



# County of Santa Cruz

## Department of Community Development and Infrastructure

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March 1, 2024

Agenda: March 13, 2024

Planning Commission  
County of Santa Cruz  
701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

**SUBJECT: Public hearing on recommendation to the Board of Supervisors regarding the proposed Low-Impact Camping Area Ordinance**

### **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

- 1) Continue the public hearing from the February 28, 2024, hearing, on the proposed Low-Impact Camping Area Ordinance;
- 2) Consider the proposed Draft Low Impact Camping Ordinance and CEQA determination and provide recommendations via resolution to the Board of Supervisors.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This proposed ordinance would define and allow property rental for “low-impact camping areas” to make it easier to establish small, low-impact campgrounds in unincorporated areas of the county. The ordinance would increase access to outdoor activities to residents of all income levels, expand opportunities for land preservation and stewardship, and provide additional Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) to the County. The low-impact camping areas would be limited to areas outside of the Urban and Rural Services Lines on parcels based on zoning and size. The Planning Commission is requested to continue the public hearing and recommend the ordinance to the Board of Supervisors for adoption.

### **BACKGROUND**

Our region is an internationally recognized destination for outdoor recreation with locals and visitors who enjoy hiking, climbing, surfing, and countless other outdoor activities. The relatively low cost and low availability of local campgrounds results in reservations (generally at state campgrounds) frequently filling up many months in advance at

popular destinations. As a result, many visitors, especially low-income households, are not able to access our region's scenic areas.

Santa Cruz County lacks affordable camping options that allow all local residents and visitors to enjoy our region's natural beauty, and low-impact campgrounds would serve to fill this void. Low-impact campgrounds should be small camping areas, requiring minimal infrastructure. Due to their small footprint, hosts should be able to provide these sites for fees that are affordable to most households. Adoption of this ordinance would harmonize with the Board of Supervisors' goals of supporting rural economies and agritourism, by creating new revenue streams for rural landowners and farmers. Additionally, low-impact camping can be an affordable access point to the outdoors and coastal area—key elements of both improving equity and access to these natural areas.

Earlier this year, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to support Senate Bill 620, which is still pending. The bill proposes making it easier to establish small, low-impact campgrounds in the state's scenic areas. The proposed ordinance would mirror much of the state legislation, which is supported by the California State Association of Counties, California Farm Bureau Federation, Latino Outdoors, Save the Redwoods League, the Nature Conservancy, and many more organizations.

On November 14, 2023, the Community Development & Infrastructure Department (CDI) was directed by the Board of Supervisors to prepare a draft ordinance in partnership with the Parks Department, to allow low-impact camping areas in unincorporated areas of the county outside the Urban and Rural Services Lines.

In the process of preparing this ordinance (see Exhibit C), Staff held an internal kickoff meeting on December 20, 2023, with the Development Review, Environmental Planning, and Public Works sections of CDI, County Parks, Environmental Health Division, County Fire Marshal's Office, and County Sheriff's Office. The initial comments and questions surrounded the following:

- Look at what other counties such as Sonoma and Santa Barbara Counties have done successfully.
- Keep campsites outside of environmental resource areas.
- Require clustering of sites to best afford for water usage, access onto properties, waste management.
- Afford a maximum number of people to maintain low impact and meet water system restrictions.
- Require applicants to obtain Environmental Health approval prior to visiting the zoning counter.

Staff also held a stakeholder meeting on February 12, 2024, to obtain comments and input from those who have the most involvement in the ordinance at a state, regional, or local level. The stakeholders represented both internal and external agencies and organizations, including those supporting the bill at the state level, as well as County

Parks. Following a very production discussion, many clarifications were made, but no substantive changes to the ordinance suggested at that time.

On February 15, 2024, the Agricultural Policy Advisory Commission reviewed the draft ordinance for ensure consistency with County agricultural policies and had the following recommendations:

- Require a 200-foot setback buffer to adjacent CA land (Agricultural Resource Type Land)
- Prohibit pets within 200 feet of CA land (Agricultural Resource Type Land)
- Require a campsite property within 200 feet of CA land (Agricultural Resource Type Land) to record an Agricultural Acknowledgement

On Wednesday, February 28, 2024, public comment was taken at an agendized Planning Commission meeting. However, due to absent Commissioners and additional work needed on the ordinance, the item was continued to the March 13, 2024, meeting. The Planning Commission heard from members of the public with general support and the following comments:

- Fire protection permit requirement of 10,000-gallon storage is too restrictive. Requirement that there be no open fires and no smoking. Suggestion of propane use with fire extinguishers on site.
- Reducing the 50- foot property line setback.
- Appropriateness of the 200-foot setback requirement from residence or Agriculture.

The Commission had one clarifying question that the low-impact camping could be allowed be on unimproved property, which was verified by Staff in certain zone districts.

## **ANALYSIS**

This proposed ordinance would create a definition, permit process, and corresponding requirements for a “low-impact camping area” in the County Code (new section 13.10.695). Additionally, the proposed ordinance would create a framework of health/safety regulations including compliance with all noise, fire, trash, and sanitation requirements for establishing low-impact camping in specified zoning areas in the unincorporated area. The proposal would also make low-impact camping areas subject to the County’s TOT requirements, similar to all other visitor-serving accommodations, including camping sites.

Currently low-impact camping would be subject to the requirements of the State Special Occupancy Parks Act (SOPA). Currently, the State Department of Housing and Community Development regulates two or more campsites, which requires a permit from the state. Proposed Senate Bill (SB) 620 is being considered at the state level and includes proposed language to exempt low-impact camping from the requirement of a state SOPA permit. As currently proposed, if the thresholds are triggered for a SOPA

permit, a noticed public hearing, CEQA review and a Conditional Use Permit would be required. This discretionary process would take much longer and be more costly than the ministerial process proposed in this ordinance. Therefore, restrictions on the number of campsites has been included in the ordinance to avoid the current discretionary process and permit requirements under SOPA. The proposed ordinance allows for more campsites should SB 620 or another exempting state bill is passed. Staff anticipates that SB 620 will pass later this year.

Here are some key highlights of the proposed ordinance:

- Maximum camp sites: Low-impact camping areas shall have a maximum density of one campsite per acre and the following maximum number of campsites:
  - (a) If a LICA is subject to the Special Occupancy Parks Act (SOPA) and would otherwise be classified as a “special occupancy park” under Health and Safety Code (HSC) section 18862.43, the maximum number of campsites in a LICA shall not exceed one campsite per low-impact camping area; or
  - (b) If a LICA would not be subject to SOPA (HSC §§ 18860 et seq.) and would not be classified as a “special occupancy park” under HSC section 18862.43, the maximum number of campsites shall not exceed nine campsites per low-impact camping area.
- Maximum occupancy (number of campers): Each low-impact camping area is allowed the following maximum number of overnight guests:
  - (a) If LICA are considered a special occupancy park per HSC section 18862.43, a maximum of 10 overnight guests in one group; or
  - (b) If LICA are not considered a special occupancy park per HSC section 18862.43, a maximum occupancy of four overnight guests per campsite or 36 overnight guests total for each low-impact camping area.
- Minimum parcel size: There would be an acreage minimum of five acres.
- Allowed zones: Low-impact camping would only be allowed outside of the Urban and Rural Service Lines and on parcels with the following zoning designations: Agriculture (A), Commercial Agriculture (CA), Residential Agriculture (RA), Timber Production (TP), Special Use (SU), Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PR), or Public and Community Facilities (PF) and would be required to be an ancillary use to the primary use on a property, with the exception LICAs on properties in the PR and PF zoning districts.
- Permits: Permits and TOT registration are required for each low-impact camping area. Applicants for a new low-impact camping area shall provide a completed application form, nonrefundable application fee and copy of County of Santa Cruz TOT certificate number, or proof of registry with a verified online platform (that pays TOT).
- Parking: Neighborhood parking impact shall be mitigated by requiring at least one off-street parking space for each site in the low impact camping area. No on-street parking would be allowed.
- Management: Low-impact camping areas shall have a designated operator or property manager who is available by phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week

when sites are occupied.

- Noise: All low impact camping areas shall comply with the County Noise Ordinance (SCCC 8.30). No activities that produce noise, dust, odor, or vibration detrimental to occupants of adjoining properties are allowed within the low impact camping area.
- Setbacks: Sites within low impact camping areas shall be located no closer than 50 feet from any property line or environmentally sensitive area and 200 feet from any off-site residence.
- Biologic impacts: Setbacks required from environmentally sensitive areas would be 50 feet, generally. A restriction on camping for sites with mapped special status species or habitat is included.
- Health/safety: All sites shall conform to local fire, solid waste, and sanitation regulations.
- Violations: Permits can be revoked if multiple violations occur within a 12-month period.
- Agricultural uses: Low-impact camping is incidental to agricultural use and shall not displace any agricultural activity.

## **LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM**

This ordinance would be applicable within the Coastal Zone and would be part of the County's Local Coastal Program's implementing ordinances. As directed by the Board of Supervisors, the ordinance would take effect in areas outside of the Coastal Zone 31 days after the second reading by the Board of Supervisors and within the Coastal Zone upon certification by the Coastal Commission. Following adoption of the ordinance by the Board of Supervisors, Staff would submit the adopted to the Coastal Commission for approval in the Coastal Zone.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The proposed County Code amendments are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because the amendments provide regulations for future camping areas and therefore do not present a reasonably foreseeable possibility of a significant impact on the environment.

Report Prepared By:

Natisha Williams, Senior Planner

Santa Cruz County Community Development & Infrastructure Department

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Santa Cruz, CA 95060

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Reviewed by:

Mark Connolly

Principal Planner

Exhibits:

A: Planning Commission Resolution

B: CEQA Notice of Exemption

C: Draft Low Impact Camping Ordinance

D: Public Comments

BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
OF THE COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

On the motion of Commissioner  
duly seconded by Commissioner  
the following Resolution is adopted:

**RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE COUNTY  
OF SANTA CRUZ RECOMMENDING AMENDMENTS TO SANTA CRUZ  
COUNTY CODE SECTIONS 13.10.312, 13.10.322, 13.10.352, 13.10.362, AND  
13.10.372; AND ADDING NEW SECTION 13.10.695, REGULATING LOW-  
IMPACT CAMPING AREAS IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF  
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY**

WHEREAS, Santa Cruz County is an area with abundant natural beauty and recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors recognizes the need for additional camping opportunities, particularly low-impact and low-cost camping options, and directed County staff to prepare an ordinance to allow and regulate such camping sites; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on February 28 and March 13, 2024, to consider an ordinance to allow low-impact camping areas in the unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County; and

WHEREAS, staff has reviewed the ordinance for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and found that, with the required regulations proposed in the ordinance, there is no reasonably foreseeable significant impact on the environment, and staff has prepared a Notice of Exemption for the project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Planning Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors confirm that a Notice of Exemption is appropriate under CEQA.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt the proposed ordinance amending sections 13.10.312, 13.10.322, 13.10.352, 13.10.362, and 13.10.372 of the Santa Cruz County Code, and adding new section 13.10.695, as presented on this date.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission finds the proposed amendments are internally consistent with the Santa Cruz County General Plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission finds that the proposed amendments constitute part of the County's Local Coastal Implementation Plan and are consistent

with the California Coastal Act, and recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to submit the ordinance to the California Coastal Commission for certification.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Planning Commission of the County of Santa Cruz, State of California, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ by the following vote:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS:  
NOES: COMMISSIONERS:  
ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS:  
ABSTAIN: COMMISSIONERS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

DocuSigned by:  
*Justin Graham*  
F17F06C7B5B14C7...

\_\_\_\_\_  
ASSISTANT COUNTY COUNSEL

cc: County Counsel  
Community Development & Infrastructure Department





# County of Santa Cruz

## Department of Community Development and Infrastructure

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### NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

**To:** Clerk of the Board  
Attn: Juliette Rezzato  
701 Ocean Street, Room 500  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

**Project Name:** Low-Impact Camping Area Ordinance

**Project Location:** Countywide, outside urban and rural services lines

**Assessor Parcel No.:** N/A

**Project Applicant:** County of Santa Cruz

**Project Description:** Ordinance allowing and regulating low-impact camping areas within unincorporated county lands outside the urban and rural services lines. The ordinance would allow limited use of rural properties for short-term camping rental subject to regulations regarding property size, number of campsites, duration, number of campers, permits, sensitive area and habitat protection, water availability, wastewater disposal, and other regulations.

**Agency Approving Project:** County of Santa Cruz

**County Contact:** Natisha Williams

**Telephone No.** (831)454-3290

**Date Completed:** 2-27-24

This is to advise that the County of Santa Cruz (insert County decision-making body) has approved the above described project on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) and found the project to be exempt from CEQA under the following criteria:

Exempt status: (check one)

- ☐ The proposed activity is not a project under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.
- ☐ The proposed activity is not subject to CEQA as specified under CEQA Guidelines Section 15060 (c).
- ☒ The proposed activity is exempt from CEQA as specified under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).
- ☐ **Ministerial Project** involving only the use of fixed standards or objective measurements without personal judgment.
- ☐ **Statutory Exemption** other than a Ministerial Project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15260 to 15285).

Specify type:

☐ **Categorical Exemption**

Class 1

#### Reasons why the project is exempt:

The ordinance allows for a short-term use intended to be low-impact and provides for regulations that protect against environmental impacts, as noted in the Project Description. With the regulations in place, there is no reasonably foreseeable significant impact on the environment.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Environmental Coordinator

**EXHIBIT B**

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ AMENDING SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CODE SECTIONS 13.10.312, 13.10.322, 13.10.352, 13.10.362, AND 13.10.372; AND ADDING NEW SECTION 13.10.695, REGULATING LOW-IMPACT CAMPING AREAS IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY**

WHEREAS, Santa Cruz County is an area with abundant natural beauty and recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors recognizes the need for additional camping opportunities, particularly low-impact and low-cost camping options, and directed County staff to prepare an ordinance to allow and regulate such camping sites; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on February 28 and March 13, 2024, to consider an ordinance amending sections 13.10.312, 13.10.322, 13.10.352, 13.10.362, AND 13.10.372 of the Santa Cruz County Code, and adopting new section 13.10.695 to allow low-impact camping areas in the unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors held a public hearing on April 9, 2024, to consider public input on the proposed Low-Impact Camping Area Ordinance.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz ordains as follows:

**SECTION I**

Table 13.10.312-1: Agricultural Uses Chart in Santa Cruz County Code subsection 13.10.312(D) is hereby amended by adding “Low-impact camping areas” as an allowed use under the heading “Visitor Accommodations” to read as follows:

USE	CA	A	REFERENCES AND NOTES
Low-impact camping area	ZC <sup>A</sup>	ZC <sup>A</sup>	13.10.695

**SECTION II**

Table 13.10.322-1: Residential Uses Chart in Santa Cruz County Code subsection 13.10.322(D) is hereby amended by adding “Low-impact camping area” as an allowed use under the heading “Visitor Accommodations” to read as follows:

USE	RA/SU	RR	R-1	RB	RM	RF	REFERENCES AND NOTES
Low-impact camping area	ZC <sup>A</sup>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	13.10.695

### SECTION III

Table 13.10.352-1: Parks, Recreation and Open Space PR Uses Chart in Santa Cruz County Code subsection 13.10.352(D) is hereby amended by adding “Low-impact camping area” as an allowed use under the heading “Visitor Accommodation” to read as follows:

USE	Permit Required	REFERENCES & NOTES
Low-impact camping area	ZC	13.10.695

### SECTION IV

Table 13.10.362-1: Public and Community Facilities Uses Chart in Santa Cruz County Code subsection 13.10.362(D) is hereby amended by adding “Low-impact camping area” as an allowed use under the heading “Residential Units-Commercial Uses (ancillary to residential use)” to read as follows:

USE	Permit Required	REFERENCES & NOTES
Low-impact camping area	ZC	13.10.695 Does not require the use to be ancillary to a residential use.

### SECTION V

Table 13.10.372-1: Timber Production TP Uses Chart in Santa Cruz County Code subsection 13.10.372(D) is hereby amended by adding “Low-impact camping area” as an allowed use under the heading “Recreation and Visitor Accommodation” to read as follows:

USE	Permit Required	REFERENCES & NOTES
Low-impact camping area	ZC <sup>A</sup>	13.10.695

## SECTION VI

Section 13.10.695 of the Santa Cruz County Code is hereby added, to read as follows:

### **13.10.695 Low-impact camping areas.**

- (A) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to establish definitions, provide for ministerial approval, and regulate rental of property for overnight recreational camping of a less intensive nature in rural areas of the County. Low-impact camping areas provide more public access to open space and generally have less need for infrastructure, generate less traffic, and have less on-site development than organized camps (SCCC 13.10.692) and other Type B visitor accommodations (see SCCC 13.10.689).
- (B) Applicability. This section applies to ministerial approval of low-impact camping areas proposed in the Commercial Agriculture (CA); Agriculture (A); Residential Agricultural (RA); Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PR); Public and Community facilities (PF); Timber Production (TP); and Special Use (SU) zone districts. For camping in other zone districts or other types of commercial visitor accommodations, see SCCC 13.10.689. County Parks as defined in SCCC 10.04.020(F) are exempt from this section.
- (C) Definitions. For the purposes of this section, the following words and phrases shall be defined as set forth in this section. In the event of any conflict between the definitions in this section and definitions of the same or similar terms in SCCC 13.10.700, the definitions herein shall prevail.
- (1) “Campsite” means a single camping space within a low-impact camping area used for short-term outdoor sleeping accommodations, and typically includes space for tents, recreational vehicles (as defined), yurts, domes, or other non-permanent structures intended for overnight recreational camping purposes.
  - (2) “Disturbance area” means a designation on a site plan indicating where campers will be permitted on the premises.
  - (3) “Low-impact camping area” means a small-scale, low-intensity campground rented out for short-term overnight recreational camping purposes (no more than 14 consecutive nights per camper and no more than 28 nights per calendar year per camper), unless further restricted by state law.
  - (4) “Premises” means one legal parcel or multiple contiguous parcels with the same landowner(s).
- (D) Low-Impact Camping Area Permit.
- (1) Low-impact camping area (LICA) permits are processed as a ministerial permit and are not subject to regulations that apply to discretionary permits in the rural area, including the Rural Density Matrix per SCCC Chapter 13.14, Organized Camps and Conference Centers per SCCC 13.10.692, or Commercial Visitor Accommodations per SCCC 13.10.689.
  - (2) Transient occupancy tax (TOT) registration shall be required for each low-impact

camping area.

- (3) Approval of a LICA permit does not legalize any non-permitted use or structure or determine buildability of a lot.
- (4) LICA permits are issued to property owners for a specific property and are not transferable between owners or properties.
- (5) LICA permits are subject to revocation as provided for in SCCC 18.10.136, and subject to the violation provisions of subsection (J) of this section.
- (6) Applicants for a new LICA permit shall provide the following to the Planning Division of the Community Development and Infrastructure Department:
  - (a) Completed application form.
  - (b) Nonrefundable application fee as established by the Board of Supervisors.
  - (c) Site plan, which does not need to be drawn by a professional, drawn to scale and showing parcel size and location of all property lines, existing buildings, nearby major roadways, proposed limits of disturbance area, proposed campsites, access to campsites, dimensioned on-site parking spaces, and location of water, sewage, and solid waste facilities, as applicable.
  - (d) Completed Environmental Health Building Clearance Form certifying that the proposed project meets the regulations and requirements of the Environmental Health Division of the County Health Services Agency.
  - (e) Copy of County of Santa Cruz TOT certificate number, or proof of registry with a verified online platform that will collect and remit TOT on behalf of applicant.

(E) Site Requirements.

- (1) Rural Properties. Low-impact camping areas are only allowed on rural properties that meet all of the following:
  - (a) Located outside of the Urban and Rural Service Lines;
  - (b) Not on a site wholly within the boundaries of an urbanized area or urban cluster, as designated by the United States Census Bureau; and
- (2) Zone Districts. Low-impact camping areas may be located within the one of the following zone districts: Commercial Agriculture (CA); Agriculture (A); Residential Agricultural (RA); Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PR); Public and Community Facilities (PF); Timber Production (TP); or Special Use (SU) zone districts.
- (3) Special Occupancy Parks Act (SOPA). LICA shall not be located on a property that has been used as a special occupancy park for the last five years unless both of the following are true:
  - (a) The area was a special occupancy park before January 1, 2024; and
  - (b) The area met the requirements of this section on January 1, 2023.
- (4) Parcel Size. The minimum parcel size or premises shall be five acres.
- (5) Agricultural Activity. For agricultural zone districts, low-impact camping areas shall be ancillary to a principal agricultural use on the property and shall not displace any active

agricultural uses.

- (6) Environmental Protection. The proposed disturbance area of a LICA shall not be located within habitat for protected species identified as candidate, sensitive, or species of special status by State or federal agencies, fully protected species, or species protected by the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1531 et seq.), the California Endangered Species Act (Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 2050) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code), or the Native Plant Protection Act (Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 1900) of Division 2 of the Fish and Game Code)
    - (a) Site-specific analysis, including a biotic assessment, may be required if disturbance area is located in areas of biotic concern, as defined in SCCC Chapter 16.32.
  - (7) Hazard Areas. Campsites within a low-impact camping area shall not be located within any of the following areas:
    - (a) Within a floodway or 100-year flood zone as determined by maps prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency; or
    - (b) Within a very high fire hazard severity zone as indicated on maps adopted by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection pursuant to Section 4202 of the Public Resources Code.
  - (8) Within Coastal Zone. Low-impact camping areas in the Coastal Zone shall be required to obtain a Coastal Development Permit pursuant to the provisions of SCCC Chapter 13.20.
- (F) Operating and Development Standards. All low-impact camping areas shall comply with the following standards for their operations:
- (1) LICA Permit. Prior to operating a low-impact camping area, a property owner shall obtain a ministerial LICA permit pursuant to this section.
  - (2) Maximum Per Premises. A maximum of one low-impact camping area is allowed per premises.
  - (3) Density. A low-impact camping area shall have a maximum density of one campsite per acre and the following maximum number of campsites:
    - (a) If a LICA is subject to the Special Occupancy Parks Act (SOPA) and would otherwise be classified as a “special occupancy park” under Health and Safety Code (HSC) section [18862.43](#), the maximum number of campsites in a LICA shall not exceed one campsite per low-impact camping area; or
    - (b) If a LICA would not be subject to SOPA (HSC §§ 18860 *et seq.*) and would not be classified as a “special occupancy park” under HSC section 18862.43, the maximum number of campsites shall not exceed nine campsites per low-impact camping area.
  - (4) Maximum Occupancy.
    - (a) Number of Campers. Each low-impact camping area is allowed the following maximum number of overnight guests:
      - (i) If LICA are considered a special occupancy park per HSC section 18862.43, a maximum of 10 overnight guests in one group; or
      - (ii) If LICA are not considered a special occupancy park per HSC section

18862.43, a maximum occupancy of four overnight guests per campsite or 36 overnight guests total for each low-impact camping area.

- (b) Type of Accommodations. Each campsite within a low-impact camping area may include one of the following types of overnight sleeping accommodations:
  - (i) One or more tents;
  - (ii) One recreational vehicle as defined in 13.10.700-R, maximum 24 feet in length (includes Class B and C motorhomes, van campers and conversions, and truck campers);
  - (iii) One recreational travel trailer as defined in 13.10.700-R, maximum 20 feet in length (includes fifth-wheels and folding camping trailers); or
  - (iv) One soft-sided, semi-permanent structure, including but not limited to canvas tents, yurts, and domes.
- (c) Maximum Nights per Camper. All low-impact camping areas shall be managed for short-term occupancy and shall not exceed 14 consecutive nights per camper and 28 nights per calendar year per camper. Permanent occupancy is prohibited.
- (d) Water Service. For low-impact camping areas that provide potable water, the maximum occupancy is required to be below an average of 25 individuals daily for more than 60 days out of the year or otherwise below the threshold of a state small water system as defined in SCCC 7.71.025.
- (5) Setbacks. Campsites within low-impact camping areas shall meet the following setbacks:
  - (a) 50 feet from any property line, riparian corridor, mapped sensitive habitat, or coastal bluff;
  - (b) 200 feet from any off-site residence, onsite or adjacent agricultural activity, or property line of Commercial Agriculture (CA) zoned agricultural resource lands (Type 1, Type 2 or Type 3).
    - (i) Parcels within 200 feet of agricultural resource lands shall record a statement of acknowledgment per SCCC section 16.50.090(B).
- (6) Clustering. Campsites in a low-impact camping area shall be clustered to minimize potential impacts. As feasible, low-impact camping areas should be located near existing structures and designed to achieve the following:
  - (a) To avoid removal of land from potential agricultural production;
  - (b) To retain natural resources;
  - (c) To avoid environmental impacts;
  - (d) To reduce the need for improvements; and
  - (e) To preserve the rural character of the land.
- (7) Improvements. No low-impact camping area shall include grading, development or expansion of roadways, driveways, utilities, or structures that requires discretionary review. A LICA project that includes grading, development or expansion of roadways,

driveways, utilities, or structures that requires a building permit or other ministerial review, shall meet all California Building Code, Fire Code, and County Design Criteria requirements, as applicable. No low-impact camping permit shall take effect prior to issuance of required building permit or other necessary ministerial permits and reviews.

- (8) Fire Protection. Campfires are prohibited in low-impact camping areas. LICA projects shall conform to all requirements of the local fire district or County Fire Marshal as applicable, state law, and SCCC Chapter 7.92 – “Fire Code,” to ensure adequate access, water availability, and other conditions for fire protection.
- (9) Solid Waste Disposal. Centralized refuse collection and storage areas shall be provided in all low-impact camping areas. All outdoor centralized refuse storage and collection areas shall be designed to screen trash and garbage receptacles from public view and containers shall be covered.
- (10) Sanitation. Unless the low-impact camping area operator specifies that only self-contained recreational vehicles or travel trailers providing their own human waste disposal systems are permitted within the low-impact camping area, sanitation facilities shall be provided that are fully self-contained, such as portable toilets, or connected to a permitted sewage disposal system that meets all regulations and requirements of the Environmental Health Division of the County Health Services Agency.
- (11) Neighborhood Impacts. No activities that produce dust, odor, or vibration detrimental to occupants of adjoining properties are allowed within the low-impact camping area.
- (12) Noise. All low-impact camping areas shall comply with the standards of SCCC Chapter 8.30 -“Noise.”
- (13) Parking. A minimum of one off-street parking space for each campsite in the low-impact camping area is required to mitigate neighborhood parking impacts. No on-street parking shall be allowed.
- (14) Pets. If allowed by the property owner, pets shall be secured on the premises and on leash at all times. No pets allowed within 200 feet from onsite or adjacent agricultural activity or from property line of Commercial Agriculture (CA) zoned agricultural resource lands (Type 1, Type 2 or Type 3). Continual nuisance barking by unattended pets is prohibited.
- (15) Events. LICA permits do not authorize the performance of weddings, the holding of outdoor parties, or similar activities.
- (16) LICA Rules. A LICA owner shall establish rules for the use of the LICA by guests. LICA rules shall be made available to all guests. The LICA rules shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following: number of guests allowed per campsite, noise limits, rules for pets, location of campsites, prohibition on events and outdoor parties, prohibition of illegal conduct and disturbances including an explicit statement



that fireworks are illegal in Santa Cruz County, directions for trash management (e.g., trash to be kept in covered containers only), prohibition of campfires, and emergency evacuation instructions.

- (17) Local Property Manager. Low-impact camping areas shall have a designated operator or property manager who is available by phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week when sites are occupied.
- (a) All low-impact camping areas shall designate a local property manager, who is located within 15 miles driving distance of the location. The local property manager shall be available 24 hours a day to respond to camper and neighborhood questions or concerns. A property owner who lives within 15 miles driving distance of the low-impact camping areas may designate themselves as the local property manager. A Local Property Manager's failure to respond within 60 minutes of being contacted, as verified by County Code Compliance staff or the County Sheriff, shall constitute a significant violation and may constitute grounds for revocation of the LICA permit as determined at a public hearing by the Zoning Administrator.
  - (b) The applicant shall mail, deliver, or otherwise provide the name, address, telephone number(s) of the local property manager, and the beginning and expiration dates of the LICA permit, to the Planning Division, the local Sheriff substation, the Auditor-Controller-Treasurer Tax Collector, the main County Sheriff's Office, and the local fire agency, as well as to the property owners of all properties located within a 300-foot radius of the boundaries of the parcel on which the low-impact camping areas is located. Proof of mailing or delivery of the contact information to all of the above shall be submitted to the Planning Division within 30 days of permit approval, amendment, or renewal. The name, address and telephone number(s) of the local property manager shall be permanently posted at the low-impact camping area in a prominent location. Any change in the local property manager's address or telephone number shall be promptly furnished to the agencies and neighboring property owners as specified in this subsection.
- (18) Advertising. All advertising for low-impact camping areas shall include the LICA permit number in the first two lines of the advertisement text, and where photos are included, a photo containing the permit number shall be included, as well as a photo of the required signage that includes the 24-hour contact information for the designated operator or property manager. Advertising a low-impact camping area for a property without a LICA permit is a violation of this chapter and violators are subject to the penalties set forth in SCCC Chapter 19.01.
- (19) Non-Profit and Public Agency Usage Fees. LICA properties operated by public agencies or verified non-profit organizations subject to this section shall provide a minimum of 20% of campsites whichever number is greater, available at a nightly rate

reduced by 50% for families qualifying for assistance under the state's CalWORKs program.

- (G) Transient Occupancy Tax. LICA properties that are not operated by a local government entity are transient occupancy facilities within the meaning of SCCC4.24.020(H) subject to transient occupancy tax. Operators and transient users of low-impact camping areas shall comply with the regulations and standards set forth in Chapter 4.24 SCCC, as administered by the County Auditor-Controller-Treasurer Tax Collector, including all required payment of transient occupancy tax.
- (H) Transfer of Property with LICA Permit. When any property transfer triggers reassessment pursuant to the California Revenue and Taxation Code Section 60 *et seq.* as determined by the County Assessor, the LICA permit associated with the property shall expire and shall become nonrenewable at the time of property title transfer.
- (I) Renewal of LICA Permits. All LICA permits must be renewed initially one year from the date of permit issuance and subsequently every three years. An application to renew a LICA permit shall be submitted no sooner than 180 days before the expiration date of the existing permit, and no later than the date of expiration of that permit. Upon receipt of a complete application, the expiration of the existing permit shall be tolled and the existing permit shall remain in force until final action is taken on the renewal application.
  - (1) Processing of renewal applications includes a review of any issued or pending building permits or other permits and review of all pertinent information specific to complaints, if any, that have been received about the subject low-impact camping area.
  - (2) Any County Code violation or violations of the provisions of this section, including but not limited to mis-advertising, citations for violation of SCCC Chapter 8.30 - "Noise", failure of the local property manager to timely respond to complaints, and/or other violations listed in subsection J, are all grounds for denial of a LICA permit renewal application.
- (J) Violation. It is unlawful for any person to use or allow the use of property in violation of the provisions of this section. The penalties for violation of this section are set forth in SCCC Chapter 19.01, Enforcement of Land Use Regulations.
  - (1) Operation of a LICA without a LICA permit shall be unlawful and shall constitute a violation of this section.
  - (2) A violation of any of the requirements to obtain a LICA permit may be grounds for denial of a new low-impact camping permit application. Further, violations of low-impact camping regulations, or of any other provisions of the Santa Cruz County Code, may be grounds for denial of a renewal application or revocation of an existing LICA permit after consideration at a public hearing by the Zoning Administrator (or by the Planning Commission upon referral).
  - (3) If more than two significant violations occur on a property with a LICA permit within a 12-month period as documented by citations, written warnings, notices of violation, or other documentation, a public hearing shall be required by the Zoning

Administrator to consider permit revocation. “Significant violations” include the following:

- (a) Citations for violation of SCCC Chapter 8.30- “Noise;”
  - (b) Mis-advertising the capacity and limitations applicable to the low-impact camping area;
  - (c) Violations of federal, State, or County sensitive habitat protections;
  - (d) Violations of State or County fire regulations;
  - (e) Violations of State or County health regulations;
  - (f) Non-compliance with a public health orders or emergency regulations issued by State or local authorities which limit use and occupancy of low-impact camping areas;
  - (g) Delinquency in payment of TOT, fines, or penalties;
  - (h) Non-responsive property management, including failure by the owner or local property manager (as defined in SCCC 13.10.695(D)(i)) to respond to calls within 60 minutes; and
  - (i) Failure to maintain signage in compliance with this section.
- (4) In the event a permit is revoked, the person or entity from whom the permit was revoked shall be barred from applying for a low-impact camping permit for the same parcel without prior consent of the Board of Supervisors.
- (5) Operation of a LICA that includes rented structures without a permit may be subject to collection of illegal rents as specified in SCCC 1.12.070.A(3), based on the reasonable rental value average campsite rental fee for similar sites as determined by the Zoning Administrator or Hearing Officer.

## **SECTION VII**

The Board of Supervisors finds and determines in its reasonable discretion on the basis of the entire record before it that the proposed amendments to the Santa Cruz County Code are consistent and compatible with and will not frustrate the objectives, policies, general land uses, and programs specified in the General Plan and Local Coastal Program.

## **SECTION VIII**

The Board of Supervisors further finds that, with the required regulations within this ordinance, there is no reasonably foreseeable significant impact on the environment, and therefore this ordinance is exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act.

## **SECTION IX**

Should any section, clause, or provision of this ordinance be declared by the courts to be invalid, the same shall not affect the validity of the ordinance as a whole, or parts thereof, other than the part so declared to be invalid.

## SECTION X

This ordinance shall take effect on the 31st day following adoption outside the Coastal Zone and shall take effect upon final certification by the California Coastal Commission inside the Coastal Zone.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2024, by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz by the following vote:

AYES: SUPERVISORS

NOES: SUPERVISORS

ABSENT: SUPERVISORS

ABSTAIN: SUPERVISORS

\_\_\_\_\_  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk of the Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Office of the County Counsel

**Subject: 2/28 Public Comment - Planning Commission Meeting Item #8**

Dear Chair Shepherd and Santa Cruz County Planning Commissioners,

My name is Nora Immoor and I am a resident of unincorporated Santa Cruz County in **Watsonville/Corralitos area**. Thank you for the opportunity to submit a public comment and communicate my support for the County's work on low impact camping (Item #8). I am excited to see Santa Cruz investing in compatible uses like camping that will create economic opportunities for local landowners and increase visitor access to our county's natural resources in a sustainable way.

*I live on approximately 15 acres, having been blessed to purchase what the prior owners used to be a cannabis farm in 2019. I do not grow cannabis as I prefer flowers, and have been slowly learning how to grow Dahlias and the land is so beautiful that it needs to be shared. I am a single mother supporting a child who suffered serious mental health issues following the epidemic- I am no longer able to work outside the home as my kid needs supervision to keep him safe and on track. We have spent the past three years in and out of hospitals and institutions across the country. Hosting recreational campers would allow me the extra income needed for the medical bills and more importantly the freedom to continue to work from home and give my kid the support he needs to heal and reinvest into the land the love and stewardship I long to give it.*

*Please consider updating the low impact camping ordinance to allow for these activities on smaller properties like ours. Hosting campers would enable us to earn supplemental income while offering an affordable option for visitors who want to travel to and experience our county. Did you know that one of the world's most famous Dahlia breeders is a Santa Cruz resident? I am learning from Kristine Albrecht and I dream of rows of beautiful dahlias and campers enjoying the beauty. I appreciate Santa Cruz's commitment to expanding economic opportunities for rural landowners like myself, and ask the Planning Commission to consider how the low impact camping ordinance can be more inclusive of smaller properties so that more residents and visitors can benefit from this.*

I am very excited to see Santa Cruz working on low impact camping. Please support an ordinance that creates an accessible permit process and that enables us to share what we have!

Thank you,  
Nora Immoor

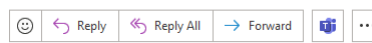


L Horst <latifhorst@gmail.com>

To: Nicholas Brown

Retention Policy 60-day Delete (60 days)

Expires 4/25/2024



Sun 2/25/2024 4:21 PM

Dear Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors,

I strongly support the proposed Low-Impact Camping Area Ordinance. However, I believe the minimum parcel size of 5 acres is unnecessarily restrictive. Allowing low-impact camping on parcels as small as 3 acres offers significant benefits to both landowners and the county, while responsibly addressing concerns that might drive a larger size requirement.

Here's why a 3-acre minimum is the better choice:

- **Ideal Suitability for Smaller Parcels:** Residential Agriculture and rural areas contain numerous properties between 3 and 5 acres that are perfect for low-impact camping. These sites offer natural buffers and privacy often lacking in more densely developed neighborhoods. Opening up this segment offers a greater selection of locations for a wider range of experiences.
- **Responsibly Addresses Density Concerns:** Low-impact camping, by definition, has minimal infrastructure and limited guest capacity. By focusing on suitable parcels and including strong operating standards, concerns about noise and neighborhood disturbance can be mitigated even on smaller sites. This offers a solution to valid concerns without unnecessarily limiting opportunities.
- **Land Stewardship and Economic Incentives:** Many smaller properties face greater difficulty generating traditional agricultural income. Low-impact camping provides an economically viable use that complements rural character, encourages land preservation, generates TOT revenue, and creates jobs for local residents without extensive infrastructure demands.
- **Increased Equity of Access:** Smaller land requirements open up participation to a broader range of property owners, including those who traditionally might not be able to provide such amenities. This widens the availability of affordable camping options across Santa Cruz County, making nature experiences accessible to more people regardless of economic standing.
- **Precedence and Alignment Goals:** A growing number of California counties, including those with significant rural character, successfully utilize smaller minimum parcel sizes for these types of camping areas. This aligns with the Board's expressed support for rural economies and agritourism.

I encourage the Board to:

1. **Adopt a 3-acre minimum parcel size** to expand the benefits of low-impact camping within Santa Cruz County.
2. **Require strong operating standards** within the ordinance to guarantee responsible management and address any potential concerns regarding density and neighborhood impact.
3. **Request a detailed rationale for the initial 5-acre minimum**, including specific data or modeling used to justify this larger acreage cutoff.

With thoughtful implementation, allowing low-impact camping on 3-acre parcels would create a win-win for landowners, the county, and visitors seeking affordable outdoor experiences in the beautiful Santa Cruz region.

Respectfully,

L Horst 1st District

2/28 Public Comment - Planning Commission Meeting Item #8



Yeyen Gunawan <laviepurefoodcollective@gmail.com>

To: Nicholas Brown

Retention Policy 60-day Delete (60 days)

Expires 4/26/2024

Some of the content in this message couldn't be downloaded because you're working offline or aren't connected to a network.



Mon 2/26/2024 8:38 AM

My name is Ivy Brown and I am a resident of unincorporated Santa Cruz County in Watsonville, CA.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a public comment and communicate my support for the County's work on low impact camping (Item #8). I am excited to see Santa Cruz investing in compatible uses like camping that will create economic opportunities for local landowners and increase visitor access to our county's natural resources in a sustainable way.

I am a single mom living in a five acre property. Hosting recreational campers would help offset my property taxes and mortgage of \$8100/month and would help enable us to invest in stewardship projects on our land. Please consider updating the low impact camping ordinance to allow for these activities on smaller properties like ours. Hosting campers would enable us to earn supplemental income while offering an affordable option for visitors who want to travel to and experience our county. I appreciate Santa Cruz's commitment to expanding economic opportunities for rural landowners like myself, and ask the Planning Commission to consider how the low impact camping ordinance can be more inclusive of smaller properties so that more residents and visitors can benefit from this.

I am very excited to see Santa Cruz working on low impact camping. Please support an ordinance that creates an accessible permit process and that enables us to share what we have!

Kindly,  
Ivy Brown

-----Original Message-----

From: Robert <[traveler11@charter.net](mailto:traveler11@charter.net)>

Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 2:37 PM

To: Natisha Williams <[Natisha.Williams@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:Natisha.Williams@santacruzcountyca.gov)>

Subject: Camping ordinance

\*\*\*\*CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.\*\*\*\*

Hi Natisha , I was enlightened to the possibility of changes to the camping on private property yesterday. I looked over the proposal and am wondering mostly about 1 thing . The water requirements for fire . As most people that might be interested in having camping on their property, I see the stumbling block as the 10,000 gallons for fire . My property although not in the woods was built in the 60 s and water storage wasn't a requirement at that time . Fast forward today installing 10,000 gallons of storage costs approximately \$20,000 . I checked with my well guy . If you are able to get \$50 - \$100 per night for campers , who is going to spend that kind of money . Unless you have it and then you are probably not going to have people camping on your property. .i think you understand my point. Am I reading this wrong?if not then most will be done before you have changed the ordinance. So I am wondering if there is anything else that can be done ? I personally have a 17 acre property that I would be interested in doing this but can't afford , the well upgrade.

Thanks

Sincerely

Robert

831-252-6670

Sent from my iPad



Subject: 2/28 Public Comment - Planning Commission Meeting Item #8

Dear Chair Shepherd and Santa Cruz County Planning Commissioners,

My name is Jessica Ridgeway and I am a resident of and run a nonprofit at two different locations in unincorporated Santa Cruz County in Aptos and Watsonville. Thank you for the opportunity to submit a public comment and communicate my support for the County's work on low impact camping (Item #8). I am excited to see Santa Cruz investing in compatible uses like camping that will create economic opportunities for local landowners and increase visitor access to our county's natural resources in a sustainable way.

I live with my family on a beautiful 2.94 acre property in Aptos and run Farm Education programs on a 19 acre property in unincorporated Watsonville. Hosting recreational campers would help offset our property taxes and would enable us to invest in stewardship projects on our land. This past winter we had a sizeable slide just after all that rain finally stopped in April. We are eager to take the advice of RDC and plant a living barrier of willows and native shrubbery to keep that slide from creeping towards our foundation. Low-impact camping also has the added benefit of allowing us to share our good fortune of a beautiful wooded hillside in the Aptos Hills with families and individuals eager to access the natural beauty our county has to offer.

On the organic farm that houses our community-based food, farming and nature stewardship programs, we are eager to help pay for our scholarship programs with low-impact camping opportunities that we know our clients are excited to access. We get requests during every season to provide space on the farm for campers. We have a beautiful spot that is about 20 feet from our property line, but hundreds of feet from any neighbor's structure.

Please consider updating the low impact camping ordinance to allow for these activities on smaller properties like ours. We could easily host one or two tents on our almost 3 acre property without parking in the street, or impacting our neighbors in any way. A factor of the proposal that would impact the nonprofit site is allowing the camp site to be within 20 feet of the property line when it will not impact neighbors.

Hosting campers would enable us to earn supplemental income while offering an affordable option for visitors who want to travel to and experience our county. I appreciate Santa Cruz's commitment to expanding economic opportunities for rural landowners, nonprofits and farmers like myself, and ask the Planning Commission to consider how the low impact camping ordinance can be more inclusive of smaller properties so that more residents and visitors can benefit from this.

I am very excited to see Santa Cruz working on low impact camping. Please support an ordinance that creates an accessible permit process and that enables us to share what we have!

Thank you,  
Jessica Ridgeway

--

**Jessica Ridgeway** (*she | her | hers*)  
**Executive Director**

**Farm Discovery at Live Earth**

*Seed to Mouth, Farm to Fork, Child to Community Connections*

831.728.2032

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by ShopWithScript

Dear Chair Shepherd and Santa Cruz County Planning Commissioners,

My name is Daniel Mollner and I am a resident of unincorporated Santa Cruz County in Boulder Creek. Thank you for the opportunity to submit a public comment and communicate my support for the County's work on low impact camping (Item #8). I am excited to see Santa Cruz investing in compatible uses like camping that will create economic opportunities for local landowners and increase visitor access to our county's natural resources in a sustainable way.

I live with my family on a property off of Bear Creek. Hosting recreational campers would help offset our property taxes and would enable us to invest in stewardship projects on our land. Hosting campers would enable us to earn supplemental income while offering an affordable option for visitors who want to travel to and experience our county.

Whenever guests come to visit us they are always grateful for the opportunity to soak up the beauty of this special place. They say it "restores their soul" and I feel the same way...that's why I live here and want to share the magic with others. For this reason, I am very excited to see Santa Cruz working on low impact camping. Please support an ordinance that creates an accessible permit process and that enables us to share what we have!

Thank you,  
Daniel Mollner



# CCOF

Advancing organic agriculture through certification, education, advocacy, and promotion.

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors  
701 Ocean Street, Room 500  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

February 26, 2024

Subject: 2/28 Public Comment - Planning Commission Meeting Item #8  
Send to: [Nicholas.Brown@santacruzcountycalifornia.gov](mailto:Nicholas.Brown@santacruzcountycalifornia.gov)

Dear Chair Shepherd and Santa Cruz County Planning Commissioners,

CCOF is a nonprofit organization based in Santa Cruz, California, that provides organic certification, education, grants, and advocacy to certified organic farms, ranches, and businesses.

CCOF applauds Santa Cruz County's commitment to expanding income diversification opportunities for rural landowners, especially the county's farmers by increasing visitor access to our region's working lands.

We strongly support an ordinance that creates an accessible process for landowners. We thank you for providing farmers with the flexibility they need to host small-scale camping areas without impacting their natural resource conservation practices, as required by the federal organic regulations.

CCOF represents a diversity farmers, including small producers who are often those most in need of new and sustainable supplemental revenue streams. With this in mind, we ask the Planning Commission to ensure development standards are proportional to the scale and intensity of use on the land, and requirements like setbacks do not inadvertently exclude landowners and farmers who may operate on smaller parcels.

We also ask the Planning Commission to consider an accessible permitting option for landowners on fewer than five acres. Development standards, such as density requirements, should mitigate any potential impacts of hosting campers on smaller parcels. For example, a one-site per acre requirement would mean that a landowners on two acres would not be able to host more than two individual campsites on their property without additional approval from the County.

CCOF would like to see a Low-Impact Camping Ordinance move forward. Let us know if there is anything we can do to help.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Benador".

Laetitia Benador  
Senior Policy Advocate

Cc: Rebekah Weber, Policy Director

Dear Chair Shepherd and Santa Cruz County Planning Commissioners,

My name is **Tori Koneya** and I am a resident of unincorporated Santa Cruz County in **Live Oak Neighborhood**. Thank you for the opportunity to submit a public comment and communicate my support for the County's work on low impact camping (Item #8). I am excited to see Santa Cruz investing in compatible uses like camping that will create economic opportunities for local landowners and increase visitor access to our county's natural resources in a sustainable way.

We would love to have opportunities to camp locally as our State Park fill up months in advance. Hosting campers would enable us to earn supplemental income while offering an affordable option for visitors who want to travel to and experience our county. I appreciate Santa Cruz's commitment to expanding economic opportunities for rural landowners like myself, and ask the Planning Commission to consider how the low impact camping ordinance can be more inclusive.

I am very excited to see Santa Cruz working on low impact camping. Please support an ordinance that creates an accessible permit process and that enables us to share what we have!

Thank you,

**Tori Koneya**

Sent from my iPhone

My name is Dawn Schipper, and I am a resident of unincorporated Santa Cruz County in La Selva Beach. Thank you for the opportunity to submit a public comment and communicate my support for the County's work on low impact camping (Item #8). I am excited to see Santa Cruz investing in compatible uses like camping that will create economic opportunities for local landowners and increase visitor access to our county's natural resources in a sustainable way.

My family lives on an agriculturally zoned parcel of 10 acres. We love the prospect of inviting visitors to share the natural beauty of our area, with low impact to the land. The income from sharing our property with short-term campers allows us to maintain the natural landscape and be better stewards of the land— the funds can be reinvested into clearing dead brush, maintaining healthy trees, and keeping the natural water pathways clear of debris. All of these efforts are more necessary with the yearly flooding and fires our area now experiences.

Thank you for considering the positive contributions outdoor recreation provides to our county. It is a low impact and joyful way to welcome visitors and generate tax funds.

I appreciate your commitment to good stewardship of our precious ecosystems, and am happy to work within the parameters of the permit process to allow short term camping on private property.

Sincerely,  
Dawn Schipper

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)



# Farm Discovery at Live Earth

## GROWING HEALTHY REALTIONSHPIS THROUGH FOOD, FARMING AND NATURE

P.O. Box 3490, Freedom, CA 95019 | 831.728.2032 | [admin@farmdiscovery.org](mailto:admin@farmdiscovery.org) | [farmdiscovery.org](http://farmdiscovery.org)

February 12, 2024

Farm Discovery at Live Earth  
Jessica Ridgeway  
(241) 728-2032  
[Director@farmdiscovery.org](mailto:Director@farmdiscovery.org)

Dear Natisha Williams and the Santa Cruz County Planning Commission,  
Thank you for inviting comments on the Low-Impact Camping Ordinance. Farm Discovery appreciates Santa Cruz County's continued commitment to expanding opportunities for local agricultural operators. In that vein, I am writing to emphasize Farm Discovery's support for the inclusion of rural recreational uses like camping and to share feedback on the proposed development standards for those uses.

Farm Discovery is an education nonprofit empowering youth and families for health in food, farming, nature and community at Live Earth Farm in Watsonville. We work with Live Earth Farm – to increase access to the outdoors, teach nutrition and environmental stewardship and strengthen our local food system. We are interested in working with Hipcamp to make our educational spaces available to a broader community and in new ways.

In Santa Cruz County, rural recreational activities like camping-based agritourism and farmstays are already a critical source of revenue for farmers and ranchers; we are excited to see the County invest in accessible permitting options for compatible, incidental uses on appropriate agricultural properties.

Farm Discovery recommends and supports the implementation of a tiered permitting process for rural recreational uses; it makes sense to create a process that is proportional to the intensity of use and development on the property, and that affords farmers and ranchers the flexibility needed to determine which uses work best for them. The following are suggestions that would make these uses more accessible, ensure smaller producers are included and able to benefit from this ordinance, and align with state policy priorities for access to recreational opportunities.

**Setbacks:** Please consider setback requirements for camping areas and rural recreational uses that are reasonable and flexible enough for landowners to be able to welcome visitors to the parts of their properties not currently in agricultural production. The proposed 100 foot setback from property lines would severely limit a farmer's ability to host campers, and would almost certainly exclude smaller producers and non-conventional farmers from being able to benefit from these activities at all. There are many properties in the more rural areas of our county without another building within 100 feet of their own property line. Picture an out of the way corner of our farm right by the fence line. On the other side of the fence, there is no building or property use that would be impacted by a low impact camper for well over 200 feet.

**Density Requirement and Parcel Size:** If we agree that 1 campsite per acre, as proposed, is an appropriate density we would like to suggest we lower the minimum parcel size to 2 or 2.5 acres in order to be inclusive of small, operations or those whose operations depend on a mix of owned and leased parcels of smaller sizes. This

Terry Sebastian  
*President*  
Thomas Broz

Steve Van Zandt  
*Treasurer*  
Luz Falcon-Toledo

Natasha Perry

Lisa Caras  
*Secretary*  
Josh Rodriguez



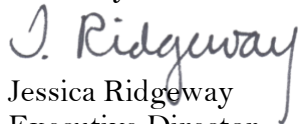
would consequently better include the smallest, most shoestring operations that could benefit most from the supplemental income. There are many properties of this size that fall within the proposed allowed zones. These properties could still meet the setback requirements as well.

**Fees and Intensity of use:** Farm Discovery's preferred approach is one that differentiates between types of camping areas. This distinct category for "low-impact camping areas" that caps the number of sites and introduces density requirements proportional to the size of the property would enable agricultural operators to host small, lower-impact camping areas without requiring the permits, infrastructure, and development more suitable for a larger-scale commercial camping operation with more permanent accommodations. We therefore recommend the application and fee structure take into account the very tight budget most farmers operate on and not be overly burdensome. The consequence of a complicated application and/or outsized fee would be lack of access to smaller, more marginalized producers. This proposed model would encourage the creation of smaller camping areas with minimal environmental and community impacts.

These proposed changes would make rural recreation more accessible and advance the stated goals of the Low Impact Camping Ordinance. They would also align with Governor Newsom's "Outdoors for All Strategy" which communicates the state's intention to work with counties, planning departments, and landowners to expand opportunities for outdoor recreation and low-impact camping on private lands, particularly agricultural properties.

We look forward to hearing the County Planning Commission's and the Agricultural Policy Advisory Commission's feedback on these ideas and are happy to partner with County Staff and community stakeholders throughout this process. Thank you for your work on this topic, and more broadly.

Sincerely,



Jessica Ridgeway  
Executive Director  
Farm Discovery at Live Earth

Terry Sebastian  
*President*  
Thomas Broz

Steve Van Zandt  
*Treasurer*  
Luz Falcon-Toledo

Natasha Perry

Lisa Caras  
*Secretary*  
Josh Rodriguez