

The Bonny Doon Firesafe Council's mission is the safety of our community, especially as regards fire danger and mitigation of that danger. Although as individuals we have many more concerns about the proposed camping ordinance, we will limit our official concerns to fire safety and public safety in our community.

Our community is still struggling to recover from the devastating CZU fire of 2020 and most residents are now extremely vigilant as to fire danger. It is completely unrealistic to expect visitors to our Mountain to exercise the same caution. Although the program specifies no fires, this is difficult to guarantee 100 percent. Particularly if the parcel owners are not on site. To allow unsupervised camping up here during fire season is a recipe for disaster.

And propane appliances, although somewhat safer, can and do start fires. We are in a high fire danger area and without the supervision as is common in established public campgrounds, there is no way to consistently monitor compliance. Let alone that large areas of Bonny Doon do not have cell signal; how do the campers call for help if something unfortunate develops? How do they call the "manager" if there is no cell service? How do they attempt self help with a fire if there is no water on site? A fire can grow a lot in the 15 minutes that is our typical fire response. And that is only if the call for help is timely and does not involve driving somewhere to get help.

The other facet of public safety involves calls for medical issues and rescues. (again the cell phone issue is the elephant in the room, along with long response time). I think the public who would be visiting may not realize that they have put themselves into a potentially unsafe situation. This will result in more calls for service in a community that is currently underserved as regards fire and police assistance.

Will there be blackout windows for red flag fire conditions? Or major wind events that could cause injury?

As a group, the board of the Firesafe Council in Bonny Doon considers that this is being pushed through too quickly without enough study. A suggestion was made that a trial could be done in a safer part of the County (south) to see what unintended results surface.

Please address all the safety issues with this proposal. Thank you.

Susan Mason
Board Secretary
Bonny Doon Firesafe Council

Hello,

I'm a homeowner at 230 Braemoor. I'm sharing the feelings of my neighbor who I agree with.

The campground idea is poorly conceived and will have devastating impacts to our community and the environment. Please do the right thing and adjust your building policies so you can construct more permanent housing in Santa Cruz County.

To whom it may concern,

I was recently made aware of a county proposal to allow parcels of five acres or greater the ability to be a LICA. The proposal states the reason for these decisions is to afford low income families the ability to get out and enjoy the outdoors. It states that due to the fact that state campgrounds fill up months in advance that it is somehow not fair or just to low income families and indicates that they are not able to enjoy the many outdoor activities, hiking, biking, surfing, climbing, birdwatching, trail running, etc. I am strongly against this proposal for the following reasons.

1) I work for a local Fire Department and have been saving money since I was a young man, and one year after buying my house, from a personal friend at fair market value my house burned down in the CZU fire. While I am well aware that I am not low income, I was house poor before the fire, and now struggling just to rebuild on my own property from the economic impacts of the last 4 years. However I am still able to enjoy the outdoors and do frequently with all the above activities for free. I have never had to pay to hike, mountain bike, surf or anything else while living in Santa Cruz County. I do however struggle to get the same campsites that everyone else in the state of California struggles to get because of the volume of people who want to enjoy our beautiful state. Low income families are able to enjoy the outdoors and the beautiful settings that Santa Cruz County has to offer with out spending the night.

2) It states under length of stay that a camper or group may not stay more than 14 days in a row, or 28 days at the same site in a calendar year. While I am an avid camper and outdoor enthusiast, I have yet to camp in the same spot for 14 days in a row without performing some specific work in the area such as a trail building or maintenance project, which I have participated in twice in my life. Once in Mendocino National Forest and once in Los Padres National Forest. This proposal does not seem to be a way to get to income families into the outdoors to enjoy nature, but rather get people who do not have homes a place to live in for 2 weeks at a time. The proposal also states that vehicles have a 24ft length limit or trailers having a 20ft length limit. In my experience with the fire department, and from what I have witnessed as a resident of Santa Cruz County for the last 15 years, low income families who live in a home or apartment, do not own recreational vehicles. People living full time out of their RVs or trailers however are strewn about the county in plain sight. Oftentimes the vehicles are in less than fully operational condition, if safe to operate at all. What happens when these derelict, massive vehicles are traveling one lane mountain roads consistently, to try and get to their next homestead for the next 14 days. This feels more like an attempt to get our unhoused populace off of Hwy 1 which is in plain sight, and into the mountains and rural areas as a sad attempt to give the illusion that Santa Cruz County is cleaning itself up.

3) Local Property Manager - This one is rather straightforward. If you are only requiring that a manager be available by phone 24/7 while campsites are in use, whose is to say that said property manager does not live anywhere close to the LICA and therefore has no ability to enforce all of the rules proposed in this bill. At every state campground, KOA or otherwise, there is a camp host that is on site, all the time. That camp host is responsible for the campground and should problems develop they have the ability to remove campers from the area. Without having 24/7 onsite hosts, you lose the ability to enforce any of these rules mentioned such as noise, pets, trash disposal, human waste or any a number of other regulations. Am I to walk over to a potential campsite at midnight on weekdays and ask the "neighbors" to keep the noise down?

4) On the topic of human waste, I am limited to the number of bathrooms I am allowed to have in my home, with a family of 3, 2 adults and 1 infant due to my septic not being large enough, per the county. Regardless of how many people use my bathrooms, my septic system needs to be pumped when it is time. However this proposal says that LICA's will be able to use portable toilets as a means for human waste disposal. To be clear we are inviting families to come and enjoy the beautiful and serene outdoors while at the same time placing porta potties all over the rural landscape? This does not make sense.

5) Water - Most rural communities have their water supplied by a well, have water delivered or natural spring with spring boxes and a water collection system. Because of the fires and CA code I am forced to have 10,000 gallons of water stored at all times. What will the minimum storage be for the minimum 5 acre properties be with a potential 5 RV's combined for up to a total length of 120 feet of vehicle. My experience of fighting vehicle fires on a consistent basis tells me that 120 feet of vehicles is a sizable fire load and potential significant threat to surrounding areas. It states that the proposal is asking to drop its 10,000 gallon requirement due to the fact that it is restrictive, but I would argue that it may not be restrictive enough.

6) Traveling to "outdoor activities" - There are only a handful of private properties that are adjacent to public hiking trails, surfing, and other various outdoor activities. Unless these campers are passing through private neighborhoods on their bikes or on foot, where they would not normally be, they will still need to drive to most areas to "enjoy the outdoors". These proposed LICA's will in the long run decimate our beautiful and rural areas due to hard overuse by campers'.

There are few things that make much sense in this proposal unless the county is trying to make an extra buck while at the same time hiding some of our local low income unhoused residents. This proposal will slowly degrade our beautiful flora and fauna by overuse and mismanagement while at the same time creating more problems for our local residents who are already paying an incredible amount to live here. This whole proposal is based around the idea that camping and enjoying the outdoors is too costly. Fall Creek, Wilder Ranch, San Vicente Redwood Forest, Henry Cowell, Forest of Nisene Marks, Big Basin Redwoods State Park, and of course as stated in the proposal, surfing in the ocean, can all be accessed for free or a cheap day use pass which all of these folks would be required to get anyways. This is not a fight to lower costs for outdoor activities for all to enjoy. This is nothing more than a money grab and possibly an avenue for the county to hide its unhoused transient problem and send them to the mountains and rural areas so that they are not in plain sight. Do not kick the can down the road and force residents of these peaceful and serene communities be threatened by anyone trying to make a quick dollar and a county that is trying to potentially hide a much larger problem.

Best,

Tim Murray
415 519 5379

The proposed ordinance regarding LICA suggests issues of noise, fire, solid waste, and sanitation will all be adequately addressed by the proposed regulations. Who will enforce these regulations? We have only one Sheriff's Department officer for SLV, Bonny Doon, and Davenport at night. It's impossible for one officer to be everywhere at once. If they are called, it is hours before they can respond if they respond at all because such violations take a back seat to more dangerous problems. The person who calls in must remain available whenever the officer arrives at 1:00, 2:00, 3:00, 4:00 o'clock to sign a complaint or a citation will not be issued so local residents have long nights before help arrives. Perhaps you should offer citizen citations if the Sheriff's Department can't help us? Please tell us how many people should sign a citizen's complaint so one nuisance neighbor can't hamper camping and a complaint is considered valid?

It's noted in the proposal that small impact activities like camping won't impact affect areas. Does that mean campers won't be allowed to use creeks in watershed areas? Right now, horses are prohibited in those areas because of concerns about pollution of the water supply. It took almost three years for PG&E to remove trees they cut during the CZU fire because of checks necessary to protect endangered plants and local birds during their nesting seasons. Who will explain restrictions to campers or is it thought that a simple, "Joey, you can't play there because it's a sensitive area," will suffice for LICA? Oh, that's right. The plan is to make them CEQA exempt so I guess that's how it will be handled. Why will visitors be allowed to ignore CEQA requirements when residents have to follow them?

A 200-foot setback is an interesting idea. Who working on the ordinance lives in open areas of the country and understands how sound and smoke travel? In Pineridge where I live, we are all more than 200 feet away from our nearest neighbor, yet we post on our neighborhood Facebook page when we are about to do a burn or often even have a bar-b-que because we know how terrifying the smell of smoke can be to neighbors who went through the CZU fire.

Which brings me to my biggest concern: fire. If fires are prohibited, do you think that will keep campers from having them? Will families forego roasting marshmallows around an open fire? Since camping will be allowed year-round, what about warming fires? I hear propane fires should be okay. Propane fires produce flames, too, which are capable of starting wildfires. Even managed fires can be tricky which is why burn days are limited and permits are required for them.

CDF will not come out for campfires or bonfires. Who do we call in the middle of the night when we smell smoke or see a fire 200 feet away from us? Managers? The ordinance only requires a manger be available by phone. What are they going to do? Call campers and tell them to put out the fires on cell phones that don't work because cell phones don't work in the woods? And what happens if campers have a medical emergency? How will they call for help when their cell phones don't work? You will have many fire restrictions if this ordinance is adopted, but enforcement will come down to an honor system.

We are already facing fire insurance cancelations just because we live in wooded areas. What will happen when our remaining carriers discover we now have campgrounds potentially with fires in our midst?

How realistic will limiting campers' numbers be? Ten people is a party. Thirty-six is a big party. We've seen what can happen when parties become raves as was the case at 5187

Empire Grade. Music, lights, bonfires, numbers of people, and all-night partying got completely out of hand. Locals called the Sheriff and contacted the County. More than thirty code violations and numerous citations were issued, but it took more than a year and a tremendous amount of work and fear before what was going on was shut down.

Who is going to verify if campsites are permitted and TOT is collected. Right now, we know of two Hipcampers sites in Bonny Doon, Banks Ranch the Redwoods and Redwood Paradise. They are not permitted and they do not pay TOT and yet they are allowed to operate. If the County doesn't control them, why should we expect the County to control additional sites under the proposed ordinance? Please prove you are on top of the situation before you make it worse.

Will drugs be allowed on site? I don't mean scary ones, but things like pot or mushrooms or other experience enhancing drugs that might make their users mellow or sleepy or forgetful of those charming fires they can't have.

Who is more important to you? Visitors or the residents of Santa Cruz County. And if locals will be able to use LICA sites, does that mean unhoused residents? Reassure us this isn't a way of taking city homeless populations and unhoused students and moving them to the country in the hopes they will be less visible there. A twenty-eight day yearly total stay in a camp is a joke. Who will enforce that and what is to stop campers from moving to the next camp once a month or, even better, naming a co-tenant for the next block of time?

The rural population in Santa Cruz County is 49% of residents. Our well-being and rights to the peaceful use of our property should be equal to the other half of local residents.

If you insist on approving LICA you also need to do the following:

1. Require an on-site manager 24-7
2. Issue individual use permits like you do for any other proposed business so neighbors will be notified and have an opportunity to comment on the proposed new use.
3. Hire one or more enforcement officers to randomly check campsites for compliance with regulations.
4. Put limits on how long a camper can stay in total per year so LICA don't become homeless encampments with all the inherent problems associated with them.
5. Set up a light ordinance like a noise ordinance (which needs to include generators) which requires lights out after 10:00 so people and creatures aren't impacted by all-night lights and noise.

