HRCAP Listening Sessions – Summary of Key Meeting Messages

From October 2020 through January 2021, representatives of the Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP) State Agency Team, their consultant team from KTUA and Participation by Design, and members of the HRCAP Working Group, conducted a series of listening sessions to get additional input on the development of the HRCAP. The listening session focused on communities or groups of stakeholders from whom we had not received much input, as well as a session with Hollister Ranch owners due to their unique stake in the Access Program. Sessions ranged from 90 minutes to 2 hours and included a brief introduction to the property and the planning process. The remainder of the time was used to hear participants interests, concerns, and ideas for access to the Hollister coastline.

1. Surfing Community, October 28, 2020

- Working Group member Jason White helped organize this session.
- The majority of surfers were local.
- Most of the surfers in this meeting already have access to Hollister, many by water.
- Much concern about providing too much access for additional surfers. Part of what makes the experience special for them is that there are not crowds of people on each break.
- Concern about protecting the environment and uniqueness of the area.
- Bike or walk-in access would be a way to limit the number of additional surfers.
- All breaks are good in the winter, breaks better on furthest beaches in the summer. Most breaks not accessible by walking.
- Bulito or Big Drakes would be good beaches/breaks for surf groups like the Wounded Warriors.
- Sense that current difficulty in access “earns” the respect of Hollister Ranch owners for them to be there.

2. Chumash Community, November 18, 2020

- Working group members Nakia Zavalla and Teresa Romero helped organize this session.
- This is a very important, spiritual part of the coast for the Chumash; yet many of the tribal members had never been able to access it in their lifetimes. Because of that, they said it was difficult to identify the opportunities they sought or where they could occur. Please note that thanks to Working Group member Beverly Boise-Cossart, one outcome of this session is a future tour of the ranch coastline with tribal members.
- Strong concern about protecting ancient village sites and other cultural resources. Would like to see access restricted in these areas.
- Strong interest in limited, conservative access. Many concerns about too much access.
- Strong interest in visiting ancestral village sites and conducting tribal/cultural-related activities and having private spaces for ceremonies and mourning. Some ceremonies

must start before sunrise or extend beyond sunset. Also interested in walking and singing on this part of the coast, fishing, harvesting sea grass, beach fires.
- Would like to monitor if any trails are built.
- Interest in being able to camp overnight.

3. Hollister Owners, December 1, 2020

- Working Group members Beverly Boise-Cossart and Ted Harris helped organize this session.
- Two key qualities about the coast that are valued by the owners are its rugged and remote feel and abundance and diversity of wildlife.
- Key concepts of what makes current HR access programs successful.
    - Lots of preparation for organizations.
    - Hollister Ranch guides or docents involved.
    - Proof of insurance and liability releases
- Key concerns include the landowner and HROA liability, cattle operations, road safety and limited capacity. Preservation of natural environment and cultural resources.
- Strong concerns about the impact of the general public or "recreationalists" versus conservation-minded visitors. Suggested alternate access points (beaches) at varying times for "recreationalists" to limit impacts.
- Strong preference for only organized, accompanied or guided group activities and firm limits on the number of public visitors.
- Suggested repair of Gaviota pier for boat access.

4. Environmental Justice and Spanish-speaking Communities, December 14, 2020

- Working group members Ashley Costa, Andrea Leon-Grossman, and Samantha Omana helped organize this session, along with staff from Assemblymember Monique Limón's office and Supervisor Joan Hartmann's office.
- Most of the participants were representatives of group and organizations that work with these communities.
- Lack of access to beaches in northern Santa Barbara County is an environmental justice issue.
- Concern that a reservation system with fees is a barrier to access.
- Interest in more local beach access for families, educational field trips, general health and wellness benefits. Need to proactively inform community of opportunities for beach access.
- For many of the communities these representatives work with, no reservation system is likely to work. What would work is being picked up in their community, brought to the beach, and brought home.
- On the other hand, families that are able to reach Hollister Ranch by car would need to

be guaranteed entry given the distance they would have to travel, and the family logistics involved.

- A first-come, first-serve system for getting in only serves locals and is not equitable. Their constituents will not risk coming the long distance to Hollister if they know they might not get in.
- If access is only by walking in, it will significantly limit who can take participate. Interest in car access for families, disabled.
- Interest in some amenities like parking, bathrooms, etc.
- Education is a key value their communities could take advantage of from visiting Hollister. Learning about the environment, but also about the types of jobs that could relate to that environment.
- Felt strongly that entrance fees would be a barrier to access. Strong preference for no access fees.

5. Educators and Non-profit Organization, December 15, 2020

- Working Group members Sue Eisaguirre and Beverly Boise-Cossart helped organize this session.
- Bathroom facility is key for organized trips; it can be a temporary "porta-potty."
- Lots of educational opportunities within Hollister especially because of the limited impacts historically.
- Tide pools in Alegria are very popular for trips, but low-tide timing is limited, and resource is sensitive.
- Groups that had previously visited Hollister agreed education about the cattle would be needed but felt this was not really a limiting factor.
- Need to partner with equity groups, not just environmental groups (e.g., Get Out Stay Out in Santa Maria)
- Some communities that face barriers getting to or enjoying the coast may not be comfortable visiting a remote beach like Hollister. Engaging youth from these communities through trips to Hollister is one way to start to address this.
- Also important to expose youth to special places like Hollister to build a sense of stewardship for they are our future leaders.

6. Young Adults, January 21, 2021

- What makes Hollister special is the surf and the lack of people. The challenge is how to provide access while keeping these qualities.
- Concern for many more surfers having access.
- Drive-in access would be the easiest, but there were concerns about too many cars and people.
- A lot of surfers might use e-bikes to get in if that were an option. Some concern about how many surfers this might add.

- Consider what makes Hollister different from Gaviota and how that should shape the access.
- Need to be sure access is financially equitable.
- Some felt having it be physically challenging (walking in by trail) to reach the beaches is okay. It would “discourage the casual visitor.”