

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

455 MARKET STREET, SUITE 228
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219
VOICE (415) 904-5200
FAX (415) 904-5400



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DATE: March 1, 2022

TO: California Coastal Commission and Interested Persons

FROM: John Ainsworth, Executive Director
Sarah Christie, Legislative Director
Linda Locklin, Public Access Program Manager

SUBJECT: **HOLLISTER RANCH ACCESS PROGRAM UPDATE**
for March 9, 2022, Coastal Commission Meeting

This briefing identifies planning steps taken since the Coastal Commission workshop held on November 18, 2021.

Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP) workshop

Following the Coastal Commission's workshop on the draft HRCAP at the November meeting where the Commission heard from over 50 speakers, the Commissioner's identified concerns and suggested several changes to the Program, including:

- Delete the maximum daily visitor number (don't get locked into a cap) and replace with adaptive management techniques in order to protect the natural and cultural resources at the beaches and bluff tops.
- Ensure that some percentage of visitors are allowed to drive-in private cars, to augment other components such as shuttles, pedestrian, and bicycle access, in order to provide equitable opportunities for families and special needs visitors.
- Ensure that shoreline armoring is not allowed.
- Support and expand Chumash cultural access.
- Ensure and expand (if needed) outreach to EJ communities.
- Expand on discussion/analysis regarding possible issues between cattle operation and public access; cattle operation should not be a barrier to new public access.
- Dogs should not be allowed.
- Include as needed seasonal visitor caps or closures to protect sensitive species.
- Include a Trail the length of the property.
- Provide more detail on how the Program implementation moves from one phase to the next.
- Prioritize underserved communities- both children and their parents, and make them feel welcome.

- Ensure that monitoring and enforcement is included.
- Explore and include as appropriate co-management with Tribes, perhaps using Mendocino and Sonoma County as models.
- Ensure that the shuttle program is free of charge, runs frequently, and directly serves underserved communities.
- State Parks could take on some management roles.
- Explore communication options; if cell phones don't work, then identify other means of communication. Lack of cell phone service is not a reason to deny new public access.
- Cultural resources study is important; should be led by Chumash; should be completed as soon as possible.
- See additional questions directed to Hollister Ranch Home Owners (Exhibit A).

In response to Commissioner comments and direction, the State Agency Team is working with our consultants to update the HRCAP. A revised Draft of the HRCAP will be completed in the near term and will be posted to the CCC website for public review.

The Commissioners also asked the Hollister Ranch representative a number of questions about the Ranch, such as the number and location of developed parcels, types of residential infrastructure, as well as details about Ranch infrastructure. The HROA representative was not able to answer these questions in the workshop, so after the workshop Commission staff sent an email to the HROA listing the questions asked by the Commissioners (see Exhibit A). On January 4, 2022, the HROA attorney responded to this request by stating that the HROA is not able to provide this information due to privacy concerns, and that release of this information would be unreasonable and illegal (see Exhibit B).

Voluntary Interim Public Access - Early Action Program

The Hollister Ranch Owners Association continues to express a desire to provide some level of increased voluntary public access to the Hollister Ranch beaches, prior to the HRCAP implementation. This voluntary program is discussed in the Implementation Steps in the Draft HRCAP (page 80). To assist with developing the scope of early access, the State Agency Team recently created an Advisory Committee. The Committee members represent various user groups, such as the Guadalupe Dunes Center, Chumash tribes, the Gaviota Coast Conservancy, as well as individual Hollister Ranch owners. The main objective of the Committee is to ensure that these new voluntary access programs provide equitable access.

Separate from the Early Action Program, the Homeowners have invited Chumash tribal members to visit the Ranch beaches. Over the winter solstice, several members accepted this invitation and conducted private ceremonial activities. It is expected that some level of Tribal use will continue in the near term.

Last, as noted in the Draft HRCAP (page 80), the Tribes will have a leadership role in the preparation of the cultural and tribal resource surveys prior to allowing general public use at the Ranch beaches. Details of that work program and administrative logistics for the study are still evolving.

April 1, 2022 Deadline for HRCAP Approval and Opening Access to Hollister Ranch beaches

Unfortunately, the State Agency Team has concluded that it will not be possible to meet the statutory deadline of April 1, 2022, for the completion and implementation of a contemporary public access program for Hollister Ranch, as required by Public Resources Code Section 30610.80 (2)(C), and enacted by AB 1680 (Limón, 2019). (See Commission letter to the Legislature, Exhibit C).

Although Commission staff and our State Agency partners have worked very diligently over the last two years to develop a comprehensive Program to provide for meaningful, equitable access with enough flexibility to allow for adaptive management as needed to protect natural and cultural resources consistent with the statutory timeline, as noted, we have not yet been able to reach agreement with the HROA on a voluntary early access. In addition, the legal steps necessary to obtain property interests required to support the level of access envisioned in the current Draft Program would take substantially more time that is afforded by the statute without the cooperation of the HROA.

Correspondence from the HROA in advance of the November workshop (see Exhibit D) over the applicability of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to the Coastal Commission's pending action to approve a Hollister Ranch Public Access Program (HRCAP), along with other stakeholder input and questions as to analysis of potential environmental impacts from a proposed access program, has made it clear that completing a full Environmental Impact Report, including more thorough resource surveys and robust public input process required of CEQA, is the most prudent path to undertake for the HRCAP. Preparing a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) would be the appropriate process to ensure environmental compliance, public input and protection from potential litigation.

Therefore, the State Agency Team will now be shifting its focus to CEQA compliance and selecting a consultant to begin work on the EIR process. We expect the process to take about 18 months; when completed, the revised HRCAP and EIR will be brought to the Commission for review, adoption, and certification.