

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

45 FREMONT, SUITE 2000
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219
VOICE AND TDD (415) 904-5200
FAX (415) 904-5400



California Coastal Commission files brief in support of protecting public access to Martins Beach

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Contact: Noaki Schwartz, public information officer, at (562) 833-5487

Timeline: <http://www.surfrider.org/pages/6950>

HALF MOON BAY, Calif. _ The California Coastal Commission has filed an [amicus brief](#) in support of the Surfrider Foundation’s ongoing effort to restore full public access to Martins Beach.

Surfrider sued Martins Beach I LLC and Martins Beach II LLC alleging that property owner, billionaire venture capitalist Vinod Khosla, shut the public out of a popular San Mateo County beach for over six years. They argued that the move was a violation of the Coastal Act, which requires maximizing public access and recreational opportunities along the coast.

“Beach access is a right for all Californians who work hard and deserve a break,” said Coastal Commissioner and San Mateo County Supervisor Carole Groom. “It’s just wrong for the public to be shut out of a beach like this without any say.”

The beach, which is just south of Half Moon Bay, had long been used by residents and visitors to the area who would fish and host family gatherings there. Khosla purchased adjacent property in 2008 and eventually shuttered the public’s access. Without applying for Coastal Act approvals, he erected signs and locked the gates to prevent the public from using the beach.

“It’s especially tragic that his refusal to comply with the Coastal Act is preventing those who have visited Martins Beach for generations from taking their families there for yet another year,” said the commission’s Acting Executive Director John Ainsworth.

In 2013, Surfrider sued and a year later won a lower court decision, which Khosla appealed. The commission filed a brief in July supporting the trial court’s interpretation of the Coastal Act in requiring the owners to obtain a permit for the closure.

While a response to the brief is expected by August 10, a new hearing date has yet to be set. Surfrider has asked the court to assess penalties.

Angela Howe, legal director for Surfrider [Foundation] said they were grateful to the commission and attorney general's office for submitting "a very strong amicus brief supporting our arguments."

"We are hopeful," she said, "that this case will help secure assurance of public access to Half Moon Bay's treasured Martins Beach.

A second lawsuit filed against Martins Beach I and II by Friends of Martin's Beach is also continuing through the legal system and is expected to go back before the lower court.