



## **County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors**

### **Agenda Item Submittal**

**From:** Board of Supervisors - Third District

**Subject:** Opposition to Assembly Bill 518 - Low-Impact Camping

**Meeting Date:** February 25, 2025

**Formal Title:** Direct the Chair to send a letter to the legislative sponsor opposing the passage of Assembly Bill 518, Low-Impact Camping, and direct the Chair to share the letter with our state legislators and relevant legislative committees

### **Recommended Actions**

1. Direct the Chair to send a letter to the legislative sponsor opposing the passage of Assembly Bill 518, Low-Impact Camping, and direct the Chair to share the letter with our state legislators and relevant legislative committees.

### **Executive Summary**

Assembly Bill (AB 518) is very similar to a bill that was rejected in last year's legislative session (Senate Bill 620) and which generated significant opposition in our community. The bill would authorize counties to enact an ordinance that would allow significant temporary camping on private property in rural areas with no consideration of wildfire dangers, no resources for increased firefighting capacity, and no review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

### **Discussion**

In 2024, our Board considered at numerous meetings a proposal to adopt an ordinance to allow "low-impact" camping in the unincorporated area despite the fact that state law did not authorize such an ordinance. When it was first placed on the agenda, Board members were not fully aware of the proposed state law and the impacts it would have on the community, which is how the Board initially supported the state legislation. Once Board members and the community became aware of the intent of the legislation and the increased wildfire danger, loss of homeowners insurance, and the potential increase in traffic on already overburdened rural roads, many members of the community came out to strongly oppose the County's proposal and the state bill.

AB 518 raises similar concerns to the previous bill. There is still a lot of uncertainty regarding the amount of camping in rural areas allowable under the proposed legislation. It allows rural properties of 2 acres or more to have up to 9 campsites with one campsite per acre and no onsite manager. In our county, this could mean hundreds of campsites in areas without adequate road access and subject to significant wildfire risk.

The proposed legislation contains no mention of wildfire dangers and does not provide any limit for properties located in Severe Fire Hazard areas. In addition, there is no requirement for CEQA review of local ordinances, nor is there any funding to support increased firefighting capacity, which was a concern of our local fire districts.

While the Board of Supervisors initially supported exploring a local ordinance, it has not officially taken a position on AB 518, although the county is listed as a supporter. We believe that the overwhelming opposition of the community to this policy has not

changed. Therefore we are asking for the Board to oppose this bill.

**Financial Impact**

The recommended action does not have a financial impact.

**Strategic Initiatives**

Climate Action - Wildfire Prevention

**Submitted By:**

Justin Cummings, Third District Supervisor

**Recommended By:**

Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrative Officer

**Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.