



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Board of Supervisors - Third District

Subject: Shark Fin Cove Parking

Meeting Date: January 14, 2025

Formal Title: Direct the Community Development and Infrastructure Department to prepare a feasibility study for a controlled parking area on Highway 1 adjacent to Shark Fin Cove Beach, and take related actions

Recommended Actions

1. Direct the Community Development and Infrastructure Department (CDI) to prepare, as soon as possible, a feasibility study for a controlled parking area on Highway 1 adjacent to Shark Fin Cove beach in collaboration with Caltrans, State Parks, and the Regional Transportation Commission; and
2. Direct CDI to apply to the California Coastal Conservancy for a planning grant to complete this study.

Executive Summary

Shark Fin Cove is an isolated pocket beach on State Parks property on the North Coast providing an important recreational amenity to Santa Cruz County residents and visitors. Unfortunately, there is no off-road parking available, and the ever-increasing public use causes very dangerous traffic conditions along the highway as well as discouraging the public from using this recreational amenity. There is space in the Caltrans right of way to provide a parking area similar to the one at the end of Bonny Doon Road and, while recognizing the need to improve traffic safety at this location, Caltrans is not able to fund this project. The first step in developing a safe parking area is the preparation of a feasibility study and CDI staff has agreed to undertake this study when staff and financial resources are available.

Discussion

There has been a major increase in the number of visitors to the County's north coast in recent years. The beauty of the area and the growing number of recreational facilities are important factors but probably even more important is the Internet and social media, where the attractions of the beaches have been highlighted.

One of the beaches that has seen an enormous increase in public visitation is Shark Fin Cove. It is a very small, isolated beach just off Highway 1 on State Parks property that can only be reached by car. Although there are no identifying signs, it now receives a large number of visitors throughout the year. Especially on weekends, cars pulling off Highway 1 on both sides of the highway are creating significant dangers to the public.

Public concern regarding traffic hazards at this location have been raised by north coast residents and visitors for a number of years. The recently completed North Coast Facilities Plan includes a parking facility at Shark Fin Cove as a high priority project.

Responding to the need for a parking solution has been difficult due to the legal status of the area. Shark Fin Cove itself is on State Parks property but the parking area along Highway 1 is on the Caltrans right of way. State Parks is unable to provide a parking

facility on property they do not own, and Caltrans isn't able to fund the parking facility at this location. Both agencies understand the need for the parking facility and are supportive of the County taking the lead.

Both the Parks Department and CDI staff also recognize the need for safe a parking area at Shark Fin Cove to provide safer access to this recreational amenity. CDI is willing to take the lead when funding and staff resources are available. While there is some local funding available, it will probably not be enough to complete the feasibility study. Therefore, applying for a planning grant from the Coastal Conservancy is necessary.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact from the recommended actions. CDI will undertake the feasibility study when staff and financial resources are available.

Strategic Initiatives

Operational Plan - Comprehensive Health & Safety, Sustainable Environment

Submitted By:

Justin Cummings

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.