



Santa Cruz County Fire Chiefs Association

President – Mark Bingham - Vice President – Jason Nee - Secretary – Rob Oatey

TO : Planning Commissioner, Renee Shepherd

April 24th, 2024

RE : Limited Access Camping Ordinance

Renee,

As our Planning Commission representative we implore you to consider the following comments in regards to the new proposed Limited Access Camping Ordinance.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the proposed Limited Access Camping Ordinance. We anticipate the proposed designated area by definition could easily impact multiple Fire Protection Districts and Fire Departments throughout the County of Santa Cruz.

In review of the Low Impact Camping Ordinance specifically related to fire protection and fire code impacts we have the following observations:

- The proposed ordinance makes no accommodation for campsite connectivity to report emergencies. This would be significant in the event of an escaped/out of control fire or a medical emergency.
- The proposed ordinance lacks site accountability when only requiring a responsible point of contact within 15 miles and 60 minutes to respond to issues on site.
- The proposed ordinance does refer to adhering to the Fire Code but should specify critical standards for adherence to 7.92.505.2 to road signage ; 503.7 – Gate standards ; 307.4.2 recreational fire standards
- The Ordinance does not require site mapping or pre plan documentation be provided to the fire authority of jurisdiction allowing responders to navigate to emergencies in these unimproved rural areas.
- The Ordinance specifies designated areas outside the Urban Services and Rural Services line, outside environmental resource areas, very high fire hazard severity zones and sensitive habitats. This should be better defined and mapped to provide clear delineation of acceptable development. Does this mean camps would not be allowed in the Watershed or on Timber Harvest Properties?
- Within section (IV) « accommodations » there is allowance for canvas tents, yurts and domes in combination with overnight stays ranging out to 14 days. It is easily conceivable that without oversight these accommodations drift from transitory to permanent populations. These structures also contribute to fire load without improved fire protection resources.
- As a reminder, campfires are prohibited under Chapter 7.92

In summary, our concerns are focused on a lack of site accountability, ensuring acceptable access, site mapping, signage and most importantly there is no prerequisite for camp sites to have the means to summon assistance from 911. We would be happy to meet with you or review future drafts of this ordinance to prevent conflict between fire codes and proposed ordinances.

Respectfully,

Mark Bingham
SCCFCA President and Fire Chief