

Appendix G:

Cotoni-Coast Dairies – BLM Visitor Use Estimates, January 2020.

This appendix documents the BLM's estimate of visitor use for Cotoni-Coast Dairies (C-CD). Estimates were developed for each of three management alternatives under consideration in the RMPA/EA. Estimates were then used to determine parking needs under each alternative.

METHODOLOGY

The anticipated future visitor use at C-CD was estimated using the assumption that visitor use will be directly tied to two key variables: recreational opportunities provided (in this case primarily hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding) and ease of access (i.e. proximity to communities and major transportation corridors). Visitor use was estimated by comparing current visitor use at nearby parks and open spaces in the region. Visitor use at comparable parks and open spaces is based on estimates prepared by Placeworks (Minn and Fleischmann 2016) for the neighboring San Vicente Redwoods property, and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's North Coast Rail Trail Final Environmental Impact Report (2019).

Comparable parks and open spaces include Wilder Ranch State Park, Soquel Demonstration Forest, and San Vicente Redwoods. Wilder Ranch State Park is a 7,000-acre property with approximately 34 miles of trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. The property also provides direct access to several popular beaches and supports tourism associated with agricultural leases on the State Park. The annual visitor use at Wilder Ranch is estimated to be 472,809, representing approximately 9,000 visitors per week. Trail use is estimated to be equivalent to 38 visitors per day per mile of trail. Wilder Ranch has significantly higher use than other parks on the North Coast of Santa Cruz. The high use is due largely to the proximity to Santa Cruz and the diversity of recreation opportunities provided.

The Soquel Demonstration State Forest (SDSF) is a 2,681-acre property with 24 miles of trail and an estimated 106,094 visitors per year, equivalent to over 2,000 visitors per week, for hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding. The annual visitor use is equivalent to 8 visitors per day per mile of trail. Over 60 percent of visitors come on the weekend versus during the week and mountain bike riding is the most common activity. The SDSF is more remote than either C-CD or Wilder Ranch. Recreational opportunities are also more limited than those provided at Wilder Ranch.

The Forests of Nisene Marks State Park is a 10,257-acre property with 30 miles of trail and an estimated annual visitation of 106,094 visitors per year, equivalent to a weekly visitation of approximately 2,000 visitors per week. Recreational opportunities on this property are similar to those provided at SDSF. However, Nisene Marks is significantly closer in proximity to major population centers in Santa Cruz County and the Highway One transportation corridor when compared to SDSF. Annual visitor use at this park is estimated to be equivalent to 10 visitors per day per mile of trail.

The San Vicente Redwoods (SVR) is a 7,000 acre property with approximately 28 miles of trails planned for hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding. A potential future trail connection between SVR and the C-CD property would result in visitors to both properties. PlaceWorks (Minn and Fleischmann 2016) anticipates that 47 parking spaces and 3-5 equestrian trailer spaces would accommodate demand at SVR based on projections for approximately 97,000 annual visitors, which is equivalent to less than 6-8 visitors per day per mile of trail.

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission certified the North Coast Rail Trail (NCRT) Final Environmental Impact Report (Volume 2, Draft EIR) in 2019. Daily use estimates for summer weekends were based on the assumption that 85% of visitors would arrive by vehicle, with an average 2.5 persons per vehicle, and observations of parking turnover at the Davenport Lot: North, Bonny Doon Beach, and Panther/Yellowbank Beach parking lots. They estimated 300 vehicle trips per day would need 100 parking spaces in the peak hour because up to 50 percent of parking spaces turned over at these parking lots.

COTONI-COAST DAIRIES

Visitor use estimates for Cotoni-Coast Dairies are provided below for each alternative presented in the Draft RMPA/EA. Visitor use is expected to vary based on the type of recreational opportunities provided and the accessibility of those opportunities from major population centers and transportation corridors.

Alternative A

Recreational Opportunities. Under Alternative A, the BLM would develop 2.7 miles of trails for day use hiking and on-lease dog walking. Mountain biking and horseback riding would not be allowed. Recreational opportunities are more limited than those provided at the comparable properties described above.

Accessibility. Under Alternative A, the BLM would develop two locations for public access to the recreational trails from staging areas on Swanton Road and Bonny Doon Road. Neither of these access points is directly adjacent to Highway One, nor do they connect to regional trail systems (i.e. North Coast Rail Trail, San Vicente Redwoods). Under this alternative, accessibility would be similar to SDSF, the Forests of Nisene Marks and San Vicente Redwoods.

Annual Visitation Estimate. The BLM estimates that 50,000 people will visit C-CD annually under this alternative due to the factors described above. The BLM assumes that initial visitation will be higher for 6-12 months due to the novelty of public access to the C-CD. However, given limited visitor services, facilities, and recreation opportunities under Alternative A, it is reasonable to expect annual visitor use will decrease after the inauguration of this unit of the California Coastal National Monument.

Estimated Visitors per mile of trail. The BLM assumes an average of 10 visitors per mile of trail based on comparable properties in the region.

Alternative B

Recreational Opportunities. Under Alternative B, the BLM would construct approximately 20 miles of trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. Mountain biking trail opportunities would be largely confined to the northern half of the property (north of Warranella Road), while horseback riding opportunities would be confined to the southern half of the property (south of Bonny Doon Road). Hikers would be allowed on all trails. The trail network would include connections to regional trail networks on the North Coast Rail Trail and San Vicente Redwoods. Facilities would be designed for day-use and may include kiosks and vault toilets.

Recreational opportunities would be comparable to those provided at Wilder Ranch, Forests of

Nisene Marks, and San Vicente Redwoods. However, opportunities are less than those provided at Wilder Ranch, particularly because beach access drives a significant number of visitors to Wilder Ranch.

Accessibility. Alternative B proposes to establish parking areas at three locations, two year-round access points at Warrenella Road and Marina Ranch Road and a seasonal access point further up Warrenella Road. There would also be a trailhead connection via a pedestrian bridge at Panther Beach, providing two access points directly adjacent to Highway One. Accessibility is comparable to Wilder Ranch, although further removed from the major metropolitan center of Santa Cruz. It is anticipated that visitation will be roughly split between the two access points north of Davenport and the two access points south of Davenport.

Annual Visitation Estimate. The BLM estimates that 150,000 people will visit C-CD annually under this alternative due to the factors described above. The BLM assumes that initial visitation will be higher for 6-12 months due to the novelty of public access to the C-CD. However, due to the phased buildout planned under this alternative, full annual visitation numbers will not be reached for several years.

Visitors per mile of trail. The BLM assumes an average of 20 visitors per mile of trail based on comparable properties in the region. The BLM assumes that initial visitation per mile of trail will be higher for 6-12 months due to the novelty of public access to the C-CD and the phased buildout of trails on the property.

Alternative C

Recreational Opportunities. Under Alternative B, the BLM would construct approximately 29 miles of trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. Most of these trails would be accessible for mountain biking, horseback riding, and hiking. The trail network would include connections to regional trail networks on the North Coast Rail Trail and San Vicente Redwoods. Facilities would be designed for day-use and may include kiosks and vault toilets.

Recreational opportunities would be comparable to those provided at Wilder Ranch, Forests of Nisene Marks, and San Vicente Redwoods. However, opportunities are less than those provided at Wilder Ranch, particularly because beach access drives a significant number of visitors to Wilder Ranch.

Accessibility. Accessibility would be similar to that described for Alternative B, except there is one additional parking lot proposed on Swanton Road. This access point would be approximately 16 miles north of the City of Santa Cruz. It is anticipated that visitation would be notably higher at other locations in closer proximity to Santa Cruz and Highway One.

Annual Visitation Estimate. The BLM estimates that 250,000 people will visit C-CD annually under this alternative due to the factors described above. The BLM assumes that initial visitation will be higher for 6-12 months due to the novelty of public access to the C-CD. However, due to the phased buildout planned under this alternative, full annual visitation numbers will not be reached for several years.

Visitors per mile of trail. The BLM assumes 30 visitors per mile of trail due to the multi-use nature of trails in this alternative. This would provide a comparable estimate to Wilder Ranch, while accounting for the closer proximity of that park to Santa Cruz.

ESTIMATED PARKING DEMAND

Parking demand was estimated for C-CD based on the existing parking supply/demand discussed above. Parking estimates are based on the high end of the range of expected annual visitors.

Alternative A anticipates that approximately 40 parking spaces and zero trailer spaces would accommodate demand based on the following assumptions:

Visitation projections of 50,000 annual visitors

75-percent of visitation will take place on the weekend, equally distributed between Saturday and Sunday (equivalent to 350 visitors/day on a weekend)

85-percent of visitors will drive-in (others will walk from Bonny Doon Beach parking area)

There will be an average of 2.5 visitors/vehicle

Vehicles will stay an average of 1.5 hours, therefore 6 vehicles can occupy one parking space each (6 vehicles/parking space/day)

Demand will be lower than nearby State Parks due to longer distance and lower trail mileage.

Alternative B anticipates that approximately 78 parking spaces and 1-2 equestrian trailer spaces would accommodate demand based on the following assumptions:

Visitation projections of 150,000 annual visitors

75-percent of visitation will take place on the weekend, equally distributed between Saturday and Sunday (equivalent to 700 visitors/day on a weekend)

85-percent of visitors will drive-in (others will walk, hike, bike or ride-in)

There will be an average of 2.5 visitors/vehicle

Vehicles will stay an average of 1.5 hours, therefore 6 vehicles can occupy one parking space each (6 vehicles/parking space/day)

Equestrian trailer demand will be lower than nearby State Parks due to longer distance and lower trail mileage.

Alternative C anticipates that 100 parking spaces and 3-5 equestrian trailer spaces would accommodate demand based on the following assumptions:

Visitation projections of 250,000 annual visitors

75-percent of visitation will take place on the weekend, equally distributed between Saturday and Sunday (Equivalent to 1500 visitors/day on a weekend)

Staging areas at will have adequate capacity to accommodate visitors, including equestrian trailers

50-percent of visitors will drive-in (others will walk, hike, bike or ride-in; it is anticipated that many will access the property via regional trail connections)

There will be an average of 2.5 visitors/vehicle

Vehicles will stay an average of 1.5 hours, therefore 6 vehicles can occupy one parking space each (6 vehicles/parking space/day)

SUMMARY

The RMPA/EA assumes a conservative ratio of 10 trail users per mile of trail under Alternative A and 20 trail users per mile of trail under Alternative B based on the average number of visitors on the comparable properties in Santa Cruz County. The RMPA also analyzes a maximum ratio of 30 trail users per mile of trail under Alternative C. Based on these assumptions, the total estimated annual visitor use for Alternative A is 50,000; the total annual visitor use for Alternative B is 150,000; and the total annual visitor use for Alternative C is 250,000.

New vehicle trips projected to travel to C-CD were estimated based on the anticipated number of trail users and the proportion of trail users expected to arrive and leave by motor vehicle. As a result, daily use of the C-CD during average summer weekends was estimated to range from 350 visitors during summer weekends under Alternative A to 1,500 visitors during summer weekends under Alternative C.

Based on these estimates, it is recommended that the staging areas be designed to accommodate up to 100 vehicles and 3-5 trailers under Alternative C, 78 spaces and 1-2 trailer spaces for Alternative B, and 40 vehicles and zero trailer spaces under Alternative A to maximize parking space and to minimize the impacts of overflow parking on the surrounding neighborhoods.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on these estimates, it is recommended that the staging areas be designed to accommodate up to 100 vehicles and 3-5 trailers under Alternative C, 78 spaces and 1-2 trailer spaces for Alternative B, and 40 vehicles and zero trailer spaces under Alternative A to maximize parking space and to minimize the impacts of overflow parking on the surrounding neighborhoods.