



CORRIDOR INTRINSIC QUALITIES INVENTORY

RECREATIONAL QUALITIES



Highway 1 along the Big Sur Coast
From San Carpoforo Creek in San Luis Obispo County
To the Carmel River in Monterey County

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was prepared in support of the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (CHMP) for State Highway 1, between San Carpoforo Creek in San Luis Obispo County and the Carmel River Bridge in Monterey County. The CHMP is designed to establish coordinated management of the Highway 1 corridor along this widely treasured coastline. The primary goal of the CHMP is to preserve, protect, and restore the area's unique qualities while ensuring the continued safe and efficient operation of the highway.

The CHMP also fulfills the objectives of the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways program.¹ This program calls for an inventory of intrinsic qualities, those unique and irreplaceable features that define the essence of the corridor. This report's purpose pursuant to the Scenic Byways program is to provide an overview of the Big Sur Coast byway's existing recreation qualities, one of six types of intrinsic qualities identified in the Byways Program. Inventory reports are also being prepared in support of the CHMP for the corridor's archaeological, cultural, historical, natural, and scenic qualities. This report is supported by—and is a companion to—a Geographic Information System (GIS) database² created from information collected in the field. This database contains a detailed inventory of Big Sur's recreational resources, focusing on those features that are visible from Highway 1.

The CHMP is a long-range planning document, designed to guide the management of the Big Sur Highway 1 corridor for years to come. These inventory reports and their supporting GIS database offer the most detailed and specific inventory of resources within the Highway 1 corridor along the Big Sur Coast that has ever been compiled.

This information resource not only provides the basis for CHMP management strategies, enhancement projects, and other implementation measures, now and for the future, but it also offers a valuable source of information for other resource management agencies along the coast. It is hoped that federal, State, and local agencies including the U.S. Forest Service, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, State Parks, Coastal Commission, and County of Monterey, to name only a few, will use this database. Such information sharing should facilitate their decision-making regarding highway-related activities within their jurisdictions and support their respective management planning efforts. For example, Caltrans and regulatory agencies can consult the database for early information about sensitive resources in the vicinity of a project or storm damaged location and be clear about a course of action to avoid, minimize or mitigate for impacts to these resources. The plans of the individual agencies will provide the structure and detail needed to ensure implementation of their CHMP responsibilities outside of those areas controlled by Caltrans.

It is also anticipated that these agencies will participate over time in updating and expanding the inventory database. Such information sharing and cooperation among all stakeholders will help to achieve coordinated planning among agencies along this stretch of coast.

¹ The guidelines for the Scenic Byways Program are outlined at <http://www.byways.org>, and on the website for the Federal Highway Administration.

² A Geographic Information System provides the ability to store and view geographic information spatially; it is a computer-based application from which the mapping for this report was produced.

Methodology

The Recreation Qualities Inventory was produced from information collected by field observation and supplemented with information from secondary sources such as history books and guidebooks, local publications, and Internet sources. The form used to compile the inventory data is shown in Appendix A. The Big Sur Coast's most prominent recreation features, as covered in this report, are organized and described within 13 named segments (see Table B). For each segment, the report presents a thematic overview of the intrinsic recreational qualities and then follows with a description of particular recreation features. The inventory is presented in geographic order from south to north, segment by segment. Although not all recreation features recorded in the inventory are described in the report, they are all included within the GIS database and are shown on the maps provided in Appendix B. The report is not intended to serve as a recreation guidebook for the Big Sur region. Nor is it to serve as a management action plan, though management efforts will be able to utilize this recreation data to inform future planning efforts.

To facilitate the discussion of recreation resources, recreation activities were grouped into three themes: touring, educational & contemplative, and active sports (see Section 3.2 Recreation Themes). As the inventory proceeded, it became evident that the primary recreational use of the highway is for sightseeing or traveling to tourist destinations, either by motor vehicle or—to a lesser degree—by bicycle. Touring was the primary recreation theme; followed by educational and contemplative pursuits and destinations such as retreats, nature preserves, and individual explorations; and active sports such as water sports, hiking, and bicycling.

The results of the inventory re-emphasized the relationship between the landscape of the coast and the recreational opportunities it offers. The dramatic, precipitous landforms of the Big Sur Coast, coupled with limited shoreline and inland access, have constrained the development of recreation along much of the highway. Landforms conducive to recreation development: sandy beaches, broad coastal terraces, rolling open terrain, and gentle shoreline slopes are rare commodities. Even access for touring visitors is limited by the narrow, winding roadway and lack of public side roads off the highway. This dynamic between opportunity and constraint has caused the development of coastal recreation to locate in those public lands that can provide accessibility, whether to a cobble-strewn beach, or a mountain overlook. The result is a dispersed arrangement of recreational areas, forming a necklace of unique and site specific, recreational opportunities along the Coast Highway.

Recreational Themes

While the report focuses on a journey along the coast from south to north through the study segments, each of which offers varying degrees and types of recreation, this summary concludes by describing the recreation highlights within each of the three recreation themes: touring, educational and contemplative, and active sports.

Touring

While touring the coast, the experience is ever changing, from the remote and wild southern and central sections to the gradually more gentle and civilized northern section. The coastal landscape offers a rich visual display of form and character, from precipitous mountains and ravines to forested river valleys, coastal plains and beaches. Nestled

into this landscape are numerous formal and informal touring attractions, from vista points, to state parks and resorts. Although complete service facilities along a Big Sur journey are limited, at 75 miles long, the Coast Highway is a reasonable day tour. It should be noted that touring the coast is most popular by traveling from north to south. This allows the best windshield survey of the setting and direct and safe access to most of the vista and access points along the shoreward side of the highway.

Touring highlights include day use activities as well as overnight stays at campgrounds and resorts in each of the three main regions of the corridor (north, central, south). With the Los Padres National Forest stretching along the southern section of the corridor, eight state park units complement the touring opportunities along the length of the corridor, from Limekiln State Beach in the south to Point Lobos in the north. Public campgrounds are accessible from the highway within areas of the forest and at several state parks. Privately managed resorts offer both lodging and camping at various locations throughout the corridor.

Educational and Contemplative

Educational and contemplative opportunities for the individual are abundant along the route, although formal, publicly accessible facilities are rare. Each cove, bluff, trail, and water feature offers a unique place to investigate the richness of the Big Sur environment. The Big Sur coastline is also protected by the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary designation, and offers many opportunities for marine study and inquiry. In the north, the Point Lobos Reserve is the crown jewel, providing extensive preserved marine and upland ecosystems. Designated natural systems study areas such as the Southern Redwood Botanical Area and Big Creek Reserve provide restricted use areas for scientists and students.

Two prominent facilities supporting this theme are found within the southern and central Big Sur Coast: Esalen Institute and the New Camaldoli Hermitage. Esalen provides a range of programs and sessions in alternative education, transformation practices, and restorative experiences along with soothing hot springs. Lucia's New Camaldoli Hermitage, run by a group of Camaldolese Monks, offers retreats to the public by reservation and a small shop for tourists.

Active Sports

As noted previously, the inventory suggests that the rugged character of the landscape has influenced and limited the development of active sport recreation within the region. Yet for the novice and the seasoned enthusiast alike, there are still numerous opportunities. In the southern and central sections, the Los Padres National Forest encompasses the majority of the inland property along the coast and the coastline itself from just south of Lucia to the San Luis Obispo County line. The proximity of the National Forest to the coast south of Lucia provides for a rich assortment of shoreline and inland trails and public use recreational features such as beaches for surfing, diving, and fishing.

North of Lucia, where the Los Padres Forest pulls back from the coastline and the highway, private land ownership restricts access to areas off the highway. Fortunately, as you travel north there are several large tracts of state lands, either reserves or parks, which provide shoreline access for active sports pursuits. Family-oriented active recreation is best served at one of these coastal state parks, or within the Big Sur Valley at Pfeiffer-Big Sur State Park.

Numerous trailheads are found along the highway, providing a wide variety of access opportunities to both the shoreline and to inland destinations. Also, parallel to the shoreline, several segments of the California Coastal Trail (CCT) are already in place, and one day will be linked to provide a continuous trail system along the coast. In the meanwhile, to complete the route, CCT hikers must utilize the highway shoulder as a connector between existing segments.

In the Pacific Valley area of Los Padres National Forest, hang gliding and soaring are popular active sports, as is mountain biking on Nacimiento-Fergusson Road and connecting service roads. Elsewhere, much of the forest inland from Highway 1 lies within either the Ventana or Silver Peak Wilderness Areas, where all forms of mechanized travel are precluded, including bicycling and gliding.

Along the Coast Highway, serious and enthusiastic road cyclists, traveling for the day or overnight, take advantage of the highway's moderate traffic speeds and make good use of the highway as an active recreation route.

1 PLAN PURPOSE

The Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (CHMP) is designed to establish coordinated management of the State Highway Route 1 corridor along one of California's most treasured coastlines. The primary goal is to preserve, protect and restore the area's unique qualities while ensuring the continued safe and efficient operation of the highway. The planning area is located along a portion of the historic Carmel-San Simeon Highway from San Carpoforo Creek in San Luis Obispo County to the Carmel River in Monterey County, also known as Highway 1, along the Big Sur Coast (see Figure 1).

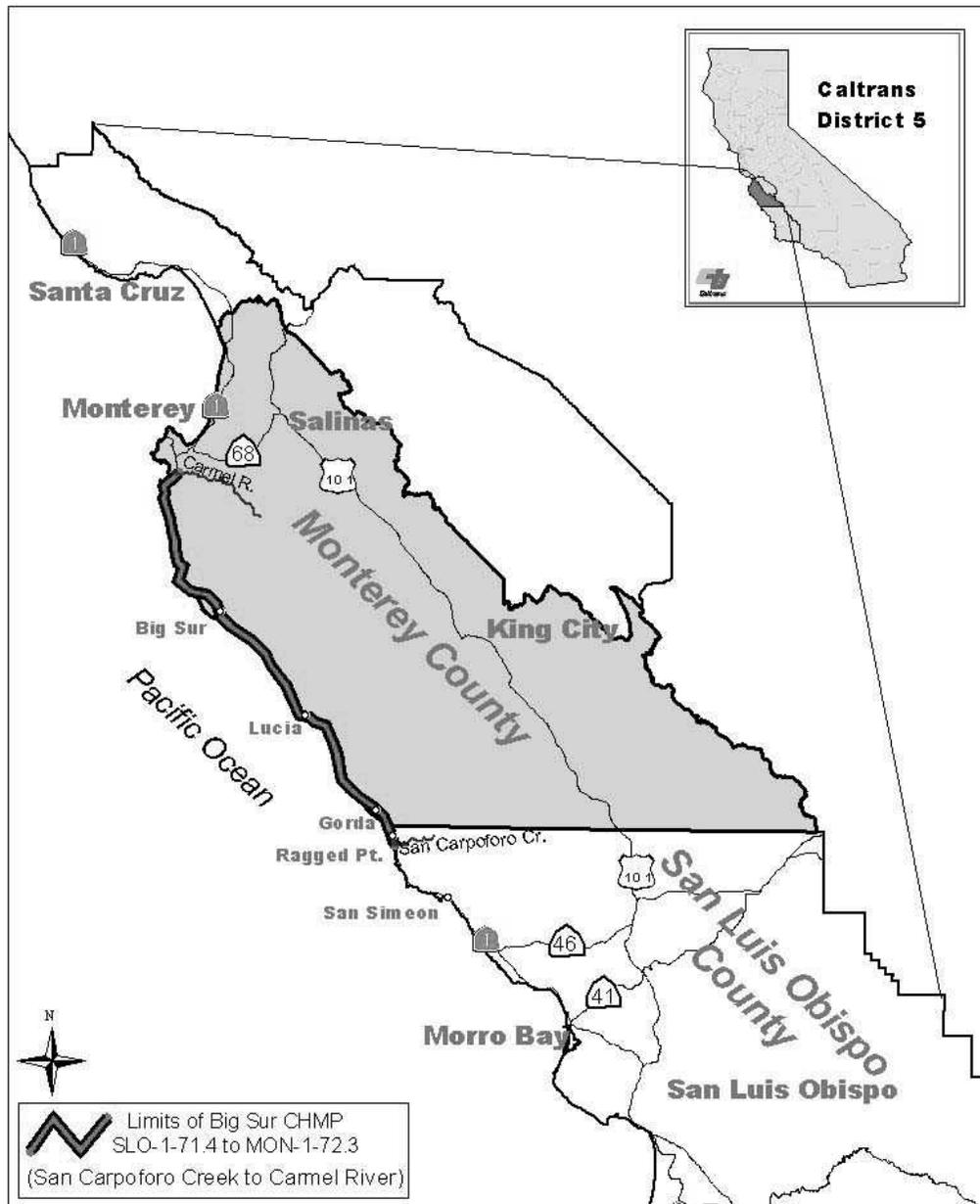


Figure 1. Map of Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan Area

The CHMP also fulfills the objectives of the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) National Scenic Byways program to update the Corridor Management Plan, originally prepared in support of the FHWA's All-American Road designation in 1996.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The ongoing natural processes that shape Big Sur's unforgettable landscape also create the greatest challenges for maintaining a reliable highway. Perched on the steep western slopes of the Santa Lucia Mountains, which face the brunt of Pacific storms, the highway requires intensive maintenance and is in an almost continuous state of repair.

Landslides and washouts of variable severity result in frequent road closures; complex repairs to restore the highway can cause further delays and extend over long periods of time. With detours nearly non-existent, Highway 1 is the lifeline to several well-established communities. It also provides access to nine state park units and the entire coastal frontage of Los Padres National Forest. Considering that the highway itself is a major travel destination, closures and extended delays reverberate through the coastal communities between San Luis Obispo and Carmel whose economies are heavily dependent on recreational travel.

With rapid response to restore highway travel after an event, coordination among many parties with an interest or regulatory authority can become tense under what sometimes appear to be competing interests. Working under these circumstances can result in somewhat awkward solutions, delays and increased costs.

Meanwhile, the accumulated consequences from frequent repairs and related highway improvements have been seen as threatening the unique qualities and most sensitive resources found on this coast. Concerns about visual impacts from large cut and fill slopes, spread of invasive plants, impacts to marine and upland coastal habitats from repairs (including disposal of landslide material) and proliferation of standard highway designs have all contributed to a sense by the community that the corridor is being gradually degraded.

After a particularly harsh winter in 1998, a focused effort by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to develop a coordinated management plan was initiated in the form of the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan. This report is one of a series of documents prepared in support of this planning effort.

1.2 CORRIDOR INVENTORY

Fundamental to a corridor management plan is an inventory of intrinsic qualities, the unique and irreplaceable features that define the essence of the corridor. The inventory of these qualities provides the foundation on which management strategies will be designed to preserve, protect and restore.

Intrinsic qualities are categorized into six types:

- Archaeological
- Historic
- Scenic
- Cultural
- Natural
- Recreational

This report inventories and describes the recreation qualities, as defined by the National Scenic Byways Program guidelines:

“Recreational quality involves outdoor recreational activities directly associated with and dependent upon the natural and cultural elements of the corridor’s landscape. The recreational activities provide opportunities for active and passive recreational experiences. They include, but are not limited to, downhill skiing, rafting, boating, fishing, and hiking. Driving the road itself may qualify as a pleasurable recreational experience. The recreational activities may be seasonal, but the quality and importance of the recreational activities as seasonal operations must be well recognized. (FHWA Policy 5.18.95)”³

The inventory of recreational qualities along the Big Sur Coast has been developed to a greater level of detail than what would normally be expected for a Corridor Management Plan. The higher level of inventory detail was included to establish a baseline recreation and public access component for the CHMP. These baseline data will support use of the CHMP by various stakeholders, including state parks, USFS, the California Coastal Commission (CCC), the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, and Monterey County to help coordinate corridor management activities along the coast. This inventory will be key to developing the public access component of a Public Works Plan (PWP), which is anticipated to serve as the implementation tool for the Coast Highway Management Plan under the California Coastal Act.

The CHMP is a long-range planning document, designed to guide the management of the Big Sur Highway 1 corridor for years to come. These inventory reports and their supporting Geographic Information System (GIS)⁴ database offer the most detailed and specific inventory of resources within the Highway 1 corridor along the Big Sur Coast that has ever been compiled.

This information resource not only provides the basis for CHMP management strategies, enhancement projects, and other implementation measures now and for the future, but it also offers a valuable source of information for other resource management agencies along the coast. It is hoped that Federal, State, and local agencies including the U.S. Forest Service, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, State Parks, Coastal Commission, and County of Monterey, to name only a few, will use this database. Such information sharing should facilitate their decision-making regarding highway-related activities within their jurisdictions and support their respective management planning. For example, Caltrans and regulatory agencies can consult the database for early information about sensitive resources in the vicinity of a project or storm damaged location and be clear about any type of action to avoid, minimize or mitigate for impacts to these resources. The plans of the individual agencies will provide the structure and detail needed to ensure implementation of their CHMP responsibilities outside of those areas controlled by Caltrans.

It is also anticipated that these agencies will participate over time in updating and

³ Federal Highway Administration *Byway Beginnings- National Scenic Byways Program: Understanding, Inventorying, and Evaluating a Byway's Intrinsic Qualities*. Swimmer, Whiteman & Taintor, 1999.

⁴ A Geographic Information System provides the ability to store and view geographic information spatially; it is a computer-based application from which the mapping for this report was produced.

expanding the inventory database. Such information sharing and cooperation among all stakeholders will help to achieve coordinated planning among agencies along this stretch of coast.

Prior regional planning efforts have had an effect on the recreation features inventoried in this report: first in 1962 with the Monterey County Coast Master Plan, and more recently in 1986 when the CCC certified the Monterey County Local Coastal Program, including the Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan (LUP).⁵ Of the eight general land use categories in the LUP, two specifically address recreation: Outdoor Recreation; and Recreational, Visitor-Serving Commercial, Public and Quasi-Public Uses. Both of these recreation types are inventoried in this report.

During these planning processes, local communities and regional agencies and advocates worked diligently to guide the development of coastal and inland public access and recreation. The accepted philosophy as stated in the LUP focuses on regionally appropriate recreation that acknowledges the ecological sensitivity of the Big Sur environment, the richness of cultural and historical influences, and the need to accommodate and manage public access. The Big Sur Coast Citizen's Advisory Committee, in providing guidance to Monterey County, stated the following as their essential planning goal:

“To preserve for posterity the incomparable beauty of the Big Sur country, its special cultural and natural resources, its landforms and seascapes and inspirational vistas. To this end, all development must harmonize with and be subordinate to the wild and natural character of the land.”⁶

The reflection of this philosophical tenet is embodied in the physical and cultural features of the Big Sur Coast and has affected, and continues to influence, the development of recreation features along the coast. The results of this recreation quality inventory illustrate that recreation has been developing in response to this philosophy, maintaining regionally appropriate recreation and ecologically sensitive public access.

⁵ Monterey County Planning Department. *Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan: Local Coastal Program*. Monterey, CA, 1986.

⁶ See footnote 3 above.

2 METHODOLOGY

The recreation qualities inventory covers the entire project limits of the CHMP. A field survey was conducted in the spring and summer of 2001, and was accomplished by automobile and on foot. The inventory process incorporates secondary source research via publications and Internet sites, together with direct field inventory and personal information and experience.

Although recreation associated with the Big Sur Coast Highway encompasses the area from the shore to the coastal mountain ridge high above the inland side of the highway, for the purposes of this report, recreation features were identified by their proximity to the highway corridor. The CHMP defined a total study area corridor of 400 feet (along the highway's centerline) upon which the inventory effort focused. To record the inventory, the project team developed a data form to locate and record recreation features along the highway. The forms were divided into two sections: Recreation Feature, and Trail Attributes. In addition to the basic inventory form, a Comments field was provided that allowed the inventory to document specific attributes of a feature (refer to Appendix A for sample inventory form).

Recreation Feature documented the resource name, location, proximity to highway, type, ownership, and attributes such as campground sites and services provided. A recreation feature's proximity to the corridor was defined as either: Highway 1 Corridor (meaning within the 400-foot corridor limit), Entrance Only (meaning the accessway to the feature meets the highway), or Non-Corridor (meaning the feature is entirely outside the 400-foot corridor limit). Using these criteria resulted in inventorying the majority of coastal recreation features, both on the shore and inland. This occurred because at least the access roads or trailheads for most coast recreational features start at Highway 1, which provides the vital link to virtually all other public recreational features. As well, in future database updates, the Non-Corridor designation will allow for the documentation of significant recreation features outside the 400-foot corridor, from the shoreline to the Coast Ridge divide.

Trail Attributes documented the attributes and characteristics of those features identified as trails. The emphasis on trails was in part due to the abundance of trails along the coast, and also to the physical link most trails have to the Coast Highway. Access to the majority of the area's trails requires using the highway, which functions as the region's primary "trailhead access corridor."

As the inventory process developed, a series of recreation themes came to frame the recreation qualities of the Coast Highway. Primary among these was the fact that the highway itself was the key recreation feature and that touring the highway was the region's most common recreational activity. John Brinkerhoff Jackson wrote, "Roads no longer merely lead to places; they are places." As evidenced by the popularity of touring the Coast Highway, it has been and continues to be a "place" in itself. That is, the scenic highway *is* the destination.

Supporting the main theme of *Touring* are two additional themes: *Educational and Contemplative*, and *Active Sports* (see Section 3). *Educational and Contemplative* elements derive not only from the area's dramatic landscape, remoteness, and biological diversity, but also its cultural values and renowned capacity for spiritual renewal. While

destination tourism and educational elements are found in limited areas along the coast, opportunities for inspiration abound. *Active Sports* are popular in most of the region, primarily as a result of the abundance of trails and water recreation opportunities.

In addition to framing the recreational qualities of the Big Sur Coast in terms of theme, the inventory discussion (Section 3) describes specific recreation features of note, highlighting those that make up the unique recreation experience of Highway 1. For additional recreation feature locations, refer to the maps in Appendix B.

3 RECREATION RESOURCES

3.1 INTRINSIC RECREATION QUALITIES OF THE COAST

The intrinsic recreational qualities along the Coast Highway are the result of the dramatic scenic landscape and inherent isolation of the Big Sur area. Recreation opportunities are defined by the elements of this spectacular setting: precipitous mountains rising straight from the sea, an often-inaccessible rocky shoreline, limited beach access, cold and dangerous surf, and challenging topography. For the majority of the Big Sur Coast, the roadway is the only continuously accessible route or feature. Supporting the vision to provide a continuous trail system along the coast, sections of the California Coastal Trail (CCT) are already in place along Highway 1. However, the trail presently contains numerous gaps along the Big Sur Coast, where the highway shoulder serves as the only means to span these gaps.

The first forms of contemporary recreation along the coast may have involved European pioneers in the latter half of the 19th century. Their travels over the wagon routes and foot trails that linked their homesteads were an early form of sightseeing and passive recreation. Homesteading life was indeed challenging and consuming, yet the early Big Sur Coast inhabitants still found time to explore the region simply for pleasure. Their need to traverse the rugged coastal landscape to bring goods to market and supplies to their homes gave rise to roughhewn routes that eventually led to the establishment of a coastal highway. After the turn of the century, the dramatic scenery of the Big Sur Coast and its remoteness provided the impetus for non-resident visitors to venture to the coast to travel the limited routes established by the pioneers. Destination touring was one of the first forms of recreation in Big Sur, where the dramatic scenery drew people from all over the world.⁷

Much of what lured early travelers to the coast was its isolated setting and unspoiled scenery. And though access was limited, not all residents were comfortable with the idea of improving local access and through travel along the coast across mostly private lands. There was a concern among some of the inhabitants that accessibility would bring an end to the elements of isolation that drew them to the coast and helped define the character of the area. But opening up the interior of the Big Sur Coast would bring opportunity to the community in the form of tourism and recreation. As this new tourism grew and more visitors traversed the Big Sur Coast, the need arose to provide an official roadway, and in 1919 Californians voted to fund construction of The Carmel – San Simeon Highway, as Highway 1 was originally known. While various recreation resorts had already been established on the coast, the 1937 opening of the highway enabled full establishment of recreation tourism on the Big Sur Coast. For further detail on this era, refer to the Historic Qualities Inventory Report of the CHMP.⁸

Recreation along the coast developed in response to both physical and social factors. The landscape of the Big Sur Coast provides a compelling and challenging setting for recreation, presenting outdoor opportunities that demand a level of skill and determination: steep and exposed rocky trails, thick brush, inaccessible beaches,

⁷ Henson, Paul & Donald J. Usner, *The Natural History of Big Sur*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1993.

⁸ JRP Consulting Services, prepared for Caltrans District 5. *Coast Highway Management Plan: Corridor Intrinsic Qualities Inventory: Historic Qualities*. 2001.

pounding surf and tidal currents, a narrow winding highway with few paved pull-outs, as well as poison oak. The highway is the one refuge from this ruggedness, though as time has told, even the road is not safe from the powers of nature, as slides regularly damage the roadway.

Big Sur culture has also had a significant influence on the development of recreation, and on its quality and character. Beginning with pioneer settlers and continuing with farming and ranching families, artists and artisans, and people searching for a life away from settled areas, the character of the local residents has not been one which championed marketing or advertising the coast's recreational opportunities. This passive approach to tourism reflects community values, generally favoring privacy, solitude, and serenity over publicity and profit. The area's remoteness from urban centers and the limited access to and from the highway makes traveling the coast route a serious undertaking in and of itself. Perhaps this is why the region has historically attracted the rugged individualist, rather than the urbanite bent on taming the wilderness.

As noted in Section 1, land use planning efforts in the 1960s through the 1980s resulted in the Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan (LUP). Through that effort a planning goal was established, which recommended a regional approach to developing recreation and public access. Key criteria included: limiting the kinds and intensity of public access (especially in areas where it could harm fragile coastal ecosystems), and limiting the visual impact of public access improvements along the highway.

After the LUP was certified, the Big Sur Coast Highway achieved further national recognition through its designation in 1996 as an *All-American Road* under the Federal Highway Administration's *National Scenic Byways Program*. The intrinsic character and quality of the Big Sur Coast's recreational resources supported its designation as an *All-American Road*, as to achieve this listing, the highway had to meet these stringent criteria:

"All-American Roads must have national significance, meaning that they must contain at least two intrinsic qualities that are not only significant on a regional level but also are recognized nationally as being unique or the most outstanding examples of their kind. All-American Roads must also be considered as a destination unto themselves—that is; they must be so distinctive that driving along the road will be the primary reason for a traveler's trip."⁹

⁹ Federal Highway Administration *Byway Beginnings- National Scenic Byways Program: Understanding, Inventorying, and Evaluating a Byway's Intrinsic Qualities*. Written by Swimmer, Whiteman & Taintor, 1999, p. 7.

3.2 RECREATION THEMES

The region’s intrinsic recreation qualities are organized into three major recreation themes: Touring, Educational and Contemplative, and Active Sports (Table A).

Recreation Themes	
TOURING	Sightseeing & Vista Points Dining/Shopping/Lodging (Facilities, Shops, Restaurants, Fuel) Day-Use & Camping (Picnicking and Overnight Stays) Beach Exploring
EDUCATIONAL and CONTEMPLATIVE	Nature Study (Botany, Wildlife, Geology, Oceanography) Spiritual Experiences and Retreats
ACTIVE SPORTS	Hiking, Backpacking, and Trail Running Horseback Riding Bicycling (Road and Mountain Biking) Kayaking & Floating (River and Sea) Fishing (River and Sea) and Hunting Diving, Snorkeling Surfing and Wind Surfing Swimming (Rivers and Sea) Rock Climbing Soaring (Hang Gliders/Parapente)

Table A

3.2.1 TOURING

Touring, as used here, involves activities associated with traveling and sightseeing by vehicle, and to a lesser extent, bicycle. Touring the highway is the activity that most typifies Coast Highway recreation and is the backbone of the local tourist economy. Due in part to the rugged physical character of the Big Sur Coast, many visitors find that touring provides them with an effective and convenient means to recreate along the Coast Highway. Most of the touring visitors start their journey from the population centers of Monterey and the San Francisco Bay Area, north of the Big Sur Coast, and travel the Coast Highway in a southerly direction. This is attributed not only to the proximity of the regional visitor population, but also for out-of-state visitors, these cities are travel destinations in themselves and, unlike Big Sur, have major chain hotels, commercial airports, and other large-scale travel industry infrastructure. In any case, driving on the ocean side of the highway—southward—affords both the best windshield views and the easiest access to roadside vistas, beach accessways and view-oriented recreation features.

The majestic scenic quality of the Big Sur Coast and its numerous wayside features makes a vehicle tour of the route engaging and satisfying. For the touring visitor, the highway is more than a roadway. It becomes a vehicle-accessible “motor trail,” complete with hairpin turns, vista points, rest stops, service areas, restaurants, resorts, and campsites. As evidenced by the fact that the Coastal trail route parallels the highway (and is often obliged to use the highway shoulder) in numerous sections of the

Big Sur Coast, the motoring tourist can (in a cursory way) enjoy some of the same experiences as the hiker. The road cyclist has a far more active and sensory experience while touring the Coast Highway, which is also part of the designated Pacific Coast Bike Route.

In addition to the scenic splendor, the tourist is afforded a cultural and historical experience while traveling the route. A highway tour allows visitors to reminisce on the rich past of the region and explore the unique cultural setting that has developed within the Big Sur Coast.

3.2.2 EDUCATIONAL AND CONTEMPLATIVE

The Educational and Contemplative recreational activities may be centered on self-discovery, spiritual renewal, or increasing one's level of consciousness, perhaps involving nature or cultural studies, and contemplation. Educational activities range from scheduled studies at facilities such as the University of California's Big Creek Reserve to spontaneous personal explorations. Contemplative opportunities are found in both personal settings and in retreats such as Esalen Institute and the New Camaldoli Hermitage. This category of recreation is often associated with destination tourism, where the Big Sur Coast is visited for an extended stay at either a retreat or one of the nature reserves. But an institutional setting is not mandatory: what Big Sur has to offer can just as well be experienced in strolling along a beach or quietly resting by a creek side pool.

3.2.3 ACTIVE SPORTS

Though the dramatic scenery would lead one to assume that active recreation opportunities abound along the Big Sur Coast, it is the inherent drama of the landscape that has played a part in limiting the development of active recreation. Much of the coast is too inaccessible and too lightly populated for the region to serve as an active recreation destination center. The challenging physical setting and lack of protected harbors limit traditional coastal activities such as swimming, surfing, fishing, and boating. These limitations imbue the notion of recreation along the Big Sur Coast with a sense of wildness and adventure not found in more accessible coastal areas. Limited access and development has diffused recreation activity along the coast providing a high level of solitude for those willing to venture beyond the highway corridor and major points of interest. The Big Sur Coast holds many of its choice active recreation opportunities as little known secrets enjoyed mainly by locals and enthusiasts.

Active recreation on the Big Sur Coast is linked to the highway itself. The highway, which for the most part parallels the shoreline, is the spine to which all recreation in the area is linked. Along its 75-mile length there is only one east-west connecting road, the Nacimiento-Fergusson Road (P.M. 18.9), another narrow, winding road through the rugged Los Padres National Forest. The nearest major east-west routes are Highway 68 in Monterey to the north and Highway 46, south of Cambria (in San Luis Obispo County), connecting Highway 1 at points just over 100-miles apart. Lacking other major access points, this makes a one-way coastal journey of the Big Sur coast a commitment. This commitment by recreational visitors affects their perceptions of the Big Sur region and their expectations and objectives for recreation. The Coast Highway provides the sole accessway to the area's active recreation sites: state parks, national forest lands, small-scale resorts, beaches, rivers, and trailheads. Every year, to accommodate the world-famous Big Sur Marathon, the northern section of the highway is temporarily given

over to runner traffic. In addition to being one of the modes of travel in the “Touring” category, bicycling along the highway and on designated trails off the highway is a popular activity. Other activities include hiking, water sports, fishing, and hunting.

3.3 INVENTORY AREA SEGMENTS

For this report, the Big Sur Coast is defined as the landform bounded in the south by San Carpoforo Creek, in northern San Luis Obispo County, and in the north by the Carmel River, in Monterey County. The majority (72 miles) of the highway corridor’s 75 miles is within Monterey County. For purposes of this report, the recreational features are organized as they correspond to 13 named segments (Table B) and are described from south to north. The typical segment is 5 to 6 miles in length, beginning and ending at an identifiable feature such as a creek or park entrance. Each segment discussion includes a physical description and notes key recreational elements. Major features such as state parks, points of cultural and physical interest, and popular active recreation are the primary recreation resources included in the report. Added to these features are minor elements such as secondary trails, access points, and constructed features.

The discussion is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of recreation resources or a guidebook, but rather is meant to document the intrinsic recreational qualities of the area, and highlight notable features along the highway. This discussion draws on information collected during the field inventory and from other secondary sources. The results of the field inventory are summarized in Table C at the end of this chapter and are depicted on the maps contained in Appendix B.

Big Sur Coast Highway Corridor Segments

Corridor Segment	Southern Limit		Northern Limit		Main Public Recreational Features
	Begin	P.M.	End	P.M.	
Ragged Point	San Carpoforo Creek	SLO-71.4	San Luis Obispo/ Monterey Co Line	0.0	Los Padres NF
Gorda Coast	San Luis Obispo/ Monterey Co Line	0.0	Willow Creek	11.6	Los Padres NF
Pacific Valley	Willow Creek	11.6	Wild Cattle Creek	17.3	Los Padres NF
Lucia Coast	Wild Cattle Creek	17.3	Lucia	23.0	Limekiln State Park
Big Creek Coast	Lucia	23.0	Rat Creek	30.0	
Esalen Coast	Rat Creek	30.0	JP Burns State Park	35.8	John Little State Reserve
Partington Coast	JP Burns State Park	35.8	Deetjen’s Big Sur Inn	43.1	JP Burns State Park
Big Sur Valley	Deetjen’s Big Sur Inn	43.1	Andrew Molera State Park	51.2	Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park Andrew Molera State Park
El Sur Ranch	Andrew Molera State Park	51.2	Little Sur River	56.1	Point Sur State Park
Bixby Coast	Little Sur River	56.1	Rocky Creek	60.0	
Garrapata Coast	Rocky Creek	60.0	Malpaso Creek	67.8	Garrapata State Park
Carmel Highlands	Malpaso Creek	67.8	Point Lobos	70.4	
Point Lobos	Point Lobos	70.4	Carmel River	72.6	Pt. Lobos State Reserve

Table B

3.3.1 RAGGED POINT SAN CARPOFORO CREEK TO MONTEREY COUNTY LINE (SLO-1-71.4/74.3¹⁰) MAP 1



San Carpofo Beach

The Ragged Point segment is the southern terminus of the CHMP study area, and the shortest of the 13 segments inventoried. South of here towards San Simeon, the Santa Lucia Mountains curve inland, leaving a broad coastal terrace along the shore. The characteristic coastal bluffs still protect the shoreline, except where San Carpofo Creek winds its way to the sea (see Map 1). The highway roadbed is at one of its lowest elevations here, providing a close view of the surf and beach

environment. At the mouth of the creek, a broad sandy beach on United States Forest Service (USFS) land is accessible from the highway on a trail through private land. This beach is becoming one of the southern Big Sur Coast's most popular surfing beaches. Moving north, the highway climbs the shoulder of the mountains to access a series of interconnected but unmarked informal trails. These trails lead to the Silver Peak Wilderness and Mount Mars through USFS land (see Map 1). The California Coast Trail (CCT) route through this area presently follows the shoulder of the highway, and is exposed to motor traffic until Salmon Creek.¹¹ In this segment, north and south of the county line, the lands bordering the highway and along the shoreline are a patchwork of public and private land.

Ragged Point Inn and Resort (see Map 1), a privately owned tourist facility, is situated at SLO-1-72.9. Located on a dramatic bluff forested with Monterey cypress, the Ragged Point Inn and Resort is north of Ragged Point itself, offering spectacular views of the southern coastal beach landscape towards Piedras Blancas Point, and views north to the mountainous Big Sur coastline and the Silver Peak Wilderness. The Ragged Point Inn and Resort is a complete tourist facility offering food, supplies, restrooms, shops, and lodging. The Inn offers visitors trail access to both a bluff-top trail, easy walking and partially wheelchair accessible, and to a steep, challenging trail to a small dark sand beach and wispy seasonal waterfall. Both trails are privately managed.



Black Swift Falls

¹⁰ Postmile references are within Monterey County unless otherwise noted by the designation for San Luis Obispo County (SLO).

¹¹ A provisional CCT route has already been (unofficially) identified in popular literature. The State Coastal Conservancy, in consultation with the California Coastal Commission is planning to identify a contiguous CCT route along the entire California Coast. Earlier, the Big Sur Coast LUP suggested a route through the Big Sur Coast area. Currently, in certain sections the trail route utilizes the highway shoulder where no trail has been developed, or moves inland to contour along the side of the coastal mountains.

3.3.2 GORDA COAST MONTEREY COUNTY LINE TO WILLOW CREEK (MON-1-0.0/12.1) MAPS 1, 2 & 3

Entering the Gorda Coast, the visitor is immersed in the classic Big Sur coastal environment. Precipitous mountains rise straight from the shoreline to the highway, which is often at over 500 feet elevation, and on up to the crest of the Silver Peak Wilderness at nearly 3,600 feet. The topography in this section of the Santa Lucia Mountains is so remote, rugged and steep that much of it was never homesteaded. As a



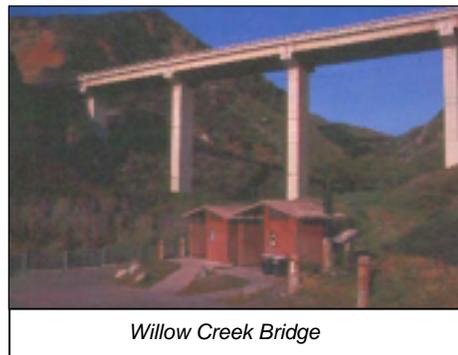
Elephant Seals seen from Gorda bluff

result, and in contrast to the northern sections, more of the land has been in public ownership and is better developed with inland trail access. Coniferous forests fill the creek drainages and wind-blown chaparral covers the exposed ridges. The majority of the coastal and inland area of the Gorda Coast is within the Los Padres National Forest, including the Silver Peak Wilderness, Southern Redwood and Alder Creek Botanical Areas.

The Gorda Coast is rich in trails that access coastal sites and inland mountains. Several major Big Sur trails are found in this area (see Map 1): Salmon Creek trail, which leads to a series of waterfalls and pools (the lower set visible from the highway) and which eventually reaches the Coast Ridge; Buckeye

Trail, which is the route for the California Coastal Trail (CCT), parallels the coast, from the old Salmon Creek Ranger Station to Cruickshank Trail, Alder Camp and beyond; Cruickshank Trail (see Map 2), which meets the Buckeye and heads to the highway as the provisional CCT (P.M. 6.5). Once the hiker reaches the highway, it becomes necessary to follow the highway shoulder on past Willow Creek.

One of the focal points of the Gorda Coast is the lower Salmon Creek area (P.M. 2.2) (see Map 1). Both the falls and pools are major attractions, drawing visitors from the greater Big Sur Coast and beyond. Over the years the lower falls area has suffered from overuse, mainly due to its proximity to the highway.¹² Another noteworthy recreation feature is the Gorda Springs Resort (see Map 3). This quaint full-service touring destination and supply point includes food at the Whale Watcher Café, deli, store, lodging and fuel.



Willow Creek Bridge

Across from the Gorda store is a short, unmarked bluff-edge trail on land recently acquired by the State Coastal Conservancy.

Additional recreation features of the Gorda Coast include: Alder Creek Beach (P.M. 7.6) (see Map 2) and Willow Creek Road and Beach access (P.M. 11.2 & 11.8) (see Map 3). Further inland, the Willow Creek Road and area trails lead to the Coast Ridge Road,

¹² Henson, Paul & Donald J. Usner, *The Natural History of Big Sur*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1993, p. 391

providing access for mountain biking and to a hang-gliding launch site on Prewitt Ridge. The Willow Creek Picnic Area is available for public use though ironically no picnic tables are provided. Offshore, Cape San Martin (P.M. 11.5), south of Willow Creek, is one of the coast's scenic icons (see Map 3). The Cape is an interesting seashore wildlife viewing area, and can be accessed via an unmarked bluff-top trail.

3.3.3 PACIFIC VALLEY WILLOW CREEK TO WILD CATTLE CREEK (P.M. 12.2-17.3) MAPS 3 & 4

Entering Pacific Valley, the classic Big Sur mountainous coastal topography gives way to

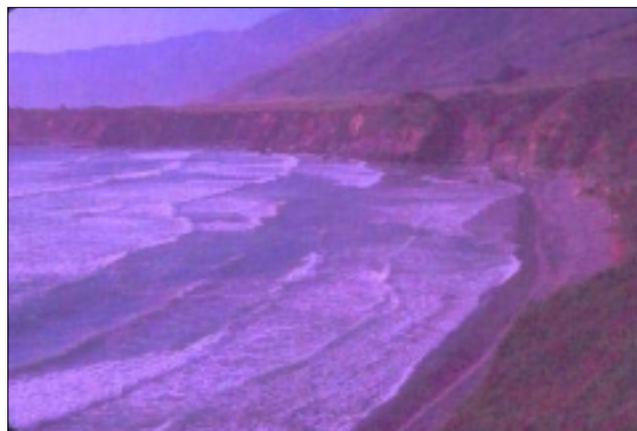


Pacific Valley Stile

a broad, elevated coastal terrace, 20 to 50 feet above the ocean. The unusual grassland terrace landform offers some of the region's best walking trails, open coastal views, and in the distance, the summit of Cone Peak. The western slope of Cone Peak is said to be the steepest continuous coastal slope in the continental U.S. The coastal terrace shoreline in Pacific Valley is eroded into several pocket beaches reached by steep trails. The area's coastline and inland mountains are all within the Los Padres National Forest, except for several private

inholdings upland from the coast around Plaskett and Wild Cattle Creeks (see Map 3).

The gently sloping coastal terrace has enabled the development of upland and beach access trails, viewpoints, campsites, and day-use areas. Here, the CCT follows the bluff-edge from south of Jade Cove (P.M. 13.2) through Pacific Valley and past the Pacific Valley Ranger Station (P.M. 14.7), to a point north of the former Pacific Valley Store (see Map 4). Beyond there, long-distance coastal hikers must follow the highway shoulder past Wild Cattle Creek and into the Lucia Coast segment.



Sand Dollar Beach

One of the very best features of Pacific Valley is the great freedom of movement that is possible on the open terrace grasslands. Numerous trails are available by virtue of the distribution of coastal access points. The multiple access points to the terrace alleviate the potential for concentrated overuse. Cattle grazing also suppresses the growth of coastal scrub that is characteristic of this area, increasing accessibility for hiking. A challenge for the Forest Service is to manage this level of use along with the presence of environmentally sensitive habitats, including rare plants. Careful use of the existing trails over the broad coastal terrace is encouraged. The trails are accessible from the highway with a series of stiles (wooden stepladders built into the roadside cattle

fences), which allow hikers to cross into pastures without damaging range fencing. There are nine stiles along the Pacific Valley section of the Coast Highway.

In addition to the well-developed trail system, Pacific Valley offers other recreation opportunities, including beach exploration and hang gliding, or hang glider watching. Jade Cove Beach is famous for the nephrite jade that can be found within the beach cobbles. Divers have claimed a 2-ton jade boulder off the Jade Cove shore. The beach is also a designated hang glider landing site.

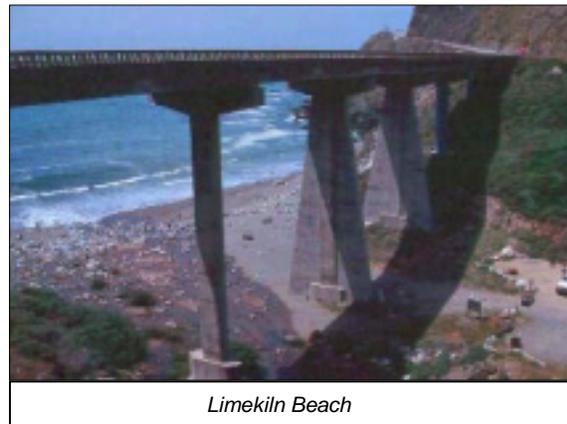
Further north, the Plaskett Creek area (see Map 3) provides several amenities: a rugged unpaved road to the inland mountains for mountain biking; a 44-site fee campground with biking and hiking trails; and a hang glider launching site. Just across the highway is the Sand Dollar overlook trail (see Map 3), a paved wheelchair-accessible path providing easy access to a bluff-top viewpoint above the beach. Sand Dollar Beach (P.M. 13.85) is the longest stretch of publicly accessible sandy beach along the Big Sur Coast. The crescent-shaped beach is popular for surfing, exploring and fishing. There is a fee picnic area with eight tables and a restroom. Other Sand Dollar area trails access the CCT as well as provide breathtaking views, including that of the 5,155-foot Cone Peak—often tipped with snow in the winter season.

Pacific Valley is also the site of the Pacific Valley Ranger Station. The Station offers no recreational services other than information, hang glider registry and water. The former Pacific Valley Store (P.M. 15.8) has not been restored since a recent fire. One and a half miles further north at Wild Cattle Creek Bridge (see Map 4), the end of the Pacific Valley segment is reached. Note that mountain biking and hang gliding are restricted in all designated Wilderness Areas.

3.3.4 LUCIA COAST WILD CATTLE CREEK TO LUCIA (P.M. 17.3-23.0) MAPS 4 & 5

Continuing north from the Pacific Valley terrace, the highway enters another section of classic Big Sur coastal geography. At over 5,000 feet, Cone Peak and the smaller Twin Peak loom over the coast. Both of these peaks are in the Ventana Wilderness, which extends north from the Nacimiento-Fergusson Road. The first half of this highway segment is adjacent to the Ventana Wilderness, where public lands reach the coast, while the second half, around the tiny community of Lucia, is bordered by private ownership.

Just north of Pacific Valley is the intersection of the Nacimiento-Fergusson Road (P.M. 18.9). This County road is a minor although interesting feature of the Big Sur Coast (see Map 4). This is the only east-west road linking the Coast Highway



Limekiln Beach

with the interior, between San Simeon and Carmel.¹³ The Nacimiento-Fergusson Road provides visitors the opportunity to enter or exit the southern section of the Big Sur Coast via the Hunter-Liggett Military Reservation. It also provides rare vehicular and mountain bike access to the crest of the coastal mountains, along the Coast Ridge Road.

In the southern half of the Lucia Coast, trails wind through some dramatic shifts in microclimate between ravines and slopes, characterized respectively by redwoods and



Mill Creek Picnic Area & Bridge

redwood forest plants, native oaks, madrones, and coastal scrub habitat. Along the Coast Ridge trail, hikers can see the indigenous Santa Lucia fir, found only in these mountains. At Kirk Creek campground (see Map 4), a popular trail route leads up to the Coast Ridge divide and the summit of Cone Peak. Once the visitor leaves the coastal public lands around Limekiln Creek, the private lands hold few trail opportunities.

The Nacimiento-Fergusson junction area includes a wealth of picnic and camping facilities, beach access, and ample active recreation opportunities including hang gliding (launching from nearby Plaskett Ridge, landing at Pacific Valley), diving, fishing and surfing.

The Mill Creek picnic area (P.M. 18.5) and beach (see Map 4) is a favorite for surfers, photographers and anglers.¹⁴ Two picnic tables overlook the ocean; a rocky path leads to the craggy shore below. At Kirk Creek (P.M. 19.0), a formal campground provides 33 campsites, including bicycle sites. There is also a trailhead for the Kirk Creek trail that leads to the interior mountains of the Ventana Wilderness and to Coast Ridge Road. For beach access, there are two short, steep, trails leading from the campground to a rocky beach, popular with divers. Directly below Cone Peak is Limekiln State Park (P.M. 20.7), which encompasses 711 acres and has 37 sites for camping near the beach and in the redwoods. The state park adjoins the Ventana Wilderness and offers occasional interpretive programs in summer, hiking, and fishing, as well as waterfalls and historic limekilns as sightseeing and educational destinations (see Map 5).

Beyond the area's active recreation sites is the contemplative setting of the New Camaldoli Hermitage (see Map 5). This self-sufficient community of Camaldolese monks offers retreats to men and women on a reservation basis. The gift shop sells their famous Hermitage fruitcake, religious artifacts, and books. For touring visitors, the Lucia Lodge offers coastal cabins with stunning views of the rugged South Coast, and a restaurant featuring al fresco dining. Provisions are also available at the grocery.

¹³ Lussier, Tomi. *Big Sur-A Complete History and Guide*. Big Sur Publications, p. 36.

¹⁴ <http://www.pelicannetwork.net/big.sur.Coast.htm>

3.3.5 BIG CREEK COAST LUCIA TO RAT CREEK [P.M. 23.0-30.1] MAPS 5 & 6



Biking along Big Creek Coast

The Big Creek Coast is divided into private land in the southern section and a publicly owned, but restricted access ecological reserve in the north. The coastline in this area is rugged and inaccessible. Active recreation is limited, though touring vistas and nature study opportunities are plentiful. Lopez Point, Gamboa Point, and the spectacular concrete arch Big Creek Bridge are the key sightseeing features. The interim CCT continues to follow the Coast Ridge trail alignment, while the shoreline alternative follows the highway shoulder, from the Kirk Creek area to the Ventana Inn.

Leaving Lucia, the highway bows out to the sea, reaching Lopez Point before heading northwest towards Gamboa Point (see Map 6). The vista at Gamboa Point (P.M. 26.0) offers views of the old landing facilities on south side of Gamboa Point, plus a more distant vista of the beach at the Circle M Ranch, and the Big Creek Bridge.¹⁵ Another vista point (P.M.27.3) offers spectacular views of the bridge, Square Black Rock and the slopes of the Big Creek Reserve. Along the way, on the highway's eastern shoulder is the Rigdon Fountain (see Map 6), a mortared rock fountain structure (currently in disrepair) that offers a visual link to the early character of the Coast Highway.

The northern half of the segment encompasses Big Creek Reserve, a unit of the University of California Natural Reserve System. Entry is by special permit, University Extension class enrollment, or Esalen seminar only. The plant life in this reserve epitomizes the exceptional diversity of vegetation in the Big Sur region. In a survey of only 4,000 acres in this reserve, 344 species of plants were found, representing 42 percent of all California plant families.¹⁶ An established trail system within the reserve leads to Devil's Canyon, Big Creek footbridge, Whale Hill and the ponderosa pine-covered ridge above Vicente Creek (see Map 6). There is no general public access to the beach at the mouth of Big Creek.



Driving for Pleasure

¹⁵ <http://www.bigsurcalifornia.org/beaches.html>

¹⁶ Henson, Paul & Donald J. Usner, *The Natural History of Big Sur*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1993, p. 85

3.3.6 ESALEN COAST RAT CREEK TO J.P. BURNS STATE PARK (P.M. 30.2-35.8) MAPS 7 & 8

This segment of the highway takes its name from the famous Esalen Institute, which in turn took its name from the original inhabitants of the area, the Esselen and Salinan Indians. The healing hot springs in this area have been visited for countless years and now are managed by the Institute and open to the public for a fee. The Esalen Coast is one of the most remote areas along the Big Sur Coast. This section of the coast is in private ownership, except for the John Little State Reserve (see Map 7), which is a unit of the state park system but provides no coastal shoreline access. The interim CCT continues along the Coastal Ridge trail alignment, well to the east of the Esalen Institute.



Picnic Table in the Redwoods

The Esalen Institute (P.M. 33.5) is famed as the fountainhead of the Human Potential Movement (see Map 7). As a non-profit institute, Esalen sponsors a full program of seminars and hosts retreats and conferences fostering alternative education, transformation practices, and restorative experiences. The original incarnation, Slate's Hot Springs Resort, was founded in the late 1800s. Drop-in visitors are accepted at the hot springs/baths at specified late night hours. Lodging units are intermittently available when not needed for conferences/seminarians. Except as noted, all facilities are by reservation only.



Footbridge in Redwoods

3.3.7 PARTINGTON COAST JP BURNS STATE PARK TO DEETJEN'S BIG SUR INN (P.M. 35.8-43.2) MAPS 8 & 9

Along the Partington Coast, the Ventana Wilderness boundary stays up-slope on the Santa Lucia Mountains, bordering the private and state park lands along the highway. North of this highway segment, the classic southern Big Sur Coast landscape gives way to the Big Sur Valley area where the Coast Highway moves inland to the Big Sur River. Partington Coast holds one of the Big Sur Coast's most scenic landscapes, Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park (see Map 8). Here, the picturesque and much photographed McWay Creek Falls spill 80 feet from bluff edge to the beach-lined cove.¹⁷ Leading up coast from the Esalen Coast, the Partington Coast offers little shoreline and inland access beyond Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park. Along the highway, touring visitors are presented with remarkable coastal scenery and a rich history. Anderson Landing and Partington Cove were sites of an early timbering enterprise, and some of the past is still

¹⁷ <http://www.bigsurcalifornia.org/beaches.html>

visible.

Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park (P.M. 35.6) was named in honor of a well-respected pioneer woman in the Big Sur country. Her good friends, the Browns, dedicated the park to her when they donated their Saddle Rock Ranch to the state. The park's 3,762 acres stretch from the Pacific Ocean to 3,000-foot ridges just below the Coast Ridge Road. Within the park are trails, waterfalls, a designated underwater park, historical features, riparian hardwood forests, and old growth redwoods.¹⁸ A panoramic view of the ocean and miles of rugged coastline is available from the higher elevations along the park's eastside trails. One particularly notable trail, 1.8 miles north of the park entrance, leads across Partington Creek (see Map 8) via wooden footbridge and 200-foot-long tunnel. The trail ends at an ancient hoist that originally served to transport tan bark, shakes and other forest products to waiting ships at this "dog hole" port. The picturesque Partington Cove is home to sea otters and seals, spectacularly clear waters and kelp forests and also has an underwater preserve and scuba diving. The park is available mainly for day-use, although reservations can be made to stay at the 2 walk-in environmental campsites. Several trails lead to coastal vistas and inland peaks. The



Partington Tunnel

alternate version of the provisional CCT breaks from the highway shoulder and enters the park near the J.P. Burns State Park environmental campsite trail.



Partington Landing

North of Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, a series of trails provide public access to the shore and inland areas. The unmarked "Boronda Trail" (P.M. 40.3) leads to the Coast Ridge Road and Timber Top camp. "Fuller's Beach Trail" (P.M. 42.2) is a popular surfing access route (see Map 9). Prior to

entering the Big Sur Valley proper, the Coast Gallery offers the touring visitor the first of many cultural facilities that are revealed as the visitor approaches the Big Sur Valley area.

**3.3.8 BIG SUR VALLEY
DEETJEN'S BIG SUR INN TO ANDREW MOLERA STATE PARK
(P.M. 43.1-51.2)
MAPS 9 & 10**

The Big Sur Valley segment is the cultural and historic heart of the Big Sur Coast. The northern portion of this area is vaguely referred to as Big Sur Village. At Castro Canyon, the Coast Highway begins its climb to Posts before it turns inland to reach the Big Sur River Valley. Here the highway and valley are protected by Pfeiffer Ridge and—except

¹⁸ <http://cal-parks.ca.gov/allpages>

for Sycamore Canyon Road—the shoreline is temporarily inaccessible until reaching Andrew Molera State Park (see Maps 10 and 11). The landscape of the valley floor is densely forested and often shady, but with much less summer coastal fog than other segments of the highway corridor. There are several inns, art galleries, shops, service station facilities, restaurants, a library, and many walking trails. Access to water recreation opportunities is enhanced by the ease of access to the Big Sur River throughout the valley. Trails are found throughout the valley's two state parks and accommodate all levels of experience.



Trailhead at Pine Ridge Trail

Highlights of the Big Sur Valley cultural features include: the rustic Norwegian-style Deetjen's Big Sur Inn nestled in the redwoods of Castro Canyon (P.M. 43.1); the nearby Henry Miller Memorial Library; Nepenthe Restaurant and the Phoenix Shop; Hawthorne Gallery; Post Ranch Inn; and Ventana Inn and campground. Additional visitor accommodations and services are found at Big Sur Center, the Loma Vista Café, Big Sur Lodge, Glen Oaks and Ripplewood Resort, Fernwood, and the River Inn complex, as well as several commercial campgrounds on the

banks of the Big Sur River.

Trail access is well developed and includes a trailhead to the Coast Ridge trail (P.M. 44.3), which is the starting point for the southbound traveler on this section of the CCT. Parking is available at "Cadillac Flat," just a short distance inside the Ventana Inn entrance. Other hiking opportunities include inland trails such as the Pine Ridge trail and Mt. Manuel trail in the Los Padres National Forest.

Sycamore Canyon Road leads to the spectacular beach (USDA-Forest Service fee area), the only public shoreline access in this area. The single-width roadway winds through redwood forests and past wind-stunted sycamores to a concessionaire's fee kiosk, parking, restrooms, and a beach access trail. Past the turn-off to Sycamore Canyon is Pfeiffer-Big Sur State Park (see Map 10). Pfeiffer-Big Sur is a large 1,107-acre park with 214 campsites and full services set in a redwood grove along the banks of Big Sur River. The Park also has two group campsites and a bike-in site. The park also has a Nature Center. Nature trails, campfires, amphitheater, and other interpretive features plus swimming and floating in the Big Sur River are all popular here.¹⁹



Floating on Big Sur River

The Big Sur River itself is a year-round water recreation corridor (see Map 10). Activities vary with the season: winter—steelhead fishing; spring—whitewater kayaking and

¹⁹ Schaffer, Jerry P. *Hiking the Big Sur Country – The Ventana Wilderness*. Berkeley, CA. Wilderness Press, 1988, p. 129

canoeing; summer—swimming, tubing, and lounging; fall—wading/walking at low water, photography (fall color), and birding. Within the upper Big Sur Valley, the majority of the river corridor is within state park lands. In the central section, the river flows through many private holdings, with access being limited to the area within the stream banks. In this area, a variety of commercial resorts and campgrounds do provide access to the river.

3.3.9 EL SUR RANCH ANDREW MOLERA STATE PARK TO LITTLE SUR RIVER (P.M. 51.2-56.0) MAPS 10, 11 & 12

Descending through the sheltered Big Sur River Valley, views from the Coast Highway open out to a broad coastal terrace that holds the largest of the area's state parks, ranch lands, and a former naval facility. As the route leaves the forested Big Sur River Valley, the landscape transitions to an open, wind-swept grassland, marked with ranch fencing and riparian vegetation within ravines cutting across the terrace to the coast. Out on the terrace, the highway sets back a quarter to a half-mile from the sea bluffs, and the typically winding roadway alignment straightens until it passes Point Sur (see Map 11). Point Sur is the memorable feature of this segment. The dome-shaped rock, extending out into the sea from brilliant white sand beaches and dunes, has historically been one of the coast's most dangerous maritime hazards. The majority of the shoreline and uplands lie in private ownership, and as a result, much of the land outside the state park is inaccessible. The interim CCT alignment, after following the coast through Andrew Molera State Park, leaves the ocean and travels the roadbed of the Old Coast Road, which is also generally accessible to mountain bikes and high clearance motor vehicles during the dry season (P.M. 51.2).



Pt. Sur State Historic Park entrance

Andrew Molera State Park (see Map 11) is a diverse landscape of 4,800 acres that straddles the Big Sur River where it empties to the Pacific Ocean and stretches inland



Hiking along trail to Pt. Sur Lighthouse

on the inland side of Highway 1. Andrew Molera is a coastal favorite for active sports and educational and contemplative recreation. A former ranch, the park is rich in both cultural and natural resources. There is a day use picnic area, a walk-in trail camp that is open year-round, and numerous trails, including beach access. A natural history and historical museum is located in the historic pioneer home of the former large dairy enterprise owner. There are also two concessions that operate in the park. A horse riding concession allows visitors to tour the park on guided horseback rides. The Ventana Wilderness Society (VWS) has an interpretive and educational operation in the park.

Through its Big Sur Ornithology Laboratory, VWS conducts extensive avian research. VWS also provides public programs and educational science camps for students. (P.M. 51.2).²⁰

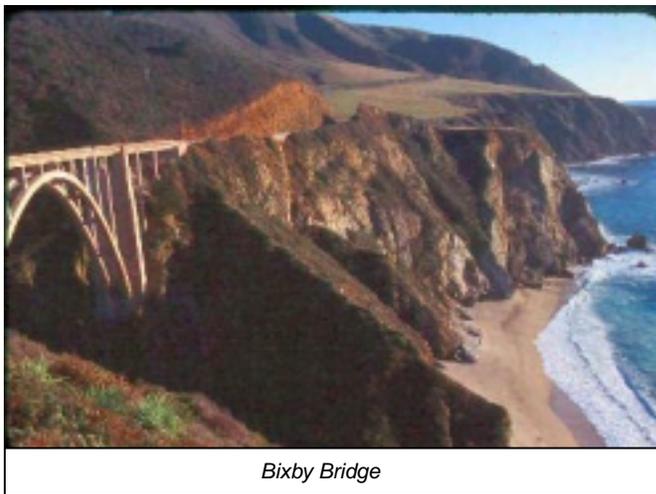
On the way to Point Sur is the old Point Sur Naval Facility (P.M. 53.8). This former U.S. Navy oceanographic monitoring station has been transferred to state parks, but is currently closed to the public beyond a phone booth and bus stop near the highway, awaiting the planning process that will determine its future use (see Map 11). Beyond the former naval facility and to the north of Point Sur are exquisite white sand beaches and dunes, which are not available for public use at this time. Point Sur Lighthouse and its supporting light station buildings, now a designated structure on the National Register of Historic Places and a State Landmark and Historic Park, stand atop a dramatic offshore volcanic rock (P.M. 53.8). Built in 1889, the historic lighthouse that was an aide to navigation now uses a modern aero-beacon to continue guiding ships along the treacherous Big Sur Coast. Point Sur can be visited year-round, by guided tours only.²¹

3.3.10 BIXBY COAST

LITTLE SUR RIVER TO ROCKY CREEK (P.M. 56.0-60.1)

MAP 12

The Bixby Coast area returns the touring visitor back to the characteristically steep Big Sur landscape. From Point Sur, the highway enters the Little Sur River drainage and begins a demanding and winding route along the steep face of Serra Hill²² (elev. 1,545'). The exposed slopes of the coastal hills are chaparral covered and plunge dramatically to the ocean from the highway. This segment offers only a few individual attractions beyond enjoying the scenic quality of the touring experience. Public lands, access and trails are all limited in this area. The interim CCT route follows the Old Coast Road on the east side of Serra Hill and meets the Coast Highway at Bixby Bridge, where it continues along the highway shoulder (see Map 12).



Bixby Bridge

First among these individual attractions is the improved Hurricane Point viewing area (P.M. 58.0). This is the highest point along the Coast Highway, and takes its name from the predictable high winds. In a pair of paved pullouts, about two dozen vehicles can be accommodated with entrancing views of the ocean and a lower terrace bluff. Further north, the Brazil Ranch (P.M. 58.9), established by the pioneer Brazil family and previously owned by celebrity Alan Funt, is now in the process of acquisition for

²⁰ http://www.surCoast.com/post_m.html

²¹ <http://www.montereymediainfo.org/Towns/BigSur/BigSur4.htm>

²² Clark, Donald Thomas, *Monterey County Place Names*. Carmel Valley, CA: Kestrel Press, 1991. Page 520 notes hill is incorrectly labeled as "Sierra Hill" on USGS quadrangle.

addition to the Los Padres National Forest. The ranch lands encompass scenic Serra Hill, Hurricane Point, and the redwoods along Bixby and Sierra Creeks, and several existing farm roads and trails, including an underpass beneath the highway for a trail to the Hurricane Point terrace (see Map 12). However, public access improvements will have to await completion of land acquisition and the future planning process.

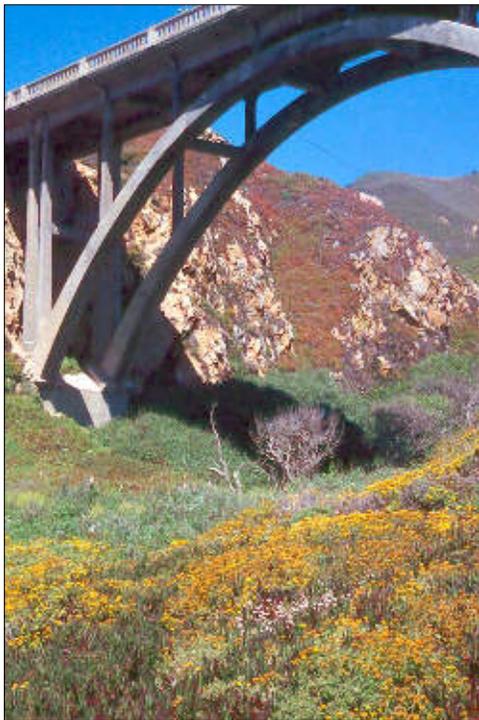
The major landmark of the segment, and arguably of the Big Sur Coast, is the often-photographed Bixby Creek Bridge (P.M. 59.5). This concrete arch bridge is one of the longest in the world at over 700 feet long and 260 feet high. Spectacular views are provided by a paved highway pullout on the north side of the bridge (see Map 12). Just past the bridge is the northern entry point of the Old Coast Road.

**3.3.11 GARRAPATA COAST
ROCKY CREEK TO MALPASO CREEK [P.M. 60.0-67.8]
MAPS 12, 13 & 14**

Rocky ocean bluffs coupled with an elevated roadway and steep interior mountains typify this segment. The sharply cut granitic rock bluffs afford unlimited coastal views. The reaction of the coarse-grained rock to natural erosive elements over the years is responsible for the characteristic rugged coastline of this area. Numerous offshore rocks and islets are found in this section of the coast. Within a mile of crossing Bixby Bridge the northbound



Garrapata State Park - Soberanes Point



Garrapata Historic Bridge

traveler crosses Rocky Creek Bridge (see Map 13), a similar but smaller version of the Bixby Bridge. Rocky Point Restaurant (P.M. 61.9) offers tourists a stopping point before reaching the Carmel Highlands area.

Through this segment, the landscape to the east remains steep and mountainous, while the ocean side landform benches out to form a narrow coastal terrace with a precipitous bluff-edge shoreline. Coastal views are interrupted by two residential enclaves, and the typically chaparral landscape is sporadically planted with Monterey cypress and eucalyptus. North of Garrapata Creek and lagoon (P.M. 62.9, 63.1) several trails lead to a public beach, where surf can be treacherous. At Granite Canyon (P.M. 62.9,) an informal trail leads to a local rock climbing area. Several excellent sections of the CCT have been completed along the bluff edge in Garrapata State Park (although during the course of the inventory work, certain existing

CCT links within the park were discovered to be abandoned or neglected).

Garrapata State Park (P.M.66.0) is a day-use-only park extending from Garrapata Beach northwards, spanning Soberanes Creek and Point (see Map 13), and finally curving inland past the former Victorine Ranch to encompass the redwood forest along upper Malpas Creek. The park has two miles of shoreline, with coastal hiking and a short climb to a beautiful view of the Pacific from atop the Soberanes Point knoll. With 2,879 acres, the park offers diverse coastal vegetation with trails running from ocean beaches into dense redwood groves (see Map 13). Several side trails lead to fine bluff-edge viewpoints and access to ledges suitable for fishing. The park also features outstanding coastal headlands at Soberanes Point, and the scenic Lobos Rocks offshore. Sea lions, harbor seals and sea otters frequent the coastal waters and California gray whales pass close by during their yearly migration.²³

**3.3.12 CARMEL HIGHLANDS
MALPASO CREEK TO POINT
LOBOS (P.M. 67.8-70.4)
MAP 14**

Carmel Highlands is a predominantly residential area that marks the end of the wild character of the Big Sur Coast. Residences are now found with regularity on the ocean side of the highway, many with formal entry gates.²⁴ Access to the shoreline and inland hills is limited, though views of the surrounding landscape and ocean scenery are still available. As Carmel Highlands proper is approached, two side roads lead off the seaward side of the highway, Yankee Point Drive, and Spindrifft Road. Recreation features are few until reaching Point Lobos State Reserve (see Map 14).



Carmel Highlands General Store



Carmel River State Beach

Notable features of the segment include: the Malpas Beach trail (P.M.67.9); an unmarked beach access path that provides a view of the historic arch bridge at Malpas Creek and the southernmost extent of the native stands of Monterey pine in the Monterey Peninsula area; Wildcat Creek Bridge and pedestrian sidewalk (P.M. 69.0), an excellent canyon and ocean vantage point; and the Highlands Vista Point and Highlands Inn complex (P.M. 69.4).

²³

<http://cal-parks.ca.gov/allpages/>

²⁴

Public Affairs Management. Prepared for Parsons Brinkerhoff, for submittal to Caltrans. *Coast Highway Management Plan: Draft Scenic Qualities Report*. 2000.

3.3.13 POINT LOBOS POINT LOBOS TO RIO ROAD (P.M. 70.4-72.6) MAP 14

Point Lobos is the jewel of the northern and final segment of the Coast Highway Management Plan study area. It includes both the Point Lobos State Reserve and Carmel River State Beach. Sited between Carmel Highlands and Carmel, these public lands, while affected by the neighboring residential developments, have preserved important open space and habitat for both terrestrial and aquatic species. The landform is a gentle coastal terrace rising just above the ocean. Native stands of Monterey pine and Monterey cypress cloak the Point Lobos area, while scenic open uplands, coastal bluffs, and a series of sandy beaches characterize the Carmel River State Beach (see Map 14).

Point Lobos State Reserve (P.M. 70.4) is a 1,276-acre coastal wonderland, with restricted day-use limits. The reserve offers countless opportunities for educational, contemplative, and active recreation pursuits. In 1960, the waters off Point Lobos (approximately 700 acres of the reserve) were designated the country's first underwater marine reserve. Spectacular underwater pinnacles, rock walls, kelp beds and diversity of rockfish make this one of California's premier diving areas. Both maritime and terrestrial species thrive in the reserve, which includes 300 plants and 250 birds, animals, and mammals. Wildlife includes seals, sea lions, sea otters and migrating gray, humpback, and blue whales (December to May). Thousands of seabirds make Point Lobos their home.

Little remains from the area's turn-of -the-century whaling and abalone industry, except a small cabin of the era that still remains on Whaler's Cove. Hiking trails follow the shoreline and lead to hidden coves, and are linked by a six and one-half mile perimeter trail. The reserve is outstanding for sightseeing, photography, painting, nature study, picnicking, scuba diving, and jogging. In addition to the spectacular beauty, nearly every aspect of its resources is of scientific interest. There are rare plant communities, archeological sites, unique geological formations, and extraordinarily rich flora and fauna of both land and sea.

Adjacent to the northern boundary of Point Lobos is the Carmel River State Beach (P.M. 71.4). The southernmost part of the sandy beach, called Monastery Beach, lies parallel to the highway and can be accessed directly off the Coast Highway. Other sections of the beach are accessed off Ribera Road and Scenic Road (beyond the Highway 1 corridor). Surf conditions can be treacherous, but the area



Roadside path along Highway 1 at Point Lobos State Reserve

is nonetheless quite popular with divers due to the spectacular underwater scenery—including the head of the Carmel Submarine Canyon. There is no access to Point Lobos from the beach. Across the highway from the state beach is the historic and architecturally interesting Carmelite Monastery, founded in 1925.

Bracketing the north end of the Big Sur Coast corridor is the Carmel River, which once featured a spectacular annual steelhead run—now severely and sadly depleted. The river corridor is used locally during the winter for floating and in the summer for horseback riding and birding. Two unmarked trailheads, one on each side of the highway, provide access to the river, leading under the highway bridge from the north side. The adjacent Carmel Crossroads shopping complex provides a full range of visitor services and overnight lodgings, as well as a terminal point for the Amtrak shuttle bus and Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) bus service.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The inherent drama and richness of the Big Sur Coast landscape, and its distinctive cultural character have combined to provide recreational visitors with a distinct set of opportunities. Supported and accessed via the Coast Highway, the Big Sur Coast offers a wide range of recreational activities in the use categories of touring, educational and contemplative, and active. Traveling north through the study segments, the Coast Highway transitions from wild and inaccessible to ruggedly civilized and back again. Throughout its length it exhibits incredible physical diversity, scenic splendor, and recreational opportunity.

Development of recreation along the Coast Highway is unique to the region. It is founded and limited by the physical characteristics of the coast: its mountains meet the sea landform, and by its cultural antecedents, from the pioneers to the artisans and road builders. Recreation development has had a light touch on the land as the result of these influences and constraints, and the fact that the Big Sur Coast is still distant from urban centers. As a result, while the touring visitor has a continuously and consistently rich visual journey, one still finds long stretches of the coast without services or recreation features. The region's physical characteristics and cultural influences are what imbue the recreation qualities of the Coast Highway with its distinctive character: wild, remote and memorable.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A Sample Inventory Form

APPENDIX B Mapping

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE INVENTORY FORM

CHMP Recreation/Access Inventory

Air Photo Sheet No.
 Feature ID on Sheet Co PM Recorder(s)
 EndPM Date

RECREATIONAL FEATURE

Name
 Proximity (H)wy 1 corridor, (E)ntrance only, (N)on-corridor
 Type (C)ampground, (T)rail, (L)odge, (B)each
 (V)ista point, (O)ther
 System (Pr)ivate, (N)on-profit, (Pu)blic
 If Pu, DPR
 FS
 CT
 Other

Services:
 Restrooms
 Food
 Picnicking
 Telephone
Information:
 Visitor Info
 Interpretation

Comments:

Accommodations

Lodgings Yes/No # units
 Campsites Yes/No If Yes, # RV
 # Auto
 # Walk-in

TRAIL ATTRIBUTES

Type (P)ed, (B)ike, (E)quest, (A)ll types
 Marked Yes/No **Comments:**
 Road separation (P)ublic road surface, (S)houlder,
 (R)estricted use road, (O)ff-road
 Function (L)a teral, (V)ertical, (I)nterpretive,
 (L)o cal connection, (I)n land
 Leads to (B)each, (V)ista point/overlook,
 (C)ampsite, (O)ther
 Use (G)eneral, (S)killed
 ADA Yes/No
 Trailhead parking (N)one, (Pu)llout, (F)ormal
 Highway crossing (N)one, (S)urface, (U)ndercrossing, (O)ther
 Trailhead features (S)tile, (G)ate, (B)ike rack, (Bu)s Stop, (St)ock Corral, (O)ther

REMARKS/COMMENTS

APPENDIX B

MAPPING