

DAVENPORT/NORTH COAST ASSOCIATION
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8 April 2022

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
Congress Member, CA District 18
272 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jimmy Panetta
Congress Member, CA District 20
406 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument Northern Parking Location

Dear Congress Members Eshoo and Panetta,

Last month Congressman Panetta was kind enough to visit the northern access site for the Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument to meet with board members of the Davenport North Coast Association (DNCA) and Friends of the North Coast, as well as staff of The Trust for Public Land, the head of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau, and other community members to learn about our concerns related to BLM's proposed parking area site. Since then we have had a briefing from BLM's Central Coast Field Office Manager Ben Blom, which has heightened our concerns.

For the last three years the DNCA has been advocating for a parking site less than 150 feet away from BLM's more impactful site that would cause major changes to the topography and view shed. Our proposed location abuts existing ranch development, is near the culturally significant Mocettini Barn, and is on flat ground requiring minimal grading and land alteration.

We have been aware and supportive of BLM's efforts to restore the culturally significant Mocettini Barn. We were informed last week that BLM has now received \$2,500,000 for that project. That changes BLM's original planning assumptions and makes it even more imperative to re-site and consolidate the parking in one location at the DNCA recommended site.

We are open to a solution, which jointly seeks Coastal Commission approval for installing the DNCA proposed parking site as a "temporary" project, enabling opening of the northern access by Fall 2022 as BLM is currently targeting. We believe that BLM's latest plans shown to us on March 28, 2022 will also require modification of its December 11, 2020 Coastal Commission Federal Consistency Concurrence because these latest plans reduce parking capacity from 69 spaces to 42 spaces.

We are writing to ask that you utilize your valuable leadership skills and work with the Bureau of Land Management to urge them to meet with the community and move the location of the northern parking area (which apparently BLM now considers a suitable site for parking). We believe it is in the best interest of BLM, the North Coast community, and the visitors to the Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument to resolve this outstanding issue, which was included in a formal and still-pending Appeal filed with BLM by several community-based organizations.

Background

For decades, the Davenport North Coast Association has worked diligently and constructively with various public and private agencies to ensure the lands that surround Davenport are protected from private development and open to the public. **Since the establishment of the Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument in January 2017, we have been engaged with the Bureau of Land Management as it plans the infrastructure necessary for a positive visitor experience and develops policies and procedures to protect the unique coastal environment of the Monument.**

The facilities built today will be here indefinitely and it is critical to design them sensitively and locate them appropriately. As BLM approaches the time for actual project implementation, it is very important that the physical infrastructure improvements be well planned and sited in ways that maximize the visitor experience, support BLM's management objectives, and minimize impacts to the Monument and surrounding landscape. **In recognition of this, DNCA joined with other North Coast organizations¹ and on July 21, 2021 appealed two of BLM's Implementation Actions contained in the Resource Management Plan Record of Decision as provided for in BLM's planning process. This appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) is still pending and DNCA, and its co-appellants, have repeatedly proposed going to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). A successful ADR process under the auspices of the IBLA is an ideal mechanism for expediting implementation of a win-win resolution.**

Thus, an issue remains that is not resolved: the location of the two parking areas at the north and south trailhead locations. While progress is being made in finding a solution for the southern location, DNCA has on-going concerns with the northern site. **At a November 2018 on-site meeting with BLM and its consultants, DNCA urged BLM to study the site near the Mocettini Barn.** We also studied the feasibility of two other sites but returned to the Barn location, as it would meet all the needs for a positive visitor experience with reduced environmental and aesthetic impacts.

Our proposed parking/trailhead site is located approximately 150 feet south of the Mocettini Barn and less than 150 feet north of BLM's site. We repeatedly asked BLM to consider this site during the planning process but they declined. In our October 2020 Protest Letter during the public review period for the Cotoni-Coast Dairies Resource Management Plan **we provided ample evidence-based responses to each of the concerns BLM had with our proposed site.** Unfortunately our concerns were rejected without substantiation and BLM continues to state that it is moving forward in a couple of months with their preferred location; a site that is visually obtrusive and will result in unnecessary alterations to the existing landscape and topography.

Last week Ben Blom, BLM Central Coast Field Office Manager, convened a meeting with DNCA board members at their proposed site for the northern parking area to brief us on improvements to Cement Plant Road and the parking/trailhead improvements in advance of construction. Throughout we have appreciated his willingness to meet and communicate with us and have maintained a constructive relationship even when we disagree.

Unfortunately, the plan and description of the proposed work actually increased our fears that development of a parking area at BLM's preferred site would be a blight on the Monument for a long time to come. As the BLM graphic included in this letter shows, the landscape would be greatly altered, with large cut and filled areas, steep banks to accommodate parking spaces on the side of a hill, and a large storm water catchment basin. Additionally, the project would flatten the top of the existing knoll removing valuable grazing land, creating a picnic area encircled by parked cars.

At that same meeting DNCA learned that **BLM has now secured \$2,500,000 funding to restore the Mocettini Barn,** which would potentially display interpretive information about the cultural and natural history of the area for visitors and school groups. DNCA fully supports this exciting opportunity to save this iconic building and put it to good use. However, visitors and school groups will need to park. **Due to topography, it is impossible to access the Barn from BLM's proposed parking site on top of the knoll.**

If the knoll parking is developed, visitors to the Barn would require a separate parking area. Ironically, Field Manager Blom indicated parking for the Barn would probably be sited on the very site that BLM has previously opposed and that DNCA has been recommending. This negates all of BLM's previous unsubstantiated objections to this site. It also begs the question: if it is okay for the Barn parking lot to be placed on the DNCA site, why not co-locate the trailhead and Barn parking in one location thereby reducing overall environmental impacts to the Monument?

The addition of the Barn restoration project makes it imperative that the visitor parking for the trails and for the Barn be well-planned and combined at the location near the Barn where it would be closer to the trail system, require little land alteration, reduce the acreage of agricultural land taken out of ranch use, and create greater parking capacity (with space for future expansion).

¹ Friends of the North Coast and Rural Bonny Doon Association

As we said in our letter to BLM in October 2020, creating a single arrival point for visitors will also enhance opportunities for interpretation:

“One key element of the public’s experience of the National Monument is the opportunity for interpretation of the land, its history, and its natural and cultural resources. It is important to imagine how a family, a group of mountain bikers, or an older couple of life-long birders experience their visit to the National Monument. DNCA believes the Mocettini Barn site provides the greatest set of explicit and implicit information and offers the richest way to encounter this place. It is one of the only standing historical buildings within the C-CD unit. Because it is sheltered from the wind and already has been altered with ranch-related development, there is a sense of place and a sense of arrival for the visitor that does not exist with BLM’s proposed site on a rise out in the meadow. Because the creek, the barn, the corrals, the meadow lands coexist in such close proximity there is a rich context for BLM to interpret for active hikers, older visitors, and school groups.”

Illustrations *(please forgive the quality of some of the images)*

We have included three illustrative graphics:

- A.** The overall site with the Barn, the DCNA recommended parking/trailhead site, and BLM’s proposed parking/trailhead site;
- B.** A graphic presented by BLM at our recent site meeting that shows the parking layout for 42 cars on top of the knoll (a reduction of 27 cars from the scheme approved by the Coastal Commission); and
- C.** DNCA’s parking/trailhead area on a flat site at the toe of a slope near the Barn and with a capacity of 59 cars. (developed by RRM Design Group in San Luis Obispo)

Illustration A: Site Overview

Note: The DNCA site is located closer to the trail system and the Barn on a flat area that is already disturbed by human activity. BLM's knoll site will require major grading. The steep slope between BLM's knoll site and the Barn renders the knoll parking location useless for people visiting the Barn.



Illustration B: BLM “Knoll” Parking Layout (42 cars)

Note: the tightly spaced red lines indicate steep areas of cut and fill that would alter the existing contours at the edge of the knoll over a distance of 80-100 feet in places.

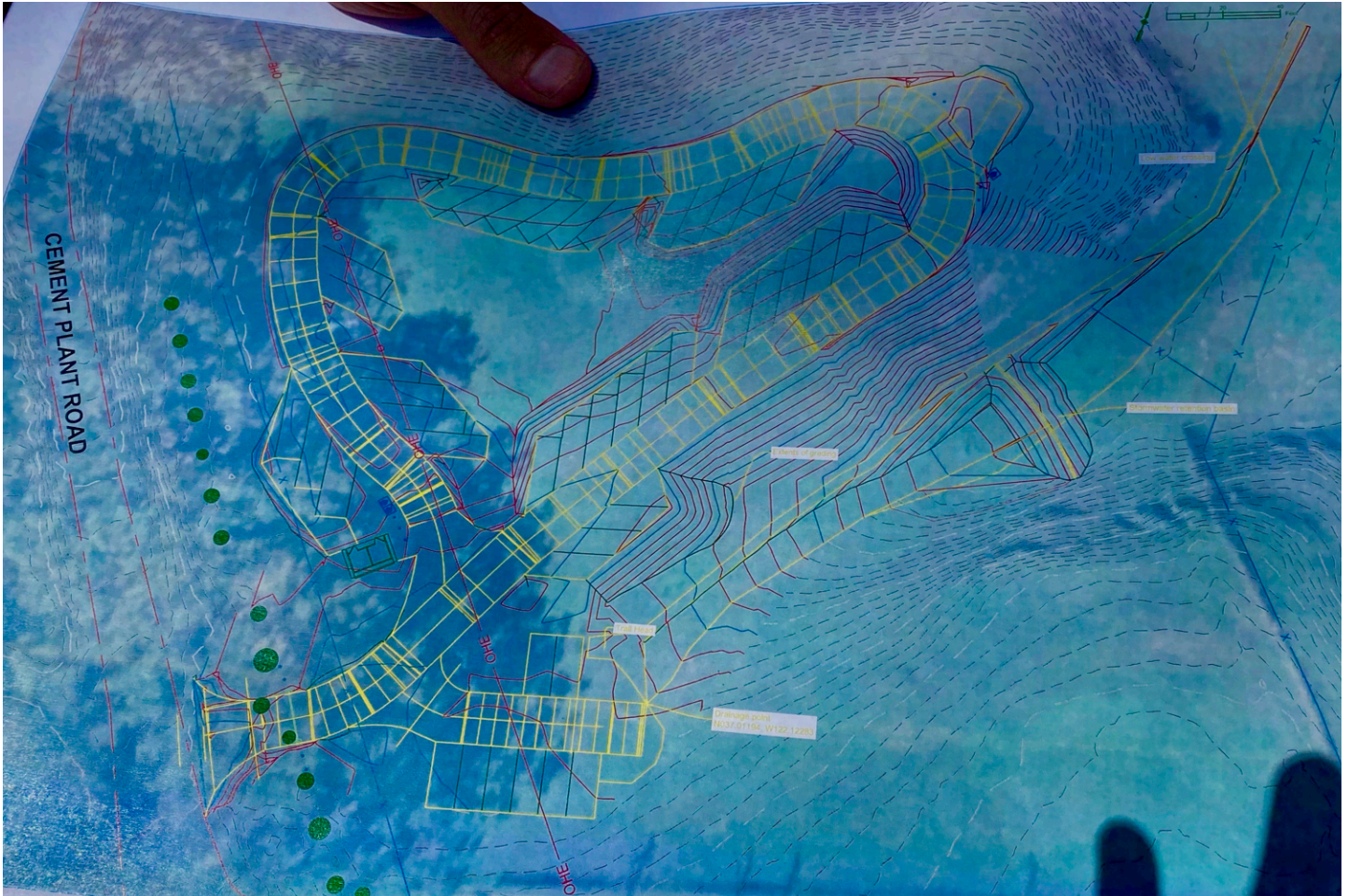
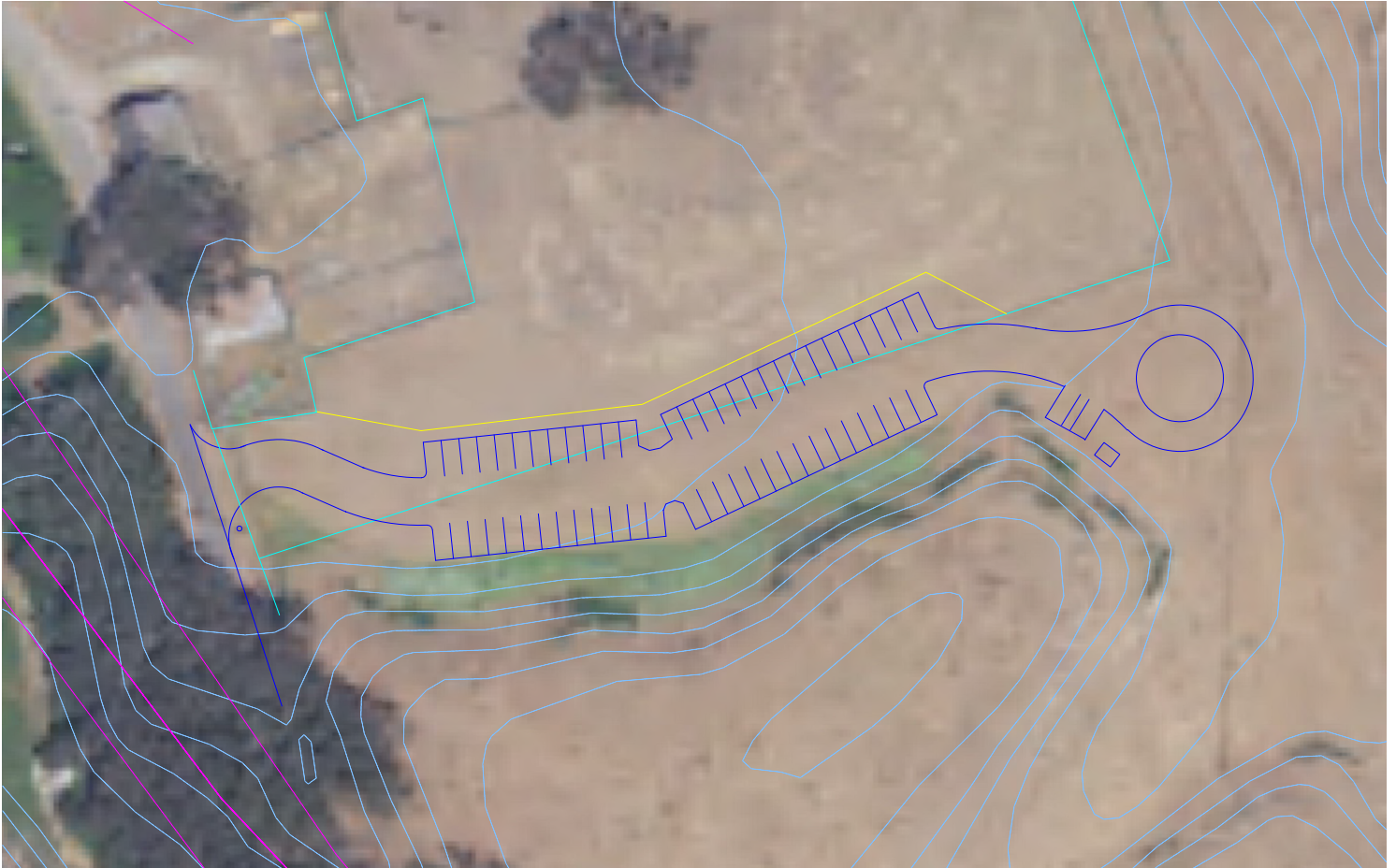


Illustration C: DNCA Parking Layout (59 cars)

Note: The Mocettini Barn as at the top left and within close walking distance of the DNCA parking site. The BLM site is located just south of the DNCA preferred parking location on a raised knoll and separated topographically by several steep contours.



We truly appreciate any help and attention you can provide to resolve the issues laid out in this letter. Specifically we would like you to seek the following from BLM:

- Agreement to jointly ask the IBLA to refer the IBLA Appeal to an ADR process; and
- In light of the pending departure of BLM's Field Manager by the end of May, request the BLM State Director and appropriate other BLM staff to meet on-site with DNCA to view and discuss the northern access alternatives;

Thank you.

Sincerely,
John Barnes

John Barnes
Davenport North Coast Association

cc: John Laird, District 17 State Senator
Mark Stone, District 29 State Assembly
Ryan Coonerty, District 3 County Supervisor

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8 April 2022

Ben Blom, BLM Central Coast District Field Manager
California Coastal Commission
Sempervirens Fund
Friends of the North Coast
Rural Bonny Doon Association