



April 26, 2022

Matt Machado, Public Works Director
Santa Cruz County Public Works Department
701 Ocean Street, Room 410
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument Northern Entrance and Parking Lot

Dear Director Machado,

It has come to our attention that on March 15, 2022 the Santa Cruz County Public Works Department approved an Encroachment Permit for entering and exiting Cement Plant Road at a proposed 42-vehicle Parking Lot serving the northern entrance to Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument (C-CD). The location of this encroachment and associated parking lot is significantly different than the location (approximately 150' – 175' north) adopted in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) which was submitted to and acted upon by the California Coastal Commission. This RMPA is intended to control the future use, disposition and management of the C-CD property. Big Creek Lumber was neither informed nor consulted regarding this change.

Our company has concerns about the location of this newly-proposed relocated northern entrance and parking area, both of which appear to be approximately 40 linear feet from long-established Warrenella Road where it enters and exits Cement Plant Road. Warrenella Road is used by commercial vehicles, including loaded logging trucks and service vehicles, which frequently transport heavy equipment. Ongoing periodic timber harvesting on San Vicente Redwoods requires the access and use of Warrenella Road. Timber harvesting is a use specifically allowed by an existing Conservation Easement. Per this Conservation Easement timber harvesting will occur into the future.

Locating the C-CD northern public entrance this close to the Warrenella Road and its associated locked manual gate could create interference with, and safety hazard to, future users of both entrances. Large vehicles entering and exiting Warrenella Road need sufficient distance between each entrance to safely turn onto and out of Warrenella Road. For the same reasons, visitors entering and exiting C-CD need sufficient distancing from Warrenella Road in order to minimize vehicle conflicts. Many vehicles that enter and exit Warrenella Road are longer than 40 feet, which is the distance between both entrances as contemplated by the Encroachment Permit. Some of these vehicles are as long as 60 feet.

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Big Creek Lumber has been informed by Davenport North Coast Association (DNCA) that BLM has a superior alternative to their new, unvetted encroachment and parking lot design. DNCA has informed us that since 2018 it has recommended a C-CD entrance near the Mocettini Barn approximately 300 feet further to the north on Cement Plant Road. Not only would this location significantly reduce future vehicle conflicts, it is a location that BLM has specified as a future entrance and parking facility to serve the soon to be restored historic Mocettini Barn.

It is important to point out that the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) also uses the Warrenella Road to transport firefighting equipment and personnel during emergencies, potentially resulting in additional vehicle conflicts. It is our understanding that Cal Fire was not informed or consulted as to BLM's proposal to relocate its entry/exit to the northern entrance either.

We urge the County Department of Public Works to reconsider the Encroachment Permit it signed about a month ago and consult with affected users of Warrenella Road. We also urge BLM to consider the alternative northern entrance long-proposed by DNCA adjacent to the Mocettini Barn. This would significantly reduce the likelihood of vehicle conflicts, serve to increase public safety and help to minimize visitor impacts to nearby local residents.

Sincerely,


Bob Berlage
Communications Director

Cc: Travis Rieber, Santa Cruz County Public Works

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