



## CHAPTER 3 -- THE LAND USE PLAN: RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES AND POLICIES

### 3.7 RECREATION AND VISITOR-SERVING FACILITIES

#### [Policies](#)

#### **Coastal Act Requirements**

The Coastal Act gives priority to recreational use and encourages the provision of support facilities, especially those available to the public at a low cost.

**Section 30210.** ...recreational opportunities shall be provided for the people consistent with public safety needs and the needs to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse.

**Section 30212.5.** Wherever appropriate and feasible, public facilities, including parking areas or facilities, shall be distributed throughout an area so as to mitigate against the impacts, social and otherwise, of overcrowding or overuse by the public of any single area.

**Section 30213 (Part).** Lower cost visitor and recreational facilities...shall be protected, encouraged, and, where feasible, provided. Developments providing public recreational opportunities are preferred.

**Section 30220.** Coastal areas suited for water-oriented recreational activities that cannot readily be provided at inland water areas shall be protected for such uses.

**Section 30221.** Oceanfront land suitable for recreational use shall be protected for recreational use and development unless present and foreseeable future demand for public or commercial recreational activities that could be accommodated on the property is already adequately provided for in the area.

**Section 30222.** The use of private lands suitable for visitor-serving commercial recreational facilities designed to enhance public opportunities for coastal recreation shall have priority over private residential, general industrial, or general commercial development, but not over agriculture or coastal-dependent industry.

**Section 30223.** Upland areas necessary to support coastal recreational uses shall be reserved for such uses, where feasible.

**Section 30250(c).** Visitor-serving facilities that cannot feasibly be located in existing developed areas shall be located in existing isolated developments or at selected points of attraction of visitors.



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**Section 30252(6).** The location and amount of new development should maintain and enhance public access to the coast by assuring that the recreational needs of new residents will not overload nearby coastal recreational areas by correlating the amount of development with local park acquisition and development plans with the provision of on-site recreational facilities to serve the new development.

### **Definitions**

**Bed and Breakfast Accommodations:** Any building or portion thereof or group of buildings containing two but no more than four guest rooms or suites each used, designed or intended to be used, let or hired out for occupancy by transient guests for compensation or profit wherein breakfast may be provided for compensation or profit. A use permit shall be required for the establishment of bed and breakfast accommodations.

**Hostel:** Any building or portion thereof or group of buildings containing five or more guest rooms or suites, or providing sleeping accommodations for five or more transient guests for the purpose of providing low cost public travel accommodations to recreational travelers. The hostel shall provide a kitchen and sanitary facilities for use by the transient guests.

**Hotel:** Any building or portion thereof containing five or more guest rooms or suites each used, designed or intended to be used, let or hired out for occupancy by transient guests for compensation or profit wherein meals may be provided for compensation or profit.

**Inn:** Any building or portion thereof or group of buildings containing five or more guest rooms or suites each used, designed or intended to be used, let or hired out for occupancy by transient guests for compensation or profit, and where regular meals may be provided for compensation or profit.

**Motel:** Any building or portion thereof or group of buildings containing five or more guest rooms or suites where such rooms or suites are directly accessible from an outdoor parking area and where each is used, designed or intended to be used, let or hired out for occupancy by transient guests for compensation or profit.

**Resort:** Certain selected sites located within the Coastal Zone have been allocated for a dispersed type of Visitor Serving Facility such as: dude ranches, dispersed overnight cabin accommodations, health spas and other similar uses. New Visitor Serving Facilities in the "Resort" category shall not be allowed on resource lands in Agriculture, Forest Lands or Rangeland classifications. No use permit shall be granted in Resource Land designations (AG, RL & FL) until a specific finding has been made that the proposed use is compatible with the long term protection of resource lands.

**Vacation Home Rental:** A single family residential dwelling unit intended for single family occupancy designed to be let or hired as an entire unit for occupancy by transient guests for compensation or profit; not a Visitor Service Facility or Accommodation as defined in this plan.



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**Visitor Accommodations and Services:** In general they are defined as uses orientated to serving the needs of the touring public which may include overnight accommodations, incidental food, drink and other sales and services. (See Chapter 2 for discussion of uses and categories of visitor accommodations.)

### **Issues: Recreation and Visitor Serving Facilities**

The diversity and relatively unspoiled character of the Mendocino coast's natural and man-made environment invite the visitor to spend a day or week there. A basic attraction is sightseeing by driving along Highway 1, admiring the dramatic vistas of sea and shoreline. Tourists are attracted by the coast's natural habitats, the tide pools, estuaries and coves, its "uncrowded" rural character, and the charm of its villages and towns. Popular activities include hiking and walking, picnicking, bicycling, fishing, abalone diving, birdwatching, whale-watching and photography. Leading attractions at specific points include the Town of Mendocino, the Skunk Train ride from Fort Bragg to Willits, fishing activity at Noyo Harbor, and the 12 state parks.

On a peak summer weekend day, when all accommodations are filled, there could be 2,600 visitor parties on the coast, 90 percent of whom will spend the night there. Many coastal motels, inns and hotels are reserved in advance and booked throughout the summer. Campgrounds near Mendocino and Fort Bragg are full during the peak season, while those farther from the heart of tourist activity usually are fully occupied only over long holiday weekends. There is some evidence that the tourist season is being extended into the spring and autumn, as visitors take advantage of uncrowded accommodations and cheaper off-season rates.

It is difficult to project increases in tourist activity because of such unpredictable factors as the availability and price of gasoline. Based on data from the Department of Parks and Recreation as well as traffic trends on Highway 1, tourism is projected to increase 3 percent per year (not compounded) for the next 20 years. By the year 2000, peak day use could increase 60 percent to 4,160 parties. During the year starting May 1, 1979 when gas shortages often were a deterrent to travel, state park attendance increased 1.5-2.0 percent.

The state parks are the largest, best known and most heavily used recreational sites along the coast. State parks account for approximately 20 miles of shoreline, or about 17 percent of the County total. Table 3.7-1 summarizes characteristics of the state parks and lists potential additional development. This Table includes reference to updated information about Westport-Union Landing State Beach Park which may be found on page 138. A current study by the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) indicates that the existing parks have the potential for 500 or more additional campsites. It seems unlikely that this many campsites could be built in the near future. A related question is whether private enterprise can meet the need and what assurance private campground owners might be given that new investment will not be undermined by state park competition. DPR has no explicit policy on this point, but does maintain lists of nearby private campgrounds and available facilities; budget requests must justify the need for new campsites in the area. State Park campgrounds are shown as principal permitted or conditional uses on the Land Use Plan Maps. Chapter 4 lists policies for each location.



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Other public recreation sites along the coast are the Wildlife Conservation Board fishing or boating access points at Kibesillah, Noyo, and Navarro, and the Caltrans Chadbourne Gulch scenic easement. There are 15 private campgrounds in the coastal zone, 5 of which have shoreline access (Wages Creek, Doyle Creek, Albion Flat, Anchor Bay, Gualala River Redwood Park).

Presently there are approximately 2,206 overnight accommodation units, including motels, inns, state park campgrounds and private campgrounds, in the coastal zone, however, there are many overnight accommodations existing outside but adjacent or close to the coastal zone such as Fort Bragg and Point Arena. If the number of accommodations were to increase at the same rate as visitors (60 percent in 20 years), an additional 1,324 units would be needed, for a total 3,530 units. Table 3.7-2 illustrates existing and projected distribution of overnight accommodations by CAC area and by type of unit based on this proposed plan.

Because the Act designates visitor serving facilities as a "priority use", it logically follows that the plan must retain sufficient sites to meet projected demand. However, meeting the sections of the Act that call for preservation of special communities and for limiting highway improvements result in allocating the increase in visitor accommodations to distribute a higher proportion of trips south of the Navarro River and a smaller share between Russian Gulch and the Navarro River. Increases in visitor accommodations in the latter area must be curtailed, but it remains to be seen how much of the demand can be shifted to the south coast. More quality restaurants, more inns and more shoreline access are proposed to establish the south coast as a visitor destination area-one that is closer to home for most potential patrons.

Both the large number of desirable sites for overnight accommodations and the difficulty of predicting demand by type (inn, motel, campground) at a particular location make any plan's compliance with the Act's intent uncertain. If too many sites are withheld from other development because they might be needed for visitor accommodations, some owners may never have development opportunities. Several land use classifications for accommodations are shown:

1. Commercial areas Rural Villages and Fishing Villages within which visitor accommodations are a conditional use, (Highway 1 between the Noyo Bridge and Boice Lane, for example), are designated C, RV or FV on the Land Use Maps.
2. Sites on which visitor accommodations are the primary permitted use. At some locations, visitor accommodations should be the priority use as required by the Act, and the Coastal Element must ensure that such outstanding sites are not preempted by other uses. These sites are marked by an \* on the plan maps for existing uses and by an \*C for proposed new uses.
3. Areas within which visitor accommodations are a conditional use (designated \*C on plan). In these areas the appropriateness of overnight accommodations will depend on the design of the project, its impact on adjoining uses and coastal resources, and the number of similar accommodations in operation nearby at the time.



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Visitor accommodations outside commercial areas will have widely varying impacts on adjoining development. An inn may be barely distinguishable from a single family house, while an RV campground generally should be screened or be out of the coastal viewshed. The visitor accommodation areas shown on the Land Use Maps allow the following types of accommodations.

- Inn, Hostel, or bed and breakfast Inn
- Motel or inn, or hotel
- Campground and recreational vehicle park
- Restaurant, boat launching or rental, or visitor-oriented commercial shops
- Resort

To ensure that sufficient sites are reserved to meet the Coastal Act's requirement as a priority use, to meet identified needs, and to ensure that sites are equitably distributed along the Mendocino Coast, the types of visitor serving development suitable to each location are designated on the land use maps based on site characteristics and compatibility with surrounding development.