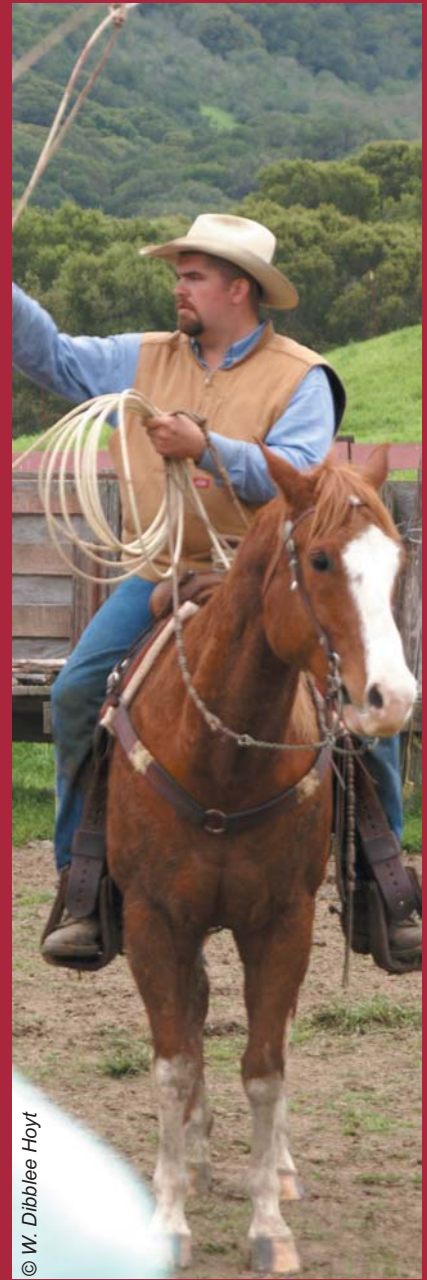


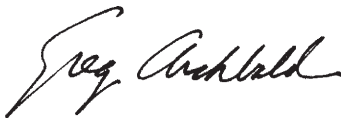
**Gaviota Coast Study Group  
Report & Recommendations  
September 2005**

# Respecting Our Heritage Determining Our Future

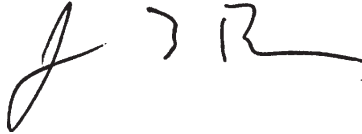


We, the undersigned, are participants of the Gaviota Coast Study Group. Although as individuals we may not agree with every item contained in this document, as a group we have reached consensus on it. We submit it as a compelling and comprehensive guide for the future of the Gaviota Coast.

## Voting Members



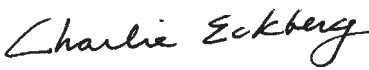
Greg Archbald



Jose Baer



Art Cisneros



Charlie Eckberg



Michael Feeney



Eric P. Hvolboll



Ariana Katovich



Kim Kimbell



Mark Lloyd



Michael V. McGinnis, PhD



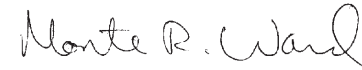
Phil McKenna



Monty Parsons



Jim Poett



Monte R. Ward

## Non-Voting Members



John Buttny



Carla Frisk

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**Additional copies of this report may be obtained from these web sites:**

[www.sblandtrust.org/links.html](http://www.sblandtrust.org/links.html)

[www.msi.ucsb.edu/msilinks/OCPC/OCPCtexts/ocpc.html](http://www.msi.ucsb.edu/msilinks/OCPC/OCPCtexts/ocpc.html)



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## *Introduction*

In recent years, public attention has become increasingly focused on the land use and resources of “The Gaviota Coast” — the last largely undeveloped stretch of coastline in Southern California. With more than 100,000 acres of coastline, ranch and forest land between the City of Goleta and Vandenberg Air Force Base, the region has been widely recognized for its tremendous and unique beauty, extraordinary ecological importance, and agricultural and cultural heritage.

In 1999-2003, the U.S. National Park Service conducted a feasibility study for a national seashore or similar federal presence. In a report to Congress in March 2004, the Park Service found the Gaviota Coast suitable for inclusion in the National Park System, but it did not find its inclusion to be feasible. Still, the genie was out of the bottle.

A growing, vocal constituency began calling for increased Gaviota planning and conservation, believing that without some intervention, the region would succumb to growth pressure and urbanization. Southern California’s coastal history, local politics and a few high profile coastal development projects fueled that concern. Environmental groups launched campaigns to “Save the Gaviota Coast,” while public and private financial support grew for the voluntary purchase of land and agricultural conservation easements, as well as for cooperative projects to restore creeks and watersheds.

Meanwhile, people who owned land and made their livelihood on the coast became increasingly alarmed about government interference. New laws and regulations were passed at each level of government, demanding that agricultural landowners plan and pay for protecting creeks, water quality, and endangered wildlife on their property. Environmental groups and elected officials were advocating land use controls, habitat restoration and public access trails. Wary of more regulation and coastal access requirements and weary of public meetings and hearings, landowners organized to resist outside intervention and more government controls.

In the midst of this growing conflict, a group of Gaviota landowners began talking about how local people and organizations could determine the future of Gaviota, based on a shared set of goals, rather than just arm wrestling in endless public debates and campaigns. The discussion expanded to include people with a broad range of interests, and in late 2001, the Gaviota Coast Study Group was formed.

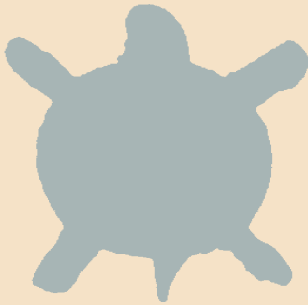
The Study Group is self-selected and is not aligned with any organization. People were invited to participate who were willing to listen, contribute and try to work out differences. This included a balanced representation from Gaviota ranch, farm and landowner interests, local environmental and conservation interests, staff observers from local, state and elected officials, and occasional public or private advisors. Twice a month for more than three years, we met privately and declined media attention as we explored ways the Gaviota Coast could be understood, planned and managed, by private and public interests, for the benefit of all.

We believe there is a broad community obligation to Gaviota that can be fulfilled – based on local determination; better understanding and communication between urban and rural; the integration of ecology and economy; and mindful, sustainable stewardship of the agricultural, environmental, cultural and recreational resources.

This report is the product of our efforts. The Gaviota Coast Study Group has no official sanction; rather, our sole authority is the weight of the ideas we present. We believe that enough people care to motivate private and public leaders to rise to the challenge of protecting, based on principles of ecology and of equity, Gaviota's tremendous resources for generations to come.

## We Only Have One Gaviota Coast

*By Art Cisneros, Chumash Descendent*



We only have one Ocean, one water, and it is the life blood of our Mother Earth, of all life. Our mutual responsibility is to take care of all water, beginning with our creeks, which flow into the ocean and complete the cycle of water.

We only have one Air, one wind, the source of the breath of all life and the spirit in each of us. Our mutual responsibility is to take care of the air, each breath, and to be mindful of the spirit in each one of us.

We only have one Earth, the body of our Mother, the womb of all life. Our mutual responsibility is to take care of the land as we would our own Mother.

We only have one Fire, one spark that exists in the Sun, the center of the Earth in every atom and in our hearts. Our responsibility is to take care of fire in all its forms and to not abuse or mishandle it, or else we may begin a wildfire, a chain reaction that cannot be extinguished. Everything and everyone exists together, interdependent, not separate. Everything we think, say and do affects everyone. Our mutual responsibility is to be mindful of seven generations to come in everything we do.

We only have one Gaviota Coast, one community. Our mutual responsibility is to take care of our mutual homeland. We ask and pray that you will share our mutual responsibility and participate with us in the continuous process of taking care of our home. We welcome your participation, support, expertise, passion, energy, and resources. All our work is necessary for our mutual vision to be fulfilled.

# Gaviota Coast Study Group

Participants in the study group, while representative of the range of Gaviota Coast stakeholder interests, are participating as individuals and not as representatives of any specific organizations. Affiliations are given only to show the breadth of experience of the members.

## **Greg Archbald**

- Retired attorney
- Founding board member and former general counsel, Trust for Public Land
- Former director of volunteer development and conservation projects, Golden Gate National Parks Association

## **Jose Baer**

- President/Manager, Rancho La Vina
- Foreman, Rancho Arbolado
- Trustee, Vista Del Mar Union School District

## **Art Cisneros**

- Local Chumash descendent — Barbareno Chumash, Infinite Hoop Foundation

## **Charlie Eckberg**

- Real estate developer and rural land manager
- Past Ranch Manager, Hollister Ranch
- Dean's Council, Bren School of Environmental Science and Management
- Board Member, Get Oil Out
- Past President, Community Environmental Council
- Past Board Member, The Sustainability Project

## **Michael Feeney**

- Executive Director, The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County

## **Eric P. Hvolboll**

- Manager, La Paloma Ranch, Gaviota

## **Ariana Katovich**

- Former Conservation Organizer, Sierra Club Gaviota Coast Campaign
- Former Director, Isla Vista Recreation & Park District

## **Kim Kimbell**

- Partner, Allen & Kimbell law firm
- Member, Dean's Council, Bren School of Environmental Science and Management
- Member, California Advisory Board, Trust for Public Land
- Board Member & Past President, Community Environmental Council
- Past President, Hollister Ranch Owners' Association
- Past President, Goleta Valley Historical Society

## **Mark Lloyd**

- President, L&P Consultants – Land planning, surveying & engineering consultant

## **Michael V. McGinnis, PhD**

- Director, Ocean and Coastal Policy Center, Marine Science Institute, UCSB
- Principal consultant, Bioregional Planning Association

## **Phil McKenna**

- Self-employed financial consultant
- Member of the Board of Directors, Gaviota Coast Conservancy

## **Monty Parsons**

- Landowner and Ranch Manager, Eagle Canyon Ranch

## **Jim Poett**

- Manager, Rancho San Julian
- Former Vice-Chair, Santa Barbara County Agricultural Advisory Committee

## **Monte R. Ward**

- Landowner and Gaviota Coast resident, Hollister Ranch
- Director of Special Projects and Strategic Advisor for the Orange County Transportation Authority
- Past Board member, Vista Del Mar Union School District

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At times, representatives of U.S. Representative Lois Capps, former State Senator Jack O'Connell, former Assemblymember Hannah-Beth Jackson, and former Supervisor Gail Marshall participated. We would like especially to acknowledge **Carla Frisk**, former District Director for Senator O'Connell and current consultant to the Trust for Public Land, and **John Buttny**, former Executive Assistant to Supervisor Marshall. Both attended consistently and helped us understand state and local policies, find solutions to our differences by highlighting our commonalities, and craft meaningful and practical recommendations.

## Mission and Goals

*The purpose of the Gaviota Coast Study Group is to discuss and develop a land planning process and strategies that can preserve the character and the values inherent in public and private land on the Gaviota Coast in a manner that is acceptable to both property owners and the community as a whole.*

### Goals:

1. To provide a local vision for lasting protection of rural agricultural, recreational, residential, cultural, spiritual, ecosystem, viewshed and open space values while respecting the rights and needs of property owners and the community as a whole.
2. To maximize local determination of land use and protection of the environment.
3. To facilitate the continuation and viability of agriculture.
4. To provide alternatives to land speculation through fair economic mechanisms as a way for landowners to maintain and/or realize the value of their land.
5. To develop economic incentives that, to the greatest degree possible, encourage private voluntary protection of agricultural, environmental and open space land values.
6. To promote increased public and private resources for protection of habitat and open space land values.
7. To develop recommendations to minimize adverse human impacts on public and private lands.
8. To develop recommendations for management structures which accomplish the above goals.



## Executive Summary

The Gaviota Study Group offers its key recommendations and policy concepts in five areas in this report: protecting agriculture, stewarding the land, developing land use policy, creating public access, and providing effective local governance. As you read the report, we ask that you keep in mind several themes that are central to our thinking:

- While there may be a fair degree of consensus about the kind of future most people envision for Gaviota, it must be recognized that a high level of mistrust and misinformation pervades our community. It will be difficult, but necessary, to overcome the polarization and fear that has characterized our past, and to bring together agricultural, environmental and governmental interests.
- These recommendations work together as a package, not as a menu. *No member of the group agrees with all positions or recommendations in the report, yet all members endorse the complementary framework of ideas and policies.* Taken together and implemented effectively, the elements of this report fairly address the needs and concerns of all the interests represented. We urge readers to reserve their judgment on the broad framework of this report when they encounter isolated elements not to their liking.
- New and better policies and tools are needed to protect the character and values inherent in public and private land on the Gaviota Coast. These policies and tools must assure landowners and residents that they will have a significant role in determining their own future, and at the same time must foster confidence within the larger community that agreed upon protection strategies will be implemented and maintained over time.
- No single agency, nor government alone, can provide what is needed to preserve all the important values of the Gaviota Coast. Rather, a well conceived, locally determined set of efforts, both public and private, is needed using effective voluntary, regulatory and financial mechanisms.
- We must integrate equity to Gaviota landowners with ecological health. This can in part be achieved by building trust and commitment through collaborative, landowner-led watershed alliances, aided by technical assistance, public funding, and streamlined permitting for good stewardship practices and restoration projects.
- The County Local Coastal Plan and General Plan, zoning ordinances and agricultural regulations should comprise the primary governmental authority for the Gaviota area. These local measures need to be updated as soon as possible to promote the continuation of viable agriculture; improved watershed and natural resource management; and appropriate, well-managed public access along the coast.
- Hostile condemnation will not be used to acquire easements or sites.

## Executive Summary

- Public resources agencies should provide permit streamlining, technical assistance and grant funds to promote natural resource enhancement projects on private land. Funding from both existing and new sources must be made available as a priority for conservation and enhancement of agriculture, wildlife habitat and resource protection, and appropriately sited and well managed public access locations.
- There is broad support for ensuring that urban growth and non-agricultural development does not consume or fragment Gaviota ranches and important wildlife habitat. Local land use policies and conservation programs keep productive ranch and farm operations on the land. The Study Group advocates creation of a voter-approved rural planning area to create certainty that Gaviota is not subject to inappropriate development pressure.
- To keep working farms and ranches viable, regulation of agricultural land use and activities needs to be simplified and streamlined. Agricultural land should be buffered from non-agricultural development. Agricultural production should be the priority for agricultural zoned land, integrated with clear, practical resource management practices for mountainous and environmentally sensitive habitat areas. The county should make it easier for farm and ranch owners to provide housing for their employees.
- Under the current plans and zoning, there is significant potential for new residential development on the Gaviota Coast. An array of tools needs to be used to reduce development potential or to direct it away from viable agriculture and environmentally sensitive areas. Such tools could include voluntary conservation easements that compensate landowners for giving up some building rights, policies to allow transfer of existing development rights within or between Gaviota properties, and areas subject to special zoning overlays.
- Voluntary alliances of landowners, and non-profit organizations such as land trusts, have a key role to play in the formation of watershed management, conservation and stewardship programs that can successfully integrate agricultural and environmental goals and objectives. Local determination requires the active participation of landowners, public land and private ranch managers, recreational users, environmental specialists and resource agencies. Pilot watershed management projects in a few Gaviota watersheds can provide models and streamline the process for others to follow.
- Regulatory agencies should assert standards that retain or enhance the environmental quality of the coast and its rural/agricultural character, water and air quality, and scenic views consistent with landowner rights. This can be accomplished through the use of design and development standards and effective resource management practices, with regulatory relief and streamlined approval for those who use them.
- Creating the kind of future for the Gaviota Coast that works well for all of us will require an extraordinary level of leadership, commitment and collaboration among public officials, private landowners and non-governmental organizations.

# Keeping Agriculture on the Land

The Gaviota Coast is not just a beautiful stretch of open space. For many of its residents it is a source of livelihood, a working rural landscape that has sustained and been sustained by generations of farmers and ranchers. But like many places around the world, the vitality of the agricultural industry on the Gaviota Coast is threatened. Many factors contribute to this tension, including rising property values and land use practices that allow for building residential neighborhoods in the midst of farmland.

As a major contributor to Santa Barbara County's economy, we cannot afford losses to this sector of our community. We must realize that agriculture on the Gaviota Coast is not a temporary or interim land use — it is a long-term commitment.



## Key Recommendation

If our local agricultural industry is to thrive, not just survive, we must value and seek to encourage its contributions — to our economy, our landscape, our history, and our environment. We must work together to encourage constructive communication, fostering a sense of understanding and stewardship between urban and agricultural communities.



## Policy Recommendations

### Federal estate tax

1. *Local decision makers should be encouraged to lobby to abolish the federal estate tax on agricultural land. This federal tax law has made it very difficult for families to pass on viable agricultural operations to future generations who may wish to continue running them.*

### Land use policies

2. *The Gaviota Coast's productive farmland is a valuable, limited natural resource. Land use policies should encourage protection of viable agricultural lands.*
  - a. Agricultural production should be the priority on Ag zoned land. Non-agricultural development should be directed to those areas least desirable for agriculture.
  - b. Proven land conservation tools that create protection boundaries should be encouraged, such as the agricultural preserve program (Williamson Act contracts), Farmland Security Zone contracts, agricultural conservation easements, and TDRs (transfer of development rights). These compensate owners who agree to keep their land in agriculture, while also providing a growth boundary.
  - c. Investments in infrastructure improvements should not be used to position agricultural lands for eventual development.
  - d. The County should make it easier for ranch and farm owners to develop and maintain housing for farm workers and their families.

# Memories of a Farm Family

By Elizabeth Erro Hvolboll



My family has owned and farmed land in Santa Barbara County since 1840 and on the Gaviota coast since 1866. I grew up in an old wooden farmhouse overlooking Refugio Beach and lived there until I was 20 in 1950. Our family has worked with other coastal ranching families, the Ortegas, Hollisters, Alegrias, Rutherfords, Dotys, Parks, Freemans, Pedottis and others for up to six generations.

When my husband and I had our children, they spent most of their growing-up years on our ranch, working with cows, raising orphan calves, riding horses, fixing fences. They learned about the natural world and about how they fit into the whole system, raising animals and food. As farmers and ranchers, they understand much about the cycle of life because they are part of it.

I remember vividly when the California highway department took the entire homestead from our ranch at Refugio. It was taken by eminent domain to widen the freeway and build the beach entrance. They brought in bulldozers and destroyed the farmhouse, garages, barn, blacksmith shop, granary, corrals and dozens of trees. My son, then 13, did save our old pepper tree, persuading the state not to bulldoze it. It is the largest in California. My daughter and I had nightmares about the rest of our ranch being bulldozed and replaced by condos and shopping centers.

Our experience has taught us that our family legacy of farming could be threatened in ways that we didn't expect. And it made us realize how important it is to our family to keep our land in farming. Although we couldn't stop the highway department, we could stop private development. So when The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County approached us several years ago, we listened to its ideas. It offered a way to keep our land as a farm by paying us to give up our "development rights" and putting the land into an agricultural conservation easement. The easement guarantees the land will never be developed for urban uses and can remain a working farm in private ownership. They call it a "working landscape" — which is an accurate term.

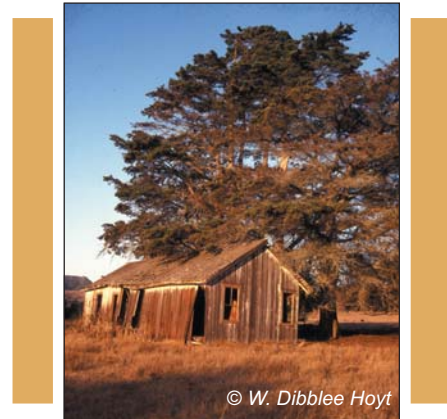
There are three newer generations of my family now, and I think about when the youngest will be my age 70 years from now. I feel good knowing they will be able to stand here in Venadito Canyon and see it much as it has been for hundreds of years. Gaviota is the last working coastal landscape in Southern California. There is nothing like it.

## Agricultural regulations

3. *To survive, agriculture needs to respond quickly to changing conditions and markets. Agriculture requires regulations appropriate to its needs, not the imposition of urban planning standards on rural areas. Rather than unnecessarily restrict agricultural operations, as some current County ordinances and regulations do, regulatory structure should allow flexibility for and encourage agricultural operations.*

- a. County regulations should not unduly restrict the use of agricultural land such as crops that may be grown, agricultural buildings and structures, equipment in view, or how production may occur.
- b. While siting and design standards for agricultural structures are needed to protect important scenic, environmental, and cultural values, a wide definition of agricultural uses should be allowed in agricultural areas to permit growers to adapt to changing markets. This recognizes greenhouses, shade structures, hoop houses, and similar structures as legitimate agricultural methods in a highly competitive market. (See page 26 of the Land Use section for further discussion.)

- c. Through zoning and appropriate infrastructure, the County and cities should continue to support related businesses in adjoining areas such as packing houses, chemical distribution facilities, and tractor and irrigation supply companies, which are critical for the agricultural industry.



- d. The County should hire a planner with expertise in agricultural operations to administer agricultural permits and regulation. Staff working on agricultural land use planning and regulation should have training and experience with rural planning and agriculture. A separate division or office to handle ministerial permit processing for agricultural land use may be necessary.
- e. The permitting process for agricultural uses should be clarified and streamlined so that landowners know what to expect and are not frustrated by bureaucracy. To build trust, regulators must contain regulatory inspections on agricultural land to single issues.
- f. Low-impact non-agricultural uses should be allowed on agricultural land to provide additional income, as long as they are compatible with and subordinate to agricultural land uses and consistent with other policies found in this document.



## Agricultural buffers and boundaries

4. *Often when a conflict arises between an agricultural operation and a neighboring urban use, it can result in restraints on the grower. One solution is to create buffers that protect agriculture operations from neighboring uses.*
  - a. County policies should create and maintain buffers between agricultural lands and urban uses. The responsibility for the buffer rests with the encroaching urban uses, not the preexisting agricultural use. Buffers can include physical separators — such as setbacks and vegetative barriers — as well as transitional zoning, restrictions, and conditions on the encroacher.
  - b. Where buffers do not exist or are infeasible, the grower should be compensated for any loss of production and/or value due to the interfering non-agricultural use.
  - c. The County should maintain the urban limit line that currently exists between Goleta and the Gaviota Coast. (See page 24 of the Land Use Policy section for further discussion.)

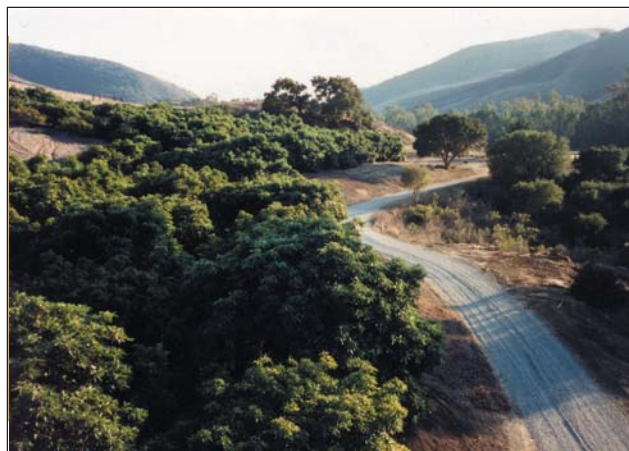
## Community awareness

5. *Develop ways to foster better community awareness of the local agricultural economy and rural land management, needs, and practices. This awareness will eventually lead to greater community support.*
  - a. Educational programs should be developed that advance awareness of local agriculture and teach respect for others, including land owners. One example is the Farm Bureau's "agriculture in the classroom" program.

- b. Re-establish and strengthen the presence of the UC Cooperative Extension on the Gaviota Coast. This could take the form of a local office that focuses on proactive outreach to the rural community.
- c. Encourage greater public awareness of and support for Gaviota agriculture as a business, through education programs in county schools, community supported agriculture, farmers' markets, ranch and farm tours, and other means.
- d. Encourage cooperative marketing of agricultural products to the local consumers. Permanent venues could be established to create a fixed local presence in the community for locally produced goods.

## Conserving and sustaining agriculture

- 6. *Maintaining a viable local agricultural industry is essential for a self-sufficient society and a strong rural economy. To ensure the future of agriculture on the Gaviota Coast, recognize and improve sustainable agricultural practices.*
  - a. County policies should not discourage sustainable farming practices such as conservation, integrated pest management, and water and soil conservation.
  - b. The County and Resource Conservation Districts should create programs that allow farmers to use a simple, one stop permit shopping process for conservation projects on their land.
  - c. Where access is desired on ranches or farms for resource conservation or restoration activities, consider using land leases or temporary easements, rather than outright purchase of ranch and farm land. This approach can promote conservation and reward cooperative private land stewardship, while keeping land in agricultural production.



# *Stewarding the Land and Resources*

The cultural heritage of the coast began more than 13,000 years ago with the ancestors of the current Chumash community, who established significant historical settlements throughout the region and who were the first stewards of the land. The historically recent European settlers displaced the Chumash, establishing cultural and land use patterns that persist to this day. Many of the current stewards of the land are descendants of those settlers, who also love the land and resources of Gaviota. All of these cultures contributed to the rural landscape that we enjoy today.

When we take this bird's eye view, we see the Gaviota Coast as more than lines on a map. It is an interconnection of plants, people and wildlife — a region rich with history. It is also the largest relatively undeveloped remnant of the Southern California Mediterranean environment, with coastal ecosystems that are of both local and global importance. This place deserves a renewed commitment to sustainable land use and environmental management practices.



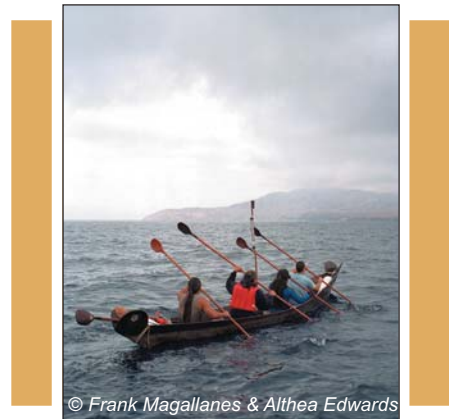
## Key Recommendation

Protecting the cultural, agricultural and natural heritage of the Gaviota Coast requires taking an integrated and comprehensive approach. We can encourage ecological health, for example, by maintaining and connecting large habitat areas. We can improve water quality by planning at the “watershed level.” For this to be successful, we must build stronger, more respectful relationships among all users of the coast, including rural landowners, recreational users, the Chumash and the urban community. We must also provide regulatory relief and other incentives to those landowners and agriculturists who lead the way in protecting and restoring natural resources.

## Policy Recommendations

### Cultural resources of Gaviota

1. *A neutral, non-governmental organization should be identified to enhance community awareness of the Chumash and the ranching and farming cultures of Gaviota.*
  - a. This group might facilitate the establishment of a cultural center for gatherings, a museum to house artifacts that are currently kept elsewhere, and a community building and healing center for residents of the region.
  - b. This group might also coordinate voluntary access to cultural sites, sacred sites, and places to gather plants for ceremonial purposes.



### Working at a watershed level

2. *By viewing the Gaviota Coast as a series of interconnected living watersheds, our region can address and plan for long-term ecological and economic needs, such as improving water resource management.*
  - a. Landowners should integrate the protection of watersheds into the economic uses of their land through voluntary, landowner-led, watershed-based

partnerships. In exchange for their efforts, they should receive regulatory relief, technical assistance, and streamlined certification and permitting. (See the sidebar on the next page for further discussion.)

3. *Scientifically-based watershed plans should be developed that contain clear, measurable goals.*



- a. Watershed plans should include comprehensive biological inventories, which are critical to developing broader ecosystem-based assessments.
  - b. A scientific advisory panel should be created to assist in watershed planning efforts. This panel should include members from public agencies, university scientists, conservation experts, landowners, and land managers who hold practical local knowledge and scientific expertise of ecosystems and watersheds.
  - c. The plans should include clear, measurable commitments from landowners. They should employ agricultural and land management practices that improve coastal watersheds and the general health and ecological integrity of the land and nearshore marine environment.
  - d. The plans should include clear performance measures to monitor the progress toward achieving the protection of watershed health and other goals, such as sustainable agricultural use.
4. *Watershed planning should be done in a spirit of open exchange of information and collaboration, to help restore a level of trust between landowners, conservationists and government agencies that is sorely lacking. Information collected in the watershed planning process is not to be used to preclude landowners from the legal and customary use of their land.*
- a. An information exchange — such as a watershed information network — should be created to provide access to credible, informed sources for watershed planning and management. Information should come from public and private sources, including independent scientific advisors and regional land managers with practical experience and local knowledge.
  - b. Pilot projects in a few important coastal watersheds can provide the community with models for collaboration, while also avoiding the cost and bureaucratic burden of trying to create many plans at the same time.

## How watershed-scale planning could work

*Watershed planning efforts on the Gaviota Coast could include these elements:*

- **Pilot projects.** While it is desirable that watershed-based planning be undertaken across the entire Gaviota Coast region over time, pilot projects can be developed more quickly than trying to plan for the entire region, and successes at implementing the plans can be models for other watersheds to follow.
- **Streamlined certification.** County, state, and federal regulatory agencies should collaborate to develop criteria for a streamlined method to certify these watershed plans. Criteria need to address large-scale ecosystem issues, as well as site specific matters, means of tracking performance of planning activities, streamlining regulatory review, and monitoring the implementation of watershed plans.
- **Regulatory relief.** Landowners who participate in developing watershed plans and implement conservation and enhancement practices should be given meaningful relief from government regulatory and permit processes. Exemptions or blanket permits for appropriate management practices and restoration activities are needed to make it less threatening and costly for landowners to provide environmental benefits as part of their operations.
- **Government support.** Farmers and ranchers should be encouraged to utilize the services of existing entities. These include the Cachuma Resource Conservation District and the USDA National Resource Conservation Service, which can attract and manage grants and provide technical and financial support for watershed planning, conservation measures, and enhancement projects.
- **Public support.** Watershed planning, conservation and restoration efforts on private lands should receive direct financial support from the public. Private landowners should not be expected to shoulder all the burden of protecting and enhancing watershed health to provide a public benefit.
- **Long term commitment.** Watershed-based planning is not a short-term remedy to resource protection. It requires partnerships that are committed to long-term protection of watershed ecosystems and associated biodiversity. Funding and other resources will be required to strengthen watershed-based planning and policy development that can protect, and where needed, restore the health and integrity of the Gaviota's diverse watersheds.

### **What a 'watershed information network' should do:**

- ▶ Provide a neutral forum for discussion and partnership in collaborative watershed-based planning and general ecosystem-based protection;
- ▶ Aid in gathering and synthesis of important economic and ecological information;
- ▶ Strengthen the baseline information on the ecology and economics of the coast;
- ▶ Improve the ecological and cultural understanding of the watersheds of the Gaviota coast, especially those that include habitat for wild southern steelhead recovery projects; and
- ▶ Establish a Scientific Advisory Panel that is made up of both social and physical scientists with regional expertise (the Scientific Advisory Panel will assist the Gaviota watershed plan development and implementation effort).

### **Real-life examples of local watershed planning:**

Two local examples exist. The first is the San Antonio Creek Coordinated Resource Management Plan — prepared by the Cachuma Resource Conservation District (RCD) in December 2003. The second is the Southern San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties Agricultural Watershed Coalition — a joint initiative by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and several local agricultural organizations, including the County Farm Bureau. The purpose of the program is to assist owners and operators of cultivated agricultural land to comply with federal clean water requirements for their agricultural runoff water, through training and assistance to develop farm water quality plans and implement best management practices. Contact info for the program may be obtained at: <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/AGWaivers/Index.htm>.

## **Conserving and protecting natural resources**

5. *Control, and where possible, eliminate invasive plants and replace with natives.*
  - a. Efforts should be funded to monitor and control the priority invasive plant species that threaten the diversity and sustainability of native floral and faunal communities.
6. *Restore and renovate degraded habitats in a manner consistent with continued agricultural use of the land. In particular, improve water quality and watershed health where it has been degraded by human activity.*
  - a. Local, state and federal agencies should work together to streamline the permitting process and provide permit exemptions to make it easier for landowners to undertake restoration activities.

## We are All Connected

By Mike McGinnis

Early one evening I was driving to my home in the Santa Ynez Mountains, into the range that sets the stage for the region. I saw a large bobcat lying in the middle of the street, and pulled over to the side of the road. The bobcat was still panting and breathing. I cautiously petted his thick fur coat. His ears, teeth, paws and eyes were large for hunting small prey. I thought of the bobcat looming in the shadows of the brush, waiting for the appropriate time to cross the road.



The young bobcat died. I took the bobcat into the hills of its origin to bury it under an old oak tree, near coyote brush, monkey flower, and coastal sage. The bobcat is now part of the soil and oak tree.

The soil, bobcat and oak tree are linked. They are part of the breath of this landscape. The bobcat reminds us that we are not far removed from the wildness of this region, place, and community. Santa Barbara is still close to the earth. The soil is made up of the flesh and bones of every creature that shares this place with us.

The presence of animals, plants and soils are the gifts of this coastal bioregion. It is up to us who are alive now to translate this information into something more than memory.

- b. Public agencies and private landowners should remove culverts, debris dams and other obstacles to improve access for steelhead and to enhance aquatic biodiversity. These projects should be a priority for grant funding.
7. *Identify wildlife corridors between mountain habitats and the sea. Such corridors require significant ecological buffer areas to support the linkage between habitat areas. They should not preclude landowners from the legal and customary use of their land.*
- a. Appropriate buffer areas should be integrated into the biological thresholds of the County. The scale of protection should focus on the relationships between the Santa Ynez range, foothills, valleys, riparian areas, coastal processes (such as wetlands), and the nearshore marine area.
  - b. Proposed future agricultural expansion or residential development should be reviewed in terms of new biological thresholds that support watershed-based planning.

- 8 *Santa Barbara County should promote use of the open space preserve program under the Williamson Act on private land with high natural resource value.*
9. *Due to the dynamic ecological conditions and scientific uncertainties associated with the coast, we do not support the use of Habitat Conservation Plans because they often fail to adequately protect habitats and species.*

## **General Plan and Local Coastal Plan update**

10. *The County Board of Supervisors should initiate an update to the General Plan (GP) and Local Coastal Plan (LCP) for the Gaviota Coast, with a focus on the protection of the ecological relationships and linkages that exist between the coastal and marine ecosystems of the area. The updates should:*



- a. Embrace the development of policies and standards that rely, in part, on the work and results produced by voluntary watershed-based partnerships. If no voluntary pilot projects arise, the County should develop stronger policies to promote or require improved watershed management practices as part of the GP and LCP updates.
- b. Be consistent with federal and state initiatives that support ecosystem-based planning and watershed protection.
- c. Use the best available scientific information for the coastal and marine ecosystems of the area.

11. *The public process for updating these planning documents and associated management elements should be collaborative, involving landowners and stakeholders.*

12. *The current “biological thresholds” that have been established by the County that relate to riparian, native grassland, oak savannah, coastal sage scrub and other protected habitat areas should be revised to focus on ecosystem-based protection measures.*

- a. The protection of important integrated ecological core areas should be better recognized in the County LCP and GP policies for Gaviota. During the amendment process, scientific information and biological inventories of significant ecological core areas should be identified and used. These important ecological core areas, such as riparian areas, native grasslands, and oak forests, should be protected while respecting the rights of the landowner.

## The ecological importance of the Gaviota Coast

*The Gaviota Coast has been through many changes — Chumash village, rancho, lemon and avocado orchard, oil development, urban and suburban development, and tourist destination. But always it has remained a rich region of wilderness and an essential ecological core to the coastal ecosystems of southern California. Some of its more significant aspects are:*

- The Gaviota Coast is considered one of the **top 15 hot spots for biodiversity** in the world. More than 1,400 plant and animal species depend on the Gaviota, including 60 species of fish and 195 species of birds. However, that biodiversity is threatened. The area contains 24 federally- or state-listed threatened or endangered plant and animal species and another 60 species of rare and special concern (including proposed endangered, threatened, candidate, and sensitive).<sup>1</sup>
- It is the only place in the nation that features an **ecological transition zone** between northern and southern Mediterranean plant communities. Many northern plant species reach their southern geographic limits north of the Santa Ynez Mountains, and many southern species reach their geographic limits south of the mountains.<sup>2</sup>
- Gaviota also borders a biologically diverse **marine transition zone** attributed to the confluence of two major oceanic currents and the shape of the continental shelf at Point Conception. Its marine and terrestrial ecosystems work together in a large-scale system of relationships where biophysical processes of land, water and wind form unique species and habitats of the Southern California Bight.<sup>3</sup>
- It is uniquely **connected to the northern Channel Islands**. This region's animals and plants depend on ecological relationships among mountains (the Santa Ynez, San Rafael and Sierra Madre Ranges), the Santa Ynez River, urban and rural areas, vernal pools and coastal wetlands, and the marine environment — including the Santa Barbara Channel and the Channel Islands.<sup>4</sup>
- Gaviota **contains 34 watersheds**, each a symbol of the link between the activities of human beings and the general health of the coast and marine environment.<sup>5</sup>

1 *Gaviota Coast Feasibility Study*, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, March 5, 2004

2 Wayne Ferren and Kathy Rindlaub, Museum of Systematics and Ecology, Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology, University of California, Santa Barbara

3 Michael McGinnis, *A Recommended Study Area for the CINMS Management Planning Process: Ecological Linkages in the Marine Ecology from Point Sal to Point Magu, including the Marine Sanctuary*. US Department of Commerce NOAA. <http://www.cinms.nos.noaa.gov/manplan/pdf/McGinnis.pdf>

4 Michael McGinnis, op cit., <http://www.cinms.nos.noaa.gov/manplan/pdf/McGinnis.pdf>

5 *Gaviota Coast Feasibility Study*

# *Developing Land Use Policy with Equity and Ecology*

The most important tools we have for determining the immediate future of the Gaviota Coast are our local land use policies and regulations. When carried out in an objective and reasonable way, they can provide a map for implementing our community's vision for this region.

And yet the very mechanisms that could preserve the Gaviota Coast can also polarize it. To be successful, we must create and carry out land use policies that integrate property owners' rights, the area's longstanding agricultural traditions, and the protection of the region's natural and cultural resources.

The potential for new residential development on the Gaviota Coast becomes significant when subdivision of large ranches is added to the number of existing undeveloped parcels. Any changes in county land use policy should not increase the overall residential development potential on the Gaviota Coast compared to the potential that exists today.



## Key Recommendation

The Gaviota Coast needs a lasting, local process to retain its rural character and unique resources. To be successful, County land use policies should be combined with other measures that conserve natural resources and support agriculture. Together these policies must incorporate both ecological principles and equity to landowners. Because the region is unique within the County, special programs and regulations should be developed to preserve its rural character, encourage agriculture, and protect resources.

## Policy Recommendations

### Voter approved rural planning area

1. *The County Board of Supervisors should place a voter referendum on the ballot for a countywide vote to establish a rural planning area for the Gaviota Coast. The ballot measure should limit land use and zoning to rural land uses for a period of 30 years, after which time voters would have an opportunity to renew, modify, or terminate it.*
  - a. The ballot measure should preserve the existing urban limit line.
  - b. Planning and zoning designations for agriculture (AG-I, AG-II, residential ranchette), resource management, mountainous area, open space and other rural land uses may be made or modified by the County Board of Supervisors.
  - c. Any change in land use designation from rural to urban use (non-agricultural commercial and industrial, and high density residential) requires approval of the majority of voters countywide.
  - d. Any subdivision which creates new legal parcels smaller than 100 acres in size requires approval of the voters, unless the subdivision results in no net increase in developable legal parcels in the Gaviota-rural planning area. “No net increase” can be achieved by the landowner seeking such subdivision through:
    - merger of existing legal parcels on the property;
    - transferring development rights from other existing, developable parcels within the Gaviota rural planning area; or
    - extinguishing development rights by funding the purchase of a conservation easement on another property within the Gaviota rural planning area.



- e. Limit for a period of 30 years any lot line adjustments that do not increase development potential.

## **General Plan and Local Coastal Plan update**

2. *The County Board of Supervisors should immediately initiate an update to the General Plan and Local Coastal Plan for the Gaviota Coast.*
  - a. This update is needed to incorporate the rural planning district, land use policies, and resource conservation programs necessary to promote locally-determined rural land, agricultural, and resource management into the future.
  - b. Pending completion of the updates, policy changes that are critical to protecting the character of the coast may need to be addressed through amendments.
3. *The County Board of Supervisors should appoint a Gaviota Coast General Plan Advisory Committee to foster landowner and community participation in the plan update and implementation of the rural planning area if it is approved by the voters.*

## **A fair and consistent process**

4. *In order to protect Gaviota's resources — whether they be agricultural, habitat, scenic, archaeological or cultural — a more innovative and flexible land use planning approach is needed that integrates the interests and values of property owners with the ecological and agricultural integrity of the land.*
  - a. Land use planning for the area should be based on a flexible “planned use overlay,” intended to direct impacts of allowed development away from high resource value land and toward lower resource value locations.
  - b. The County should take a more clear and predictable approach to evaluating the subdivision of large rural properties that incorporates agricultural productivity, watershed-level planning, and natural, scenic and cultural resource protection.
  - c. The County should implement the transfer of development rights between Gaviota properties, or policies to allow multiple dwelling units on a single parcel in exchange for eliminating development rights on other parcels through merger of lots or conservation easements, with no net increase in development potential. If a transfer of development rights program is established on a regional basis, then properties in the Gaviota rural planning area should be considered as eligible “sender” sites.
  - d. The County should encourage the purchase of development rights from willing sellers through conservation easement programs from the highest resource value properties. The County should also investigate the concept of conservation leases.



5. *Property designated for agriculture should be subject to adopted development standards and exemptions that allow and encourage agricultural use and activities.*
6. *The County should continue its long-standing policy of recognizing the right to apply for residential, agricultural or other allowed development on existing, legal land parcels, subject to adopted health, safety and environmental laws and regulations.*
7. *There should be clear, predictable and consistently applied resource protection policies or management measures that apply to mountainous and environmentally sensitive habitat areas.*
  - a. When landowners participate in watershed management plans or other demonstrations of the use of sound resource management practices, the County and other government agencies should help them integrate such measures with agricultural operations, and streamline the regulatory and permit process.
8. *Landowners should be able to understand and pursue the benefits of legally allowable residential and agricultural use of their property without facing undue delay, bureaucracy and uncertainty.*
  - a. Policies, standards, regulations and requirements must be applied in a consistent manner that objectively evaluates development proposals and any resulting impacts.
  - b. Landowners should not have to spend extraordinary amounts of time and money to confirm their ability to use their property for uses allowed by county zoning.
  - c. The process for securing permits to build a home, employee housing and agricultural improvements allowed by zoning should be streamlined.

## Wild steelhead: a totem species

Two species of salmon once swam the creeks of this region. The ghost Chinook or King salmon today exists only in our memories and our natural history. Only the wild southern steelhead remain — a resilient fish that survived the Ice Age and adapted to a turbulent Mediterranean climate of floods, fires and major storm events. Considered genetically distinct from their more numerous northern cousins, these fish are considered the grandfathers of all existing steelhead, and were once a significant part of the diet of the Chumash.

Statewide, steelhead have been reduced by approximately 50 percent in the last 30 years. Southern steelhead, which contain runs from northern Santa Barbara County to San Diego County, are the most threatened of all, with a 99 percent decline in population over the same period. How we treat and relate to the last remaining wild southern steelhead is a test of our willingness to be responsible members of this maritime community.

### Design standards

9. *The County should develop design standards for new residential development in the Gaviota Coast rural planning area to protect the scenic beauty, rural character, agricultural productivity, and ecological integrity of the coast. These standards would:*
  - a. Address the size, bulk, scale, and visual impact of new residential development so as to retain the rural and agricultural character of the coast.
  - b. Integrate watershed management and measures to protect air quality, water quality, and scenic public views.
  - c. Require residential buildings to be designed to cause minimal impact on their natural setting both visually and physically. This includes minimizing reflective surfaces and addressing shape and color so that buildings blend in with their natural surroundings.
10. *Where feasible, the County should promote the use of sustainable building materials, diffused and filtering surface drainage systems, and passive and active renewable energy generation in the rural planning area.*

## Protecting resources = protecting value

A key theme of the deliberations of the Gaviota Study Group has been the concept of providing equity for development potential value to the landowners while benefiting the greater public by enhancing protection of Gaviota's natural resources and open space. We feel that protection of the resources also enhances landowner value.

It is no accident that the Santa Barbara County South Coast has some of the most valuable real estate in the world, owing to the superb climate and natural beauty of the area. The protection of the area's resources, initially by land owners and later embodied in various city, county and state ordinances, has served to preserve the attractiveness of the region. While those protections have restricted owners seeking to develop their property, they have helped to sustain the desirable rural character of the area, which supports the high property values from which land owners eventually benefit. The key to permanently preserving this rural character is creating fair and objective opportunities for land owners to realize the value of their property while providing a superior level of resource protection.

Each section of this report contains fair, equitable and objective measures to protect and preserve natural resources, land owner property rights, and public access. This Land Use Policy section recommends progressive measures to ensure that the rural land use character continues, that property rights and land values can be translated through purchase or dedication of conservation easements, purchase or transfer of development rights, and implementation of thoughtful zoning and development rules that allow development to occur where its effects are the least impacting. We believe that this formula of sustaining the area's rural character and protecting its natural resources will uniquely benefit landowners, the environment and the public interest.

.....

*“One of the most important parts of the [National Park Service] study revealed that the citizens and local governments of Santa Barbara County are already engaged in a wide array of local land protection efforts that have set a fine example for other parts of the country. These efforts have produced an outstanding record of locally based environmental protection by private individuals, organizations and local public agencies.”*

— Office of the Secretary, Department of the Interior, March 5, 2004

# Creating Public Access on the Coast

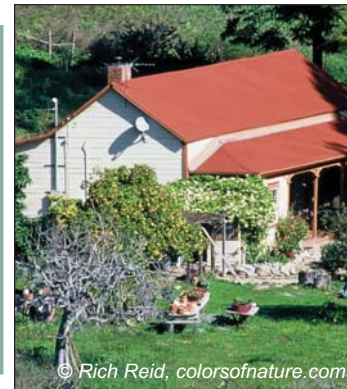
In order to understand and appreciate the Gaviota Coast, we need opportunities to experience it. We need to hike its sage-lined trails, explore its beaches, and breathe its salt air. This is how we connect with a place, and in time, how we build support for its long-term care.

At the same time, public access can cause conflicts among those sharing the same space, and can damage the very resources we all care about. Our community must be mindful of these dangers, and strive to ensure that education, direct public involvement, stewardship, and adequate financial resources are part of any public access plan.



## **Key Recommendation**

Public, non-commercial access should be developed and maintained in a manner that is mindful of landowner concerns and environmental issues by adopting policies that manage the human impact on the environment and respect the privacy and rights of landowners. If our community is to be successful in this, all interests — both public and private — must cooperate. This includes agriculturalists, environmental preservationists, recreationalists, landowners (including public agencies), and the public at large.



## **Policy Recommendations**

### **Landowner considerations**

1. *In considering the acquisition and development of additional public access, landowners should be treated fairly and with consideration. When contemplating the use of private land, planners should be especially respectful of these points:*
  - a. Public access and facilities should be placed on publicly owned lands and rights of way, or on voluntarily-granted public access easements or rights of way on private land. If done properly and in a manner that considers the use of neighboring properties, new opportunities for legal public access could reduce incidences of trespassing.
  - b. Hostile condemnation should not be used to acquire easements or sites for public facilities. In acquiring easements through permit conditions, the policy and practice should be to observe existing constraints under California case law with respect to exactions for public access easements.
  - c. Planning for public access should identify stakeholders and provide as much notice as possible to the public and all landowners in the broad vicinity of the proposed action. The location of planned trails and associated facilities in public planning documents should be specified in as much detail as possible.

## Environmental considerations

2. *Public access should avoid or minimize damage to environmental resources.*
  - a. Access on public lands should be consistent with the environmental “carrying capacity” of the land as determined and recommended through appropriate objective analysis.
  - b. Public access and facilities should be sited and designed to minimize negative impacts on resource values. For example:
    - Trails should avoid degrading sensitive habitats.
    - Beach access should be designed to avoid degrading the coastal bluffs.
    - Parking facilities should be sited close to major existing roads to avoid the construction of new access roads.
    - Ample sanitation and trash facilities should be provided and maintained at all public access points.
  - c. To provide increased beach access, additional trails on public land or easements on private lands should be sited to manage and direct access and eliminate damage to public and private land. Environmentally destructive, illegal, or dangerous beach access should be improved or closed. This will increase public safety, reduce resource damage, and eliminate conflicts with private property owners.

## Design considerations

3. *The design and maintenance of public access facilities should emphasize low impacts and foster sustainability.*
  - a. Public access should be provided with the necessary management capability and resources such as policing, liability management, trail maintenance, appropriate and necessary facilities, waste management, signs, and upkeep of parking areas.
  - b. Commercial visitor serving structures (such as stores, restaurants, and motels/hotels) should be prohibited or limited to essential services and should be designed and sited to minimize visual and resource impacts. Public visitor serving structures, necessary and related to public access (such as trail signs, kiosks, interpretive exhibits, parking, and restrooms), should also be designed and sited to minimize visual and resource impacts.
  - c. In areas where local owners or agencies control the design, public access facilities should be built on a scale sufficient to serve the needs of the Central Coast region.

## Musings by a City Boy

By Phil McKenna



I was raised in Burbank when the air was thick and the pastures were a distant memory. My father routinely took me to the “wild lands” surrounding the San Fernando Valley, especially the Santa Monica Mountains. I discovered the marvels of geology at the top of a ridge with an ocean view, where my father showed me the fossils embedded in the rocks we were sitting on and described the forces that created our perch. We discovered a mountain lion long after it had perceived us; the reality of a lion in our domain thrilled me then and now. My father showed me tadpoles in the creek and we visited the pond for a month observing the transformation to frog. I learned the value of patient observation.

So I was a city boy, but because I had access to natural landscapes (and a wonderful teacher), I became an armchair naturalist. I camped, fished, hiked, biked, learned to marvel at the common and ordinary.

I have passed on my father’s gift to me by introducing my children to the natural world and I advocate for public access to that natural world so the same opportunity is not lost to others. Without the direct experience of nature one is a “tenant” on earth, without pride of ownership; a poor steward of our fragile home. So I will argue for the broadest possible public access to the Gaviota region, consistent with the preservation and restoration of our natural heritage. And there is the rub.

We are part of nature. We belong in wild landscapes, but we change them. The vision of a static nature, pure in form, finished and complete, is a myth. We bring many of the trappings of society with us when we enter uncivilized landscapes. This is perceived as being negative, and it sometimes is. But, we can contribute to the preservation of nature through our understanding of the living earth, gained best from direct experience.

Citizens of our complex and increasingly crowded society are divorced from the natural processes that support them. It is quite possible to intellectually understand these forces. However, that understanding is incomplete without the imprint of direct experience. Appropriate public access provides the stage for this direct experience.

## Community involvement

4. *Models of community involvement in issues of public access should be developed and encouraged.*
  - a. Community involvement in the maintenance and interpretation of public access areas should be actively encouraged. Examples of current volunteer efforts include docent programs at Coal Oil Point and Arroyo Hondo, trail maintenance by the Los Padres Forest Association and Sierra Club, and beach clean-up days by the Surfrider Foundation.
  - b. Managed access programs can play an important role on the Gaviota Coast by regulating the type, timing, and extent of public activities on both private and public land. Examples include temporary closures during plover nesting season at Coal Oil Point, trails that prohibit certain uses, or areas that require advance scheduling to control the timing of visitation and the number of visitors, such as Arroyo Hondo Preserve.
  - c. Voluntary public access on private lands for scientific, educational, and cultural activities should be encouraged, such as that conducted at Hollister Ranch. Such access needs to be consistent with the rights of private landowners to protect them from unwanted intrusion. An information clearinghouse could be created to track those landowners willing to participate. (See page 15 of the Stewardship section for further discussion.)



- d. Consistent with “c.” above, Chumash cultural sites should be protected and access to publicly recognized sites should be managed and supervised to ensure respectful visitation. (See page 15 of the Stewardship section for further discussion.)

## Public use

5. *The establishment of a lateral east/west trail with a limited number of vertical access trails to both the coast and the crest of the Santa Ynez Mountains (ie, the “front country”) should be encouraged.*
  - a. Additional public trails to provide access and loop trails within the front country are appropriate if sited on public land or easements, or on land engaged in managed access programs. In addition to current sites for potential front country



trails, a limited number of inland trail sites should be considered. Potential trail links could start from:

- Arroyo Hondo Preserve;
  - The County of Santa Barbara's Baron Ranch;
  - El Capitan State Park;
  - Jalama County Beach Park ; and
  - Refugio Road public right of way.
- b. Modest addition of vehicle camping is appropriate on public parkland or private campgrounds. Serious consideration should be given to relocating Gaviota State Park campground to an alternate location and restoring the historical estuary and steelhead habitat.
- c. Limited primitive walk-in campsites could be developed in the trail system on public land.
- d. Specific trail and camping priorities, locations, design and management should be addressed as part of Local Coastal Plan and General Plan updates. In addition, some form of ongoing public process will be needed to resolve conflicts among trail users and address any problems with resource and property protection in a timely manner.
- e. Currently, state law mandates the creation of a California Coastal Trail or federal De Anza trail. However, the community is divided as to its implementation. If such a trail is to be created within the Gaviota Coast area, it should be planned, implemented and managed according to policy recommendations outlined in landowner, environmental, design, and community involvement sections of this document.

# *Providing Effective Local Governance & Finance*

There is no silver bullet for protecting the Gaviota Coast. No single agency, governance approach, or funding mechanism can provide what is needed to preserve all that we cherish. Rather, it will take a mix of efforts — both public and private, both voluntary and regulatory, from both existing and new sources.

But one thing is clear: the future of the Gaviota Coast must be locally determined, and residents and landowners must trust that they will play a significant role in determining that future. In fact, rebuilding and fostering a sense of trust among all interests — agricultural, environmental and governmental — is the backbone to creating a healthy future for this region.



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## **Key Recommendation**

Protecting the character and value of public and private lands on the Gaviota Coast can best be accomplished through local governance. The region should be primarily governed by County ordinances — aspects of which need to be simplified — with important roles for non-profit organizations and state and federal agencies. It is essential that all entities work in a spirit of cooperation, and that we develop ways to measure their success and ensure accountability.



## **Policy Recommendations**

### **Interagency clearinghouse**

1. *Federal, state and local governments have primary authority on the Gaviota Coast. An interagency clearinghouse process should be created for agencies to meet and confer on proposed public works projects, watershed management, land use, and regulatory programs affecting the Gaviota Coast.*
  - a. An inter-governmental task force should be created to extend lines of communication, coordinate projects, and streamline regulatory procedures for resource enhancement. Such a task force should include representatives of Santa Barbara County Parks, Santa Barbara County Planning and Development, California State Parks, the U.S. Forest Service, Caltrans, and others. Models of such cooperation exist at Big Sur and Elkhorn Slough. (See box on page 36.)
2. *Voluntary public and private cooperative efforts, such as that between the Agricultural Watershed Coalition and the Regional Water Quality Control Board regarding irrigation waste discharge, should be encouraged. (See Stewardship section for further discussion.)*

# Monterey County Program for Big Sur

By Kim Kimbell



In the early 1980s, Monterey County was faced with growing pressure to “federalize” the Big Sur Coast by establishing a National Seashore. Many felt the action would have led to the destruction of the vibrant community of artists, authors, nonconformists, and others who lived in the canyons and on the hills of Big Sur.

The threat galvanized locals, who successfully turned back the federal effort and adopted a realistic but strong Local Coastal Plan (LCP) as required by the Coastal Act of 1976. As a result, development over the past 25 years has continued in a way that allows the community to retain its character. Public access opportunities abound, private property rights have been respected, and no federal funds were required. This is a classic example of how a local community can resist outside pressure and protect its resources in a holistic and meaningful way.

Some of the principles in Big Sur’s LCP include:

- **Scenic values are being protected.** All structures within view of Highway 1 are required to blend into their natural background.
- **Equity to landowners.** When new restrictions removed potential development rights within view of Highway 1, landowners are granted twice the development potential they lose along the highway corridor, so long as that development takes place out of view of the highway.
- **Land trust.** A land trust was incorporated to serve as a vehicle to assemble funds from governmental and private sources and to purchase development rights and conservation easements. The land trust has preserved more than 20,000 acres along the Big Sur Coast.
- **Voluntary intergovernmental council.** All government agencies with activities along the coast are represented, and any development project by any of those agencies has to be reviewed by the council prior to implementation. While the County does not have authority to dictate to State or Federal agencies, the fact that all agencies participate has significantly reduced the number of projects that could have a negative impact on the conservation values of Big Sur.



### **Primary governmental authority**

3. *The Local Coastal Plan, the General Plan (particularly its agricultural element), zoning ordinances, and agricultural regulations should comprise the primary governmental authority for the Gaviota Coast.*
  - a. A General Plan and Local Coastal Plan update for the Gaviota Coast is overdue. The County should budget for this needed update and appoint a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) to provide for landowner and other stakeholder participation throughout the update process. The GPAC should continue after the update is completed to advise the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors on implementing Gaviota Coast plans and policies.

### **County government**

4. *The County's approach to regulating agriculture should be simplified to facilitate the continued viability of farming and ranching, and streamlined for activities that increase environmental protection.*
  - a. The role of the Cachuma Resource Conservation District should be expanded to help plan and carry out improved environmental resource and agricultural management measures on Gaviota Coast ranches.
  - b. County staff working on agricultural land use planning and regulation should have training and experience with rural planning and agriculture. (See page 11 of the Agriculture section for further discussion.)
  - c. The County should seek approval for a rural planning area for the Gaviota Coast — followed by implementing ordinances and design standards to protect the rural, scenic beauty, agricultural productivity, watershed health and ecological integrity of the coast. (See the Land Use section for further discussion.)

5. *The County should encourage the creation of a process for the Chumash community to gain voluntarily-granted managed access to cultural and sacred sites on public and private land. (See the Stewardship section for further discussion.)*

## **State and Federal government**

6. *The state government (a Gaviota Coast landowner that oversees state parks, state beaches, highways and tidelands) and the federal government (a Gaviota Coast landowner that oversees Los Padres National Forest) are important stakeholders that should be involved in the planning of regional watershed programs, resource management and public access.*
  - a. In addition to their regulatory roles, State agencies such as the California Coastal Commission, State Lands Commission, Department of Fish & Game, and the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board should continue to be involved in locally determined programs, especially by providing needed expertise and grant funding for conservation measures.
  - b. In addition to its regulatory role (such as overseeing the Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act), the federal government should carry out its responsibilities as a manager of existing public land, and should provide grants and voluntary programs through entities such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service.

## **Non-governmental organizations**

7. *Designate or create alliances to promote cooperative, landowner-led watershed protection and management programs. (See the Stewardship section for further discussion.)*
  - a. Watershed organizations are most successful when they are decentralized and formed and led by landowners, with the cooperation of participating government agencies, scientists and environmental interest groups.
  - b. As watershed alliances are formed, the government should make available grants and technical assistance to help landowners develop and carry out management plans.
8. *Improve coordination and communication among the public and non-profit entities that purchase, negotiate, hold and manage agricultural and open space conservation land, easements and leases.*
  - a. Non-profit land trusts can play an important part in retaining the natural and agricultural landscapes of Gaviota, through the negotiated purchase or donation

of conservation easements and, where appropriate, land for public purposes such as wildlife preserves, beach access, and trails.

## Funding initiatives

9. *Generate new public and private funding sources for Gaviota Coast land and resource conservation and enhancement programs. For example:*

- a. County voters should be given the opportunity to vote on a local ballot measure to increase funding for conservation of natural resource, agricultural and open space land. The geographic extent, specific type of tax or fees proposed, and timing of such a measure needs to be carefully developed, with input from all stakeholders.
- b. The County should continue to give priority to using its Coastal Resource Enhancement Fund (CREF) and available state grants to support local efforts by non-profit and landowner-based organizations to implement watershed management and natural resource conservation programs and projects.
- c. Our elected representatives should work to ensure that a share of federal, state and local government revenue generated from extractive industries that affect the Gaviota Coast (i.e. oil and gas) are returned to the region through conservation grants.
- d. Public funds for Gaviota land and resource conservation should be used only for transactions with willing landowners. Conservation funding decisions should avoid driving up agricultural land values or removing significant agricultural land from productive use.
- e. Technical assistance should be made available to help interested landowners apply for available funding from federal grant programs including USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service programs, Land and Water Conservation Fund, and Farmland Protection Program.
- f. Private charitable giving by individuals and foundations should be sought for Gaviota Coast conservation, restoration and public access programs.



## *Leadership is the Key*

This report represents only one step in a process of local determination for the future of the Gaviota. Our ideas and recommendations are not perfect or complete. Our goal is to present a locally-determined platform that can be discussed, improved upon and hopefully implemented over time, with the private landowners, public agencies and community interests all fairly represented in that work.

The members of the Gaviota Coast Study Group are committed to keep working — with many others — to build community, political and financial support for the public and private actions we recommend. We feel there is a window of opportunity now to work with the current landowners to achieve lasting protection of the agricultural, rural residential, natural and cultural resources, and public recreational values of the Gaviota Coast.

We challenge the County of Santa Barbara, with full community participation, to initiate a Gaviota General Plan and Local Coastal Plan update to develop new and revised land use policies and tools that address the principles and issues raised in this report. We do not accept that lack of government money is a reason for inaction. Because the Gaviota Coast is a region of ecological importance, it may be possible to attract public or private grants to support new planning and program initiatives. We are willing to help seek such funding.

We also challenge the other Gaviota stakeholders – public and private landowners and residents of the coast, interested non-profit community groups, and state and federal government officials – to engage positively in a process to create lasting protection and public benefit while respecting the rights and needs of property owners.

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Courtesy of the Conception Coast Project

The area addressed by the Gavioia Coast Study Group spans from Devereux on the West to Jalama on the East.



We are here to remind each other, to remember,  
that we are all descendents of the first Earth People;  
people who are aware that we all have the same Mother, Earth.

We were taught how to walk gently upon our Mother,  
with awareness and respect and reverence for the life force,  
the energy that She provides for our health and happiness.

No one is excluded from enjoying the beauty of her gifts  
in the air, water, food, medicine and resources for clothing, shelter  
and our way of life.

However, many have taken more than they need  
and almost everyone has forgotten the necessity of giving back the  
thanks and gratitude necessary  
to maintain the balance of energy.

Our responsibility is to teach our children how to walk gently  
and they will teach the next generation.

— Art Cisneros