



Sonoma County

Local Coastal Plan Update Public Access



Local Coastal Program
Permit Sonoma

Contact: Permit Sonoma, Cecily Condon, Planner
707-565-1958 | PRMD-LCP-Update@sonoma-county.org;
Address: 2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403

The County shall take all necessary steps to protect and defend the public's constitutionally guaranteed rights of access to and along the shoreline.

~ Sonoma County Local Coastal Plan



Where Does the Right to Public Access Originate?

- California Constitution: Guarantees the public's right of access to the navigable waters and tidelands of the state
- California Coastal Act: Requires that "maximum access... shall be provided for all the people consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse"
- California Coastal Act: Requires "local jurisdictions to identify an alignment for the California Coastal Trail in their local coastal plans to be, ideally, continuous and located along the shoreline"
- California Coastal Trail Act: Requires the California Coastal Trail be primarily a hiking trail, completed from Mexico to Oregon, coordinated by the California Coastal Conservancy and guided by a plan, and incorporated into regional transportation plans
- 1982 Bane Bill: Requires public access within The Sea Ranch

Who Owns Coastal Property?

About one-third of coastal property is in public ownership. The California Department of Parks and Recreation owns 30 miles of the 55-mile Sonoma coastline. Sonoma County Regional Parks owns three miles of ocean frontage. Not all government-owned land is open to the public or contains recreational facilities.

The draft, maps, and community engagement surveys are available at: sonomacounty.ca.gov/LCP-Update



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Is Public Access Required for New Development?

In order to fulfill the access provisions of the California Coastal Act, the County may require that public access be provided or enhanced as part of new development. When a permit is requested on property west of the first public road or containing an access facility designated in the Public Access Plan, dedication of the access is usually required as a condition of the permit.



California Coastal Trail

The California Coastal Trail is a continuous trail network proposed to connect the entire California coastline. In Sonoma County the trail is proposed as a braided network to accommodate hiking, cycling, and equestrian users. The Local Coastal Plan specifies the location of the California Coastal Trail where the alignment has been determined, and identifies general corridors and points of connection where the exact alignment has not been decided or identified. The Coastal Trail Act which established the proposed trail states that the ideal trail system is continuous and located near the shoreline.

What Factors are Considered in Developing Public Access?

- Existing public lands and public access easements
- Existing and future public demand
- Facilitation of California Coastal Trail
- Connections to existing and proposed inland trails
- Scenic viewpoints and vistas
- Quality of destinations
- Property rights of landowners and privacy of adjacent homes
- Compatibility with sensitive natural resources
- Compatibility with agriculture
- Geologic hazards and potential for coastal erosion
- Public safety
- Adequacy and availability of support facilities
- Operation and maintenance considerations



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