



MENDOCINO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN COASTAL ELEMENT

JUG HANDLE CREEK TO RUSSIAN GULCH
[INCLUDES CASPAR]

Adopted by Mendocino County Board of Supervisors November 5, 1985
Coastal Commission Certification November 20, 1985

November 9, 2021

SOUTH CENTRAL CAC AREA (Jug Handle Creek to Navarro River)

4.6 JUG HANDLE CREEK TO RUSSIAN GULCH PLANNING AREA (Includes Caspar)

Caspar is a former lumber town, situated on a coastal terrace that at one time was planted in some vegetable crops. The land slopes gently to sharp bluffs, interrupted only at the creek mouths. The planning area's vegetation includes the southernmost Sitka Spruce forest, windbreak planting, mixed fir and redwood forest, pygmy forest, scrub, Scotch Broom and gorse. After operating from 1861 until 1955, the lumber mill is now gone, its former location marked only by the mill pond weir, a few remaining workers' cottages, and buildings in the village. However, the Caspar Lumber Company still owns 300 acres on both sides of Caspar Creek, the future use of which will be the single most important determinant of community character.

Highway 1 is a two-lane expressway through Caspar and offers views of grazing lands fronting the old town and occasional distant views of the ocean. Old Highway 1, renamed Point Cabrillo Drive between Caspar Creek and Russian Gulch, provides one of the coast's rare alternatives to Highway 1 for intra-community travel. A gap in Point Cabrillo Drive at Caspar Creek, where all vehicular traffic must use the expressway, limits the sense of community and the potential for commercial development in Caspar.

Jug Handle Creek forms a distinct separator between the Caspar area and South Fort Bragg. If Caspar is to retain its distinct identity, low density development may be appropriate.

The intent of the plan is to comply with Coastal Act policies channeling development to already developed areas, preserving the quality of the landscape, and retaining agricultural land. At the same time the plan recognizes that an established pattern of development exists at the northern and southern boundaries of the planning area west of Cabrillo Drive. Where land in view corridors is designated for development, planned unit development is called for. The existing open character can be preserved by clustering homes at densities consistent with view sheds. Careful siting will retain views for residents as well as for visitors and expressway drivers.

Caspar Village

The unique rural character of the old town of Caspar shall be maintained. While most of the planning area is designated for low densities, the village offers an opportunity for construction of relatively high density, lower cost housing if water and sewage disposal can be provided. Design restrictions should be enacted to preserve the character of the town.

Coastal Element Policies: Caspar Village

- 4.6-1 The old town of Caspar shall be designated a Rural Village, as described in the Land Use Classification system.
- 4.6-2 Existing historical structures in the community shall be protected under the historic guidelines if so designated. Remodelling of existing buildings or new construction shall not degrade the character of the historical community. Building materials, colors, and architectural forms should be compatible with existing structures.
- 4.6-3 The County and concerned individuals shall assess the benefits of designating Caspar Village on the National Registry as a Historic District.

Designated Access Points, Trails, and Recreation Areas

Policies for all access points, trails, and recreation areas are in Sections 3.6 and 3.7. Policies specific to locations in this planning area are listed below in geographic order from north to south. Each access point (other than fee access where designated) will need to be acquired by acceptance of an offer of dedication or by purchase by an appropriate public agency or private organization as described in Section 3.6.

Caspar Road Alternative Coastal Trail

Location: Old Highway 1 through Caspar to Doyle Creek.

Characteristics: Trail follows existing road (County Road 569), then unimproved trail along headlands to beach.

Policy:

- 4.6-4 Blufftop trail on headlands shall be acquired consistent with Policy 3.6-5.

Caspar Point

Location: From Caspar via Pacifica Drive through Vanneman property.

Ownership: Private (Vanneman).

Existing Development: Traditional access to Caspar Cove. Offer of dedication of vertical and lateral blufftop access.

Policy:

- 4.6-5 The offer of dedication, an easement for vertical and lateral access (Vanneman/Tree) shall be accepted. No parking is to be provided on the parcel, and the accessway is not to be indicated by a sign.

Fern Creek Road - Caspar Orchard Road Inland Trail

Location: East of Caspar: From Highway 1 east along County Road 410, then southeasterly along County Road 411A into Jackson State Forest.

Existing Development: pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian use; designated by County Trails Plan.

Caspar-Little Lake Road (Road 409) Inland Trail

Location: South of Caspar: From Highway 1 southeasterly to its intersection with Little Lake Road (County Road 408).

Existing Development: Pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian use; connects with alternative coastal trail along Point Cabrillo Drive (Old Highway 1) to west; and also connects to Little Lake-Sherwood Inland Trail; designated by County Trails Plan.

Caspar Headlands State Beach

Location: Both sides of the mouth of Doyle Creek.

Ownership: DPR, 3 acres.

Existing Development: State ownership includes only the southwest corner of the beach at Caspar Anchorage. Existing houses on the beach are on a leasehold from the Caspar Lumber Company. Offers of dedication for lateral blufftop access south of DPR land have been recorded by Crowther and Foster.

Potential Development: State acquisition of the entire beach and adjoining Caspar and Doyle Creek wetlands; possible acquisition of private campground east of the Point Cabrillo Drive proposed by DPR.

Policy:

4.6-6 The Department of Parks and Recreation shall be requested to prepare acquisition and management plans for all of the beach lands fronting upon Caspar Anchorage and for those Caspar Creek wetlands which are located west of Highway 1. A coastal trail loop, as indicated on the Land Use Maps connecting the village of Caspar with Point Cabrillo Drive, should be incorporated in any park management plan. If the forest land ownership at Caspar Beach ever changes, State Department of Parks and Recreation should develop a hiking and equestrian trail from Caspar Beach to Jackson State Forest.

Caspar Headlands State Reserve

Location: South side of Caspar Anchorage.

Ownership: California Department of Parks and Recreation owns four parcels within the Caspar Headlands Estates Subdivision.

Characteristics: Trail shown on the Land Use Plan provides public access from Cabrillo Drive to the cul-de-sac that provides access to the parcels in the Caspar Headlands Reserve area.

Existing Development: According to an order of the court, use is for educational purposes, however, current uses are viewing and fishing. A paved cul-de-sac, now closed to traffic, serves headlands and subdivision lots which have earth berms to separate them from state-owned parcels. Recorded offers of dedication for blufftop, lateral access exist immediately south and 0.5 miles south of DPR property. (Hall and Howell)

Potential Development: State ownership should be expanded, consolidated, or eliminated. If the reserve is retained, parking should be provided and the landscape restored.

Policies:

4.6-7 It shall be recognized that acquisition of the entire Caspar Headlands estate is not feasible and that an agreement for private and public use of the area is the best solution.

4.6-8 The offers of blufftop dedication in Caspar South subdivision and Cabrillo subdivision (Foster, Crowther, Hall, and Howell) shall be relinquished because no blufftop trail is proposed and access is available nearby.

Point Cabrillo Alternative Coastal Trail

Location: Point Cabrillo Drive (Old Highway 1 now County Road 564) from Caspar Creek to Russian Gulch.

Existing Development: Connects to Caspar-Little Lake Road and Cross - California Ecological Trail Corridor. Alternative to Highway 1 for cyclists.

Potential Development: Post sign on Highway 1 for cyclists.

Point Cabrillo Light House

Location: One mile west of Point Cabrillo Drive at Pine Grove.

Ownership: U.S. Coast Guard, 32 acres; remainder private.

Existing Development: Light station is not open to public except by written permission from District Commander in San Francisco.

Potential Development: Light house station would be an access point for picnicking, ocean viewing and historic site tours during daylight hours.

Policies:

- 4.6-9 When the Coast Guard abandons the lighthouse property, the California Department of Parks & Recreation or other agency or organization should acquire the property and prepare a management plan for the lighthouse that will provide for the development of a trail to the lighthouse as shown on the Land Use Plan Map. Until then, the U.S. Coast Guard shall be requested to open the light station property to limited public access at no fee. Use shall be restricted to picnicking, ocean viewing, and historic site tours during daylight hours. Because this shoreline is included within the boundaries of the Point Cabrillo Underwater Reserve administered by the Department of Fish and Game, no offshore diving or rockfishing shall be allowed.
- 4.6-10 The use of this 300 acres should remain public. Any proposed closure or other restriction on use of the site for public access and recreation, including those arising from the sale or transfer of the property, may require an LCP amendment and would constitute development requiring a coastal development permit. A State of California Marine Preserve is located along the western shore of the Point Cabrillo Light Station and Nature Preserve prohibiting any recreational or commercial fishing, diving, or swimming in these areas. *(Revised 8-30-2005; Resolution 05-153)*
- 4.6-11 Offers of dedication for public access shall be obtained along the designated pedestrian day use trail on the land use plan map consistent with Policy 3.6-5. Existing offers of dedication located on the southern trail section on the White property shall be accepted.

Cross-California Ecological Inland Trail Corridor

Location: From Russian Gulch State Park through the Park to Colusa and the North Lake Tahoe corridor.

Existing Development: Hiking and equestrian trail through Russian Gulch State Park; designated by DPR Hiking and Equestrian Trails Plan.

Russian Gulch Headlands Area

Several property owners have been required to make access offers of dedication as a condition of permit approval. Offers by Bower, Kibbee, Ferrero and Barham have been recorded; agreements with Powers, Hansen, Davies and Bergin have not yet been signed and recorded. The Land Use Plan recommends that all offers of dedication be relinquished. The area between Indian Shoals Subdivision and Russian Gulch State Park will not be needed for a blufftop trail; the bluffs themselves are fragile and a trail could not be completed using dedication offers because key parcels have been developed without dedication offers.

Policy:

- 4.6-12 All offers of dedication which have been recorded for public access required as a condition of permit approval within the Russian Gulch Headlands area shall be relinquished finding that there is sufficient access at Caspar Cove and Russian

Gulch and that access has been requested at Point Cabrillo. The area between Point Cabrillo and Russian Gulch is already parcelled out into several subdivisions and partially developed. Public testimony has established the fragility of the area.

Russian Gulch Blufftop

Ownership: DPR

Existing Development: Well developed and heavily used park. Facilities are listed in Table 3.7-1.

Potential Development: Addition of up to 100 campsites east of Highway at north edge of park. Improved access to south headlands, including new parking area.

Policies:

4.6-13 The Department of Parks and Recreation shall be requested to prepare a general plan for Russian Gulch State Park that provides access to the south headlands, subject to conditions necessary for preservation of the park's natural environment.

4.6-14 DPR should schedule the addition of campsites at Russian Gulch State Park so that not more than 50 are built within 5 years following adoption of the Coastal Element. If subsequent evaluation shows that private campgrounds of comparable quality between Fort Bragg and Russian Gulch are not meeting the demand for campsites, 50 additional units may be built.

The Department of Parks and Recreation should schedule the development of additional campsites in conjunction with a park management plan. The number of campsites shall be dependent upon sewage capacity which is allotted to the Russian Gulch State Park by the Mendocino City Community Services District.

Visitor Accommodations and Services: Visitor accommodations and services are designated as a principal permitted use in the Jug Handle Creek to Russian Gulch Planning Area at the following locations:

Jug Handle Farm	existing hostel and campground
Caspar Beach Trailer Park	existing campground
Pt. Cabrillo Cottages and Campground	existing accommodations (motel-type)
Russian Gulch State Park	existing campground

Four sites have been designated for conditional uses. They are located at Russian Gulch State Park, south of Jug Handle Farm, the Point Cabrillo Cottages and Campground and the Point Cabrillo Lighthouse property owned by the Department of Parks and Recreation. In addition, several visitor services are located in the Rural Village of Caspar, but have not been designated

on the land use map. (*Revised 5-10-2005; Resolution 05-065; Revised 8-30-2005, Resolution 05-153*)