



WE Watch, P.O Box 830, Solvang CA93464

February 11, 2022

TO: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
FROM: WE Watch, Nancy Emerson, President
RE: Countywide Recreation Master Plan Update



WE Watch supports the Countywide Recreation Master Plan, which will provide valuable baseline information about recreational opportunities for residents and tourists throughout the County. Also, it will enable new projects to unfold more effectively in the future. WE Watch sponsored a meeting about this plan for Santa Ynez Valley residents last summer so they could contribute ideas for the consultants' use.

County & Cities Coordination. This project needs to include efforts to streamline and coordinate processes within the plan. Its strands will require **continued** coordination among county and city Parks & Recreation departments. This project involves cities' own parks and recreation surveys and those staff members need to be meaningfully involved too, so it is truly COUNTYWIDE.

Both the County's work on climate change and criminal justice issues have demonstrated the value of interdepartmental cooperative staff efforts. We think that development of this plan and its implementation will benefit from County Parks working with certain County departments: particularly the Agricultural Commissioner (including the Agricultural Advisory Committee), Public Health, Planning and Development and the Planning Commission so rural recreation/agricultural tourism projects and related ordinances can be coordinated with the plan and its potential pilot projects.

EIR. This project will have a Program EIR. We have learned from cannabis implementation and its Program EIR that the quality of scoping, including project description and baselines are critical if the EIR is to be accurate and comprehensive. Adequately anticipating consequences is difficult but we must do everything humanly possible to prevent EIR inadequacy. We strongly recommend involvement at the scoping stage by staff from other departments and from other cities as well as a County Planning Commission meeting with public comment before the EIR description is finalized.

This Program EIR needs to serve as an environmental baseline for existing parks and trails as well as new projects. How will it interact with existing, more specific EIR and Land Use Plans, both in the County and the individual cities?

Environmentally Sensitive Sites. Much recreation occurs outdoors on environmentally sensitive sites. Their natural beauty is intrinsic to the recreating and refreshing process. Some recreational uses are not environmentally sound on those sites, though popular with segments of the population. Too often “overrides” have been approved to allow uses that EIRs find unmitigable. Do not allow that to happen with this EIR.

Adequate County Parks Staff. To ensure careful implementation of project recommendations, including pilot projects, and enforcement of regulations, adequate Parks & Recreation staff must be in place when the final **plan** is approved. This includes at least a part-time planner in that department.

Additional Funding. It is unfortunate that the original planning for this project did not foresee the need for amendments to existing land use documents to implement coordination with new and innovative recreation and agricultural tourism developments – both public and private. But it is so important that this coordination be completed, that we support approval of additional funds to achieve the goals envisioned when initial funds were allocated.

Finally, county residents have responsibilities as the ultimate beneficiaries of this project. This means involving ourselves when invited to attend the scoping meeting(s) and hearings on the EIR and on the plan itself as it unfolds.