

BOLINAS BEACH COMMITTEE

FINAL REPORT ON BEACH ISSUES

October 17, 2006

Our Purpose: The Bolinas Beach Committee was formed as an ad hoc committee for the Bolinas Community Public Utility District in October, 2004 to address the rising concerns of the citizenry of Bolinas, about the escalating use and abuse of Bolinas beaches. The following points were discussed in detail over the last 24 months, we now present our findings and recommendations to the Bolinas Community.

FIREWORKS

- There is a Marin County ordinance prohibiting Fireworks of any kind. Fireworks are readily available in Sonoma County.
- Many people think fondly of past years when there were locally sponsored and administered public fireworks displays. Would such an event cause or resolve fireworks abuses?
- The Beach Committee wishes to have the Sheriff's Department enforce this ordinance without exception and to the fullest extent of the law. Special request for extra enforcement to curtail firework abuses during the 4th of July festivities.

Why: Summertime brings greater concern for wildfire. Reckless fireworks detonated by youth caused the Little Mesa fire in July of 2004, daylight hours and quick response averted a catastrophe and in an separate incident a Bolinas resident was hit with an explosive causing severe personal injury.

CAMP FIRES

- Beach fires bring many detrimental effects for visitors and residents alike. Fires generate charcoal, which pollutes the Ocean, noxious smoke, broken glass and litter; fires often glow for hours unattended. Currently it is forbidden to have a fire without a permit in Marin County. There are many non-permitted fires yearly on our beaches. Bolinas Fire Dept. is not equipped to administer to beach fires. The Sheriffs Dept. will only respond to formal complaints.
- In 2005 there was a night fire at the entrance of Brighton Beach within yards of a residence. At the same time there was a large beach fire near the green wall.

Resolved: The Beach Committee wishes to have the Sheriff enforce this ordinance in every instance of a complaint. Bolinas Fire Protection District should work with the Sheriffs Department to resolve enforcement of this ordinance. There is no established mechanism for acquiring a permit.

Why: Toxic debris is burned on the beach, onshore breezes deposit toxic smoke in neighborhoods, and fires are left unattended for kids and dogs to run through smoldering ashes.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

No Governmental Agency or local entity takes sole responsibility for Beach Stewardship. Bolinas non-profits such as the Community Center or the Downtown Cleanup Committee bare the expense for a partial beach area pick-up.

Issues and recommendations:

- County Health Dept. and other monitoring agencies must place water quality postings at ALL public entrances to the beach.
- Dog owners should have their pets in control at all times. Animal Control Ordinance 8.04.175. Demands Dog Control by a Responsible Person at all times. Failure to do so is subject to seizure and impoundment. (Ord. 3377- 1 (part) 2003)
- Clear signing for the Tennis Court Restrooms must be available at the Brighton beach entrance.
- The doggie feces bag boxes are very effective; they should be maintained and available at all beach entrances.
- Parking, Loading and Unloading of beach equipment in the roadway is a safety hazard on most weekends/ holidays.

HEALTH AND SAFETY (continued)

- Speeding autos near parking and beach entrances can not be tolerated. 25mph speed is too fast in congested areas.

GARBAGE

- Picnic trash left at but not in containers is a health hazard, which attracts vermin and pests.
- Bolinas Community Center and the Downtown Cleanup Committee are trying to meet Garbage and Recycling needs at beach entrances in cooperation with the Marin Conservation Corps.
- The Marin Conservation Corps will be responsible for recycling collection, the Community Center & Downtown Cleanup will see to trash sorting and pick-up. New receptacles are being supplied and grant monies sought for landscaping improvements.

Resolved: The Beach Committee recommends that the use and abuse of these new receptacles be monitored for future refinements.

NOISE

- There is a noise ordinance in place Chapter 6.70, requiring quiet time between 11 PM until 7 AM.
- For Beach neighbors, and downtown residents, youth events in town still bring the greatest unpleasantness. Loud and drunken behavior during early morning hours is the norm during and after many such events, this is not solely subject to summertime events.
- Bolinas is thought to be a dog friendly town. Many visitors bring their dog and let it run free while surfing or tie it up to let it bark all day disturbing entire neighborhoods.
- Car alarms are a problem during the weekends while beach users are out of earshot, sometimes for hours when alarms do not reset.
- Many beach events have been staged with amplified music, either with extension cord links or generator powered equipment. This can not be tolerated and is covered under Marin County Code, Chapter of 6.70 Loud and Unnecessary Noise. Sheriff should enforce the code upon complaint.

Suggestion: The Beach Committee would like to see more Bo-local signs that express a need for respect and stewardship of our beach and neighborhoods, We would like to see funds be made available for production of locally made user-friendly signs at beach entrances and locations with visitor parking.

BRIGHTON, WHARF, PARK, TERRACE, LITTLE MESA ROAD IMPACT

- Brighton, Wharf, Park, Terrace and the Little Mesa Streets are those which see the greatest impact from beach use. Roads are narrow and congested on weekends. There are many life safety violations that occur without a citation. Parking violations with safety impacts are the most egregious. There is no single solution to too many autos in downtown.
- Automobile campers are a constant throughout the year. Upon complaint deputies should enforce the vehicle habitation laws. (Marin County Code # 7.52.020)

THE OFFERS TO DEDICATE (O.T.D.)

- OTD's ensure the public's right to access the beach. At their May 2006 meeting the BCPUD board of directors accepted outstanding offers to dedicate from private beach property owners, thereby strengthening the public's right to use the private beach for passive recreational use. The California Coastal Commission in their State Wide Interpretive Guidelines explains passive recreational use.

CAMPING

- Present No Camping ordinance, which bans camping on weekends YEAR ROUND, is rarely being enforced by the Marin County Sheriff's Department and does little to restrict camping.
- The Bolinas Beach Committee recommends that the BCPUD Board and Community expand the current part time camping ordinance to a permanent full time, year round ordinance.

Pro: Better health and safety through cleaner beaches.
Frees up beach parking, so more locals can use the beach.
Helps make Downtown Neighbors feel more secure.
No additional part time residents; (people living on the beach).

How: Widespread publicity of a new ban, through signs at beach entrances, Internet, news reports. Etc.

OTHER ROOT CAUSES TO THE PROBLEMS

- Outdoor sports promoters/operators (kayak & surf lessons) are not passive uses, and put an excess burden on parking and in emergencies on our volunteer fire department.
- The Beach Committee has met with management of the Bolinas Community Center and hopes their new contract regulations for event promoters will bring about more respectful behavior. Promote awareness in the community that we are all “Stewards of the Beach”.

THOUGHTS ON REMEDIES / SOLUTIONS As the review of the Bolinas Community Plan, the Gridded-Mesa Plan and the Local Coastal Plan come to the forefront of local politics it is increasingly evident that present pressures both social and monetary are unlike those exerted at any time in the town’s past. Bolinas has long been a community of tolerance. The town has a fragile infrastructure paid for by earnest citizens. The setting is beautiful and unique, set within a fragile Ocean/Lagoon ecosystem. Pressures on beach communities are only going to increase and The California Coastal Commission is going to insist on open access. Some restrictions on the use of the beach, such as a camping ban and fire enforcement, will enhance the pleasure and safety of more beach goers. Bolinas still wants to take care of itself and shuns outside intervention, but we have to see to it that our local ordinances are enforced. Bolinas is no longer a secret and hundreds of water-sports enthusiasts and day users find their way here year round. We can no longer control the human influx, we can only hope to modify their behavior to be more mindful of this special place.

Recommendations:

- Expand ban on camping to full time, year round ordinance.
- Greater cooperation of the Sheriffs department to enforce existing bans on camping, fires and vehicle habitation and all current ordinances on public behavior.
- The Bolinas Beach Committee recommends that the town and the Bolinas Fire Protection District organize an annual “Springtime Beach Clean-Up Day” to haul away toxic materials and burn, in a controlled bonfire, the non-toxic wood to reduce fuel availability.
- Monitor & improve new trash and recycling receptacles and planting areas near Brighton and Wharf.
- Monitoring agencies to post water quality “Warnings” at ALL beach entrances.
- BCPUD must help to secure funds for new Bo-Local signage for posting of County Ordinances, noise abatement and beach stewardship.
- Citizens should report disturbances to the Sheriff regularly to encouraging a better level of enforcement.
- Tow vehicles from areas where emergency vehicles need to have access, with trucks supplied by the county.
- Increase community awareness that residents in the vicinity of the beach are encumbered by a significant and ongoing burden of beach use day and night.
- Encourage and promote awareness in the community and to visitors that we are all stewards of the beach.
- Utilize pamphlets, windshield tickets, news and informational sources, Internet web-sites, Surfrider Foundation and related organizations and businesses to get information out.

Respectfully Submitted by Beach Committee Members in Good Standing:

Magi Barror, Chairman; Bruce Bowser, Secretary; Jeffrey Commons, Lou Commons, David Kimball, Suzie Mills.