

BCPUD PIPELINE



FALL 2015

270 Elm Road, P.O. Box 390, Bolinas, CA 94924 (415) 868-1224

In Brief...

Update on the Surfer's Overlook Retaining Wall Repair Project

As this newsletter goes to press, the BCPUD received word from the Marin County Department of Public Works that the project to repair the road-level retaining walls at Surfer's Overlook is scheduled to begin on November 9, 2015.

Terrace Avenue will be CLOSED to vehicle traffic 24/7 for the duration of the project, which is expected to last about six weeks. Pedestrian access will be allowed via a pathway on the non-bluff side of the road; however, this access may be closed from time to time for safety reasons during the course of the project.

This important public works project was made possible by generous donations from dozens of community members and the tireless efforts of a local Committee to Save Terrace Avenue. Many thanks to all who donated their time and/or money in support of this critical community access road.

Water or Sewer-Related emergency?
Call 415-868-1224
(24 hours)

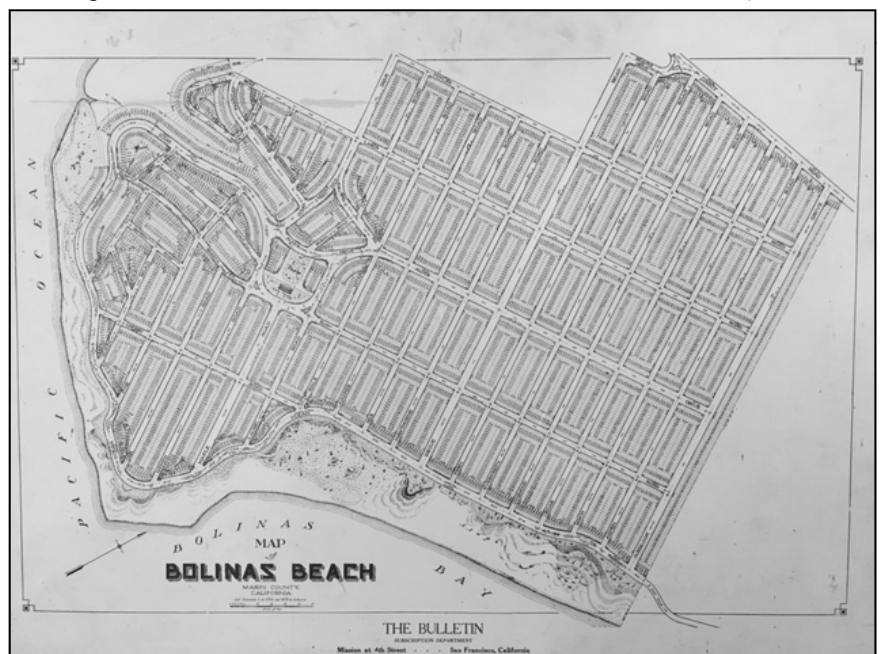
The Public Rights-of-Way on the Big Mesa: It's Time for a Community Conversation

Some History

The area of Bolinas we know today as the "Big Mesa" (sometimes referred to as the "Gridded Mesa") was established nearly a century ago as the "Bolinas Beach" subdivision when Arthur and Ruth Smadbeck recorded the Bolinas Beach Map with the County of Marin in 1927 (*See photo below*). The map dedicated to the "public use" all land within the limits of "all roads... marked as such on this map." The map depicts most of the rights-of-way on the Big Mesa as 40-feet in width, although a few key thoroughfares (i.e., Alder, Grove, Ocean Parkway) are 60-feet in width. At the same time as the rights-of-way were established, the subdivision map created more than five thousand small lots (20 feet x 100 feet or smaller in size) that could be purchased for \$69.50 as part of a subscription promotion by the *San Francisco Bulletin*. The Smadbecks seemingly envisioned a bustling beach resort community for urban San Franciscans and other "over the hill" residents.

Over time, the concept of a subdivision with thousands of individually-owned and developed lots separated by 40 to 60-foot-wide developed rights-of-way gave way to the reality we see today on the Big Mesa – many of the original lots have been merged into single properties and many of the public rights-of-way depicted on the map have been only partially or minimally developed. From time to time the BCPUD and the Bolinas Fire Protection District ("BFPD") raise concerns about the public health and safety issues posed by the disappearing public rights-of-way. For example, the BCPUD does not have ready access to sections of its infrastructure (e.g., water mains, water service lines, water meters) due to vegetation, fences, structures and other personal property encroaching in the public rights-of-way; as a result, infrastructure repairs and pipeline installation are more difficult and time-consuming and therefore are much more expensive. In addition, the BFPD cannot access certain homes (or even entire neighborhoods) due to encroachments into the public rights-of-way which render it impossible to drive an engine to those homes and/or neighborhoods; this severely compromises the BFPD's emergency response and fire suppression abilities.

In the past, the Bolinas community has responded to concerns expressed by the BCPUD and/or the

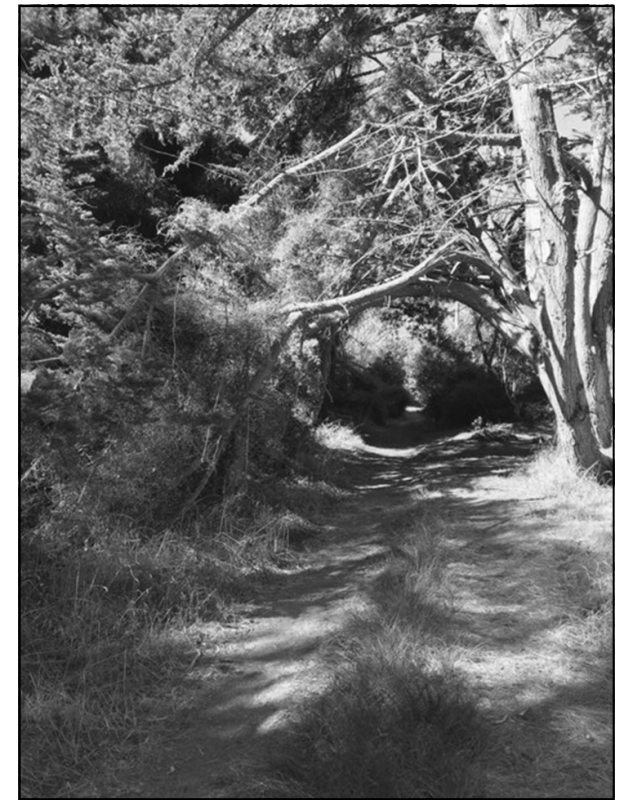


BFPD about the diminishing public rights-of-way in a variety of ways. Most recently (in 1996) a committee of community members prepared the Bolinas Mesa Traffic Plan which mapped the then-existing paved and unpaved road network on the Big Mesa. However, this plan is sorely outdated and inaccurate, and the encroachments into the public rights-of-way are much more significant than they were 20 years ago (*see photos on this page*). It is time – as a community – to tackle this topic once again.

A Call to Action

Recognizing that the community should not ignore obstructions or encroachments in the public rights-of-way that impair fire response or other emergency vehicles, or that impede BCPUD's access to its infrastructure, the BCPUD Board of Directors' Mesa Septic, Flood Control and Roads committee recommended to the BCPUD Board at its October 21, 2015 meeting that a Mesa-wide survey of existing obstructions and/or encroachments be performed by BCPUD and BFPD staff. The BCPUD Board, in consultation with the BFPD Board, will evaluate the survey results to consider what actions should be undertaken to remediate the identified, high-priority obstructions and encroachments. For the last several years, at the direction of the BCPUD Board, BCPUD staff has focused on the removal of *new* encroachments in the rights-of-way; however residents requested by the BCPUD to remove new encroachments often point to other residents with existing encroachments in the rights-of-way and assert it is not fair to single out new "offenders". BCPUD staff recently requested guidance from the BCPUD Board and – by extension – the Bolinas community on this topic; hence, the Board committee's recommendation to conduct an inter-district survey of the Mesa.

The BCPUD has authority under the California Public Utilities Code to enforce the use of land dedicated to the public, such as the public rights-of-way on the Big Mesa, for the purposes for which the land was dedicated (i.e., the development of roads, utility infrastructure, drainage culverts and ditches, etc.). As such, in 1998 the BCPUD enacted Ordinance 30 (available on the BCPUD website at www.bcpud.org) to govern the public rights-of-way on the Gridded Mesa. From time to time the BCPUD has exercised this authority to require the removal of fences, structures, trees or other encroachments in the public rights-of-way directly affecting BCPUD and/or BFPD operations. As mentioned above, the BCPUD Board has directed that staff focus on requiring the removal of *new* obstructions and encroachments as a top priority.



The BCPUD and BFPD will engage in public outreach efforts in coming months to educate Mesa residents about the extent and implications of the encroachment problem (as well as the financial, health and safety impacts thereof), and solicit input toward a solution. The BCPUD Board will include a standing item on its monthly meeting agenda to discuss and receive public input about the best use and management of the public rights-of-way.

Please give some thought to this important topic. Although no one wants Bolinas to look like a bland, suburban planned community, if we want to keep Bolinas as it is, we need to consider removing problematic encroachments from our public rights-of-way, particularly those that impede fire and emergency response. A fire comparable to the recent Valley Fire would create a dangerous evacuation problem and could represent the end of Bolinas as we know it because current fire and building codes may be impossible for some property

owners to meet — at a minimum, a rebuilt Mesa would be a very different-looking community. Finally, although not as urgent as fire safety, everyone "pays" when BCPUD has to spend extra resources and staff time to access its infrastructure located in the public rights-of-way. Thank you for thinking about this, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas.