



DRAFT
CORRIDOR INTRINSIC QUALITIES INVENTORY
CULTURAL QUALITIES

**Highway 1 in Monterey County
along the Big Sur Coast
SLO-1-71.4/74.3
MON-1-0.0/72.3**

**Prepared for: Caltrans District 5
Prepared by: Parsons Brinckerhoff
September 2001**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	1
2	<u>METHODOLOGY</u>	1
3	<u>EXPRESSIONS OF LOCAL COMMUNITY LIFE</u>	2
3.1	<u>LOCALE</u>	2
3.2	<u>SPRITUAL AND MEDITATIVE PLACES</u>	4
3.3	<u>ARTS AND CULTURE</u>	4
3.4	<u>COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES</u>	5
4	<u>CONCLUSION</u>	5
5	<u>REFERENCES</u>	6

APPENDIX A: BIG SUR COAST HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT PLAN INITIATION OF WORKING GROUPS PERSPECTIVES ON VISION

CULTURAL INTRINSIC QUALITIES INVENTORY

1 INTRODUCTION

The Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (CHMP) is designed to establish coordinated management of the Highway corridor along this widely treasured coastline. The primary goal is to preserve, protect and restore the area's unique qualities while ensuring the continued safe and efficient operation of the highway.

Fundamental to a corridor management plan is an inventory of intrinsic qualities, the unique and irreplaceable features that define the essence of the corridor. The inventory of these qualities provides the foundation on which management strategies will be designed to preserve, protect and restore.

Intrinsic qualities are categorized into six types:

- Archeological
- Cultural
- Historic
- Natural
- Scenic
- Recreational

This report focuses on the cultural qualities of the Coast. Cultural quality is defined in the Scenic Byway guidelines as follows:

Cultural quality is evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people. Cultural features including, but not limited to crafts, music, dance, rituals, festivals, speech, food, special events and vernacular architecture are currently practiced. The cultural qualities of the corridor could highlight one or more significant communities and/or ethnic traditions¹.

2 METHODOLOGY

Capturing the "evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions" of the Big Sur corridor is challenging given the fact that many residents are attracted to the area because of its remoteness and isolation. Also, while the resident population is small, it comprises individuals with a wide range of income levels, interests, beliefs, and traditions. Given the diverse nature of the population and the difficulty of working with what is largely anecdotal information, a variety of informational sources were used to prepare this report. The primary sources of information include literature and Internet searches, interviews with stakeholders, and surveys. Surveys were distributed at the public meeting held in March 2001, through the May 2001 *Big Sur Roundup*, and at the Steering Committee Meeting in June 2001. Approximately 10 surveys were received through the various methods of distribution.

¹ Federal Highway Administration, *National Scenic Byway Program: Understanding, Inventorying, and Evaluating a Byway's Intrinsic Qualities*. Written by Whiteman & Taintor, 1999.

Other inventory reports prepared for the CHMP also address topics that relate to the cultural qualities of the corridor. For example, the Historic Qualities inventory provides information on historic context and property types along the Coast Highway. Information is also derived from the Recreational Qualities inventory which, though descriptions of recreational activities in the Big Sur area, provides insight into customs and traditions of local residents.

3 EXPRESSIONS OF LOCAL COMMUNITY LIFE

The natural landscape dominates the Big Sur corridor. Human development and manmade features along the corridor are secondary to the rugged topography and scenic beauty of the area. Residents of the area are inexorably tied to the landscape by virtue of the ruggedness of the area, the beauty of the vistas, and the natural risks associated with living in an unstable coastal area.

As part of developing the CHMP, a series of perspectives on the unique aspects of the Big Sur coast was compiled by the project team in to foster a visioning process with stakeholder groups. The perspectives (Appendix A) include quotations, observations and policies that speak to the unique character of the area and address the linkage between people and place.

The historic and contemporary community centers within the Big Sur Corridor include the Big Sur Valley in the northern portion of the corridor and Lucia in the southern corridor. While these areas (especially Big Sur Valley) provide some commercial services, and a community center, pockets of development, along the ocean cliffs and within the remote valleys have evolved into smaller community places that are considered distinct and unique, given the relatively dispersed pattern of development along the corridor.

As noted in Section 2, the characteristics of the people along the Highway 1 corridor are widely divergent. Descendents of pioneering families who remained in the area, along with those who moved to the area within the last 30 to 40 years are considered local, and provide much of the community structure in terms of activities and organizations. Younger families (including minority populations) who work primarily in the construction, agriculture and service industries and who reside in employee housing, rental or caretaker housing, comprise another core group.

Part time residents are another group that are found within the Big Sur coast. This group includes people in the entertainment and high tech industries who own second homes or seasonal residences in the area, and who seek isolation and privacy and are less inclined to become involved in community activities.

The area also includes people who choose to completely isolate themselves from the outside world, who live primarily off the land, do not participate in outside activities of any type and harbor a distrust of governmental structure.

3.1 Locale

The combination of the rugged, hilly terrain set against the ocean cliffs and the large expanse of public lands has resulted in isolated pockets of development linked by Highway 1. The sense of isolation is heightened during the winter months when storms make travel difficult at best and sometimes impossible due to slides and flooding. Consequently, residents have developed an independent, self-reliant approach to living along the Big Sur coast.

The following is an overview of the main communities along the corridor:

Carmel Highlands – Residents of Carmel Highlands are more closely connected to the Monterey area.

Palo Colorado – Although this area is also commercially linked to the Monterey area, residents identify with and are active in the in Big Sur community.

Bixby area – This area is comprises the larger land holdings in public and private ownership. Residents of this area are active in the Big Sur community.

Big Sur Valley – With the largest concentration of commercial businesses along the Big Sur corridor, the Big Sur Valley serves as the primary commercial and social center of the mid-coast area. With the exception of business owners and employees who reside in the valley, the area serves as the community center for people residing in Pfeiffer Ridge, Sycamore Canyon and Partington Ridge areas.

Nepenthe – While recognized as a venerable Big Sur institution throughout the world, this restaurant also serves as a community focal point for local residents. Other businesses and residences are located within this area as well. Residents in this area consider themselves part of the central Big Sur community.

Lucia – The area around Lucia was settled in a similar fashion to the Big Sur Valley to the north serves as the primary commercial and community center for the southern portion of the corridor.

Willow Creek – This area contains working mines located on Forest Service property. Due to the remoteness of the area, residents tend to be more isolated from the outside world and less trusting of governmental institutions.

Southern Corridor – In general, the area south of Lucia to San Carpoforo Creek is constrained by severe topography and homes are dispersed and remote. Few commercial services are available and residents must travel long distances for basic services. During storm events, this area can become isolated from other sections of the coast, and local residents have adopted a strong self-reliant attitude. Again, due to the isolated nature of this area, local residents tend to participate less in the community activities in the Big Sur Valley. This area uses CB radios as a primary form of communication, which becomes critical when telephone lines are down.

Following the construction of the Monterey San Simeon Highway in the mid-1930s, local residents developed place names along the roadway corridor to identify specific points. Place names are derived from a number of sources including pioneering families, vegetation, geographic characteristics, notable accidents, and other noteworthy factors. The unique character of the place names, and the widely divergent reasons for naming points along the highway speaks to the intertwining of Highway 1 into local live and culture. A few examples of unique place names are listed below:

Pepperwood Gulch – Located somewhere between Kohlstedt Corner and Rocky Cove, this gulch is home to many Pepperwoods, Laurels or Bay trees.

The Plane Road – This road, not shown on any map, was built in order to salvage the wreckage of a Coast Guard plane that went down in the hills above Pepperwood Gulch.

3.2 Spiritual and Meditative Places

As noted in the Historic Qualities Inventory, the remoteness of the Big Sur area has also contributed to its popularity among those seeking peace and contemplation. Three places of note provide spiritual and contemplative venues for religious and spiritual activities.

Carmelite Monastery – The Carmelite Monastery, established in 1925, is located at the edge of Carmel Highlands, which was considered a remote area when originally developed. The monastery serves as a retreat for nuns and is not open to the public.

New Camaldoli Hermitage – Founded by the Camaldolese, an order of Benedictine priests, it is available for retreats by church members who can stay in rooms or trailers.

Esalen Institute – Offers public workshops, residential work-study programs, invitational conferences, and meeting venues. This 40-year-old institution with an international following contributes significantly to the reputation of Big Sur as a place for spiritual renewal.

3.3 Arts and Culture

Artists and writers were attracted to the Big Sur area early on, due to the inspiring scenery and secluded atmosphere. As noted in the Historic Qualities inventory, this trend was strengthened during World War II when buildings in the area were available at reasonable costs and artists occupied many of the cabins and homes in the area. This tradition continues today with contemporary artists and established galleries, libraries, and other cultural venues such as the Henry Miller Library, the Big Sur Co-op Art Gallery, Garden Gallery (Linda Vista), and organizations such as the Big Sur Arts Initiative. Other artistic and cultural activities include artistic workshops and seminars at Esalen, guided walks featuring local medicinal plants, sponsored by the Post Ranch Inn, moonlight tours of the Point Sur Lighthouse and other activities listed below.

Major Events (reaching outside of the immediate community)

A number of events in Big Sur are held annually which bring people from outside of the area and which enhance the reputation of the area as a special place for the arts as well as recreation.

<u>Event</u>	<u>Month</u>
Big Sur Jazzfest	May
Big Sur International Experimental Music Festival	May
Big Sur Looping Festival	July
West Coast Poetry Slam	July
Hidden Garden Tours	June
Big Sur Marathon	April
Big Sur Blues Festival	September
Big Sur River Run	October
Big Sur Trail Marathon	October
Big Sur Jade Festival	October
Big Sur Children's Writing Workshop	December

Some of these events, like the Big Sur Marathon and Big Sur Jazzfest, bring in large numbers of people and vehicles, making travel by local residents more difficult during the duration of the

event. Most of the larger events are held during the dry season, which helps to avoid access and circulation problems associated with the slide-prone rainy season.

3.4 Community Activities

Residents in Big Sur have a strong tradition of volunteering. Big Sur was one of four communities in the Nation that had a volunteer ambulance service at one time and community members also started a volunteer health clinic, (which is now staffed by paid employees). The Friends of the Big Sur Library are active in providing supplemental services to the local library to supplement the staffing provided by Monterey County.

In the spirit of volunteerism and community activity, Big Sur residents continue to hold a number of smaller events for social, cultural and philanthropic purposes. These local events serve to define community traditions and character, at least for the segment of the local population who chose to participate. These events include:

Community Events and Activities

Nepenthe "Sign" Parties
Memorial Weekend Library Book Bake Sale
Softball in the State Park
4th of July Celebration (Esalen)
4th of July Grange Rummage Sale
Grange events
Halloween Masked Ball at Nepenthe
Big Sur Christmas Craft Faire
Rummage Potluck
Music at River Inn (Fernwood)
Captain Cooper School Events
Big Sur Historical Society Meetings
Benefits, funerals and other personal gatherings

As noted in the Historic Qualities inventory, two properties that function as social centers for the community include the Bug Sur Grange Hall and the Henry Miller Memorial Library. Both buildings serve as community centers where fund raising events, public hearings and other public events are conducted. Other community venues include the main lodge at Pfeiffer-Big Sur State Park and the Multi-Agency Facility.

During the rainy season, access to local events is dependent on the severity of the storms. As with all other aspects of life in Big Sur, road closures and restricted travel conditions can disrupt daily patterns of life, including planned community activities.

4 CONCLUSION

The severe topography of the Big Sur Highway 1 corridor and the large areas of land under public ownership created a dispersed pattern of development within the buildable areas along the cliffs and within the valleys, with homes scattered along the corridor in isolated pockets. The Big Sur Valley is the primary commercial and social center of the area, although residents of the northern part of the corridor are more closely aligned with the Monterey area. Residents of the more remote and isolated southerly area are less involved in community activities in the Big Sur Valley. People are attracted to the area for a variety of reasons including generational

traditions; alternative lifestyles; employment opportunities; seclusion in a beautiful setting; artistic expression; meditative/spiritual enrichment, and, seeking a completely reclusive life.

The tourist industry also affects the cultural traditions and events in the Big Sur area in that much of the commercial businesses along the corridor cater to tourists, and many of the events listed in Section 3 are marketed to a wider population in order to bring additional visitors to the area, during the dry seasons.

The Big Sur community has a long tradition of volunteerism and local events, also listed in Section 3 are a contemporary expression of that tradition. Big Sur residents come together to celebrate social, cultural and charitable events in the limited number of venues in the Big Sur Valley. Since the local community activities occur throughout the year, scheduled activities during the rainy season are more susceptible to cancellation or postponement, depending on weather and road conditions.

5 REFERENCES

5.1 Books and Reports

Big Sur Historical Society, *Recipes for Living in Big Sur*. Big Sur Historical Society: Big Sur, 1981

JRP Historical Consulting Services. "Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan, Draft Corridor Intrinsic Qualities Inventory, Historic Qualities," June 2001.

Federal Highway Administration. *National Scenic Byway Program: Understanding, Inventorying, and Evaluating a Byways Intrinsic Qualities*. Written by Whiteman & Taintor, 1999.

Rosalind Sharpe Wall, *When the Coast was Wild and Lonely – Early Settlers of the Sur* (Pacific Grove, CA: The Boxwood Press, 1987).]

Lussier, Tomi Kay. *Big Sur: A complete History and Guide*. Monterey: Big Sur Publications, 1979.

5.2 Interviews

Telephone interview with Ken Wright, April 18, 2001.

Telephone interview with Mary Trotter, August 28, 2001.

Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan, Cultural Intrinsic Qualities Questionnaire

5.3 Websites

Big Sur Chamber of Commerce Website, at <http://www.bigsurcalifornia.org>

APPENDIX A

**Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan
Initiation of Working Groups
Perspectives on Vision**

The Big Sur Coast: *Protect the Experience.*

Since highway One along the Big Sur Coast opened in 1937, this two-lane road has offered access to spectacular and natural beauty, tranquility, wildness and a sense of wonder. Countless writers and artist have over the years derived inspiration from this landscape, Poet Robinson Jeffers wrote:

*...The greatest beauty is organic wholeness,
the wholeness of life and things,
the divine beauty of the universe.
Love that, not man apart from that...*

In 1965 conservationist David Brower wrote:

The passage along this coast needs to remain "an experience of a landscape where the hand of God has not been obscured by the industry of man" and, "The choice is still open. The Big Sur Coast can be the place where, from here on out, man asks not what he can do to hurt the earth, but what to do so as not to hurt it but to achieve restraint instead, leaving marks that are faint, or that aren't there at all."

Ever since the first homesteaders came to the coast there has been an appreciation of the unique beauty and sensitivity of the land and efforts have continually been made to protect the land.

In 1986, when working on the management plan for the Los Padres Nat'l Forest, the then Congressman Leon Panetta wrote, *"Generally, these changes are intended to shift Forest Service policy in Big Sur away from active enhancement and development of the area, and toward retention of Big Sur in its natural state."*

The State Certified Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan (LUP) states:

2.1 Philosophy and Goals

2.2.1 To preserve for posterity the incomparable beauty of the Big Sur country, its special cultural and natural resources, its landforms and seascapes and inspirational vistas. To this end, all development must harmonize with and be subordinate to the wild and natural character of the land.

2.2.1 Man-made improvements detract from the near-wilderness attributes of the area—if not individually—then collectively.

2.1 The scenic beauty of the Big Sur coast, and the opportunity to escape from urban patterns are prime attractions for residents and visitors alike.

In 1989 Caltrans did the Big Sur Transportation Management Study. A questionnaire was circulated to 2,823 travelers with a section for adding comments. An overwhelming number of the comments made it clear what visitors to the Big Sur coast hope for:

Don't do anything/Leave as is.

This underscores once again the importance of taking a very careful and close look at methods that minimizes impacts as we draft a Highway Management Plan.

*...this is the face of the earth as the Creator intended it to look.
Henry Miller in Big Sur and The Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch*

Coast Watch, September 2000