

# Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan

This newsletter is the first in a series to help you stay informed and be involved in developing the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan.

## STEERING COMMITTEE

Listed below are the 18 organizations participating on the Steering Committee guiding the development of the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan.

Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments  
Big Sur Chamber of Commerce  
Big Sur Land Use Advisory Committee  
Big Sur Multi-Agency Advisory Council  
CA Coastal Commission  
CA Department of Parks & Recreation  
CA State Assembly, 27th District (Keeley)  
CA State Senate, 15th District (McPherson)  
Caltrans  
Coast Property Owners Association  
Coast Watch  
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary  
Monterey County Planning and Building  
Monterey County, District 5 (Potter)  
Monterey County Travel & Tourism Alliance  
South Coast Advisory Committee  
US Congress, 17th District (Farr)  
US Forest Service



The management plan will establish a framework for continued safe and efficient operation of Highway 1 in a manner that preserves, restores and maintains the natural and scenic characteristics of the highway corridor.

## Managing Highway 1 along the Big Sur Coast

The Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (CHMP) will guide the management of the Highway 1 corridor between the Carmel River in Monterey County and San Carpoforo Creek in San Luis Obispo County. This management plan will establish a framework for continued and safe operation of Highway 1 in a manner that preserves, maintains and restores the unique qualities within the corridor.

### Why is a Management Plan needed?

Keeping Highway 1 open and safe is as challenging as the landscape it traverses is unforgiving—a geologist's living laboratory.

Among all the shapes and sizes of landslides occurring here, larger-scale events are not uncommon, particularly with seasons of heavy rain. With extremely limited options for detours, a closure of one or both lanes lasting days, weeks or months at a time is very disruptive to the communities, businesses and visitors it serves.

Notwithstanding the physical undertaking to restore a storm-damaged roadway, an array of considerations can complicate the process to re-establish full service. High on the list is what to do with the material (soil, rock and organic debris) resulting from the repair strategy and the consequent material disposal. Over the years, this has stirred great controversy for numerous storm-related repairs.

When the roadway link is severed, time is critical—intense efforts focus on restoring essential service as soon as possible. Swift action is required not only of Caltrans, but also of other public agencies having jurisdiction over certain work activities. Effective coordination with regulatory agencies, businesses, communities and the public is essential; however, competing interests can forestall decisions or lead to awkward solutions.

## CHMP PLANNING PROCESS



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Pacific Valley in southern Big Sur near Plaskett Creek and Sand Dollar Beach.

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Assuring necessary protection for environmental resources with minimal travel disruption (both in frequency and duration) is expected. The management plan will institute a proactive approach to enable coordinated decision-making.

In addition to storm damage repair techniques, highway design features, certain maintenance practices, proliferation of roadside signs, utilities, development and the spread of exotic weeds are seen as

## PROBLEM SOLVING ACTIVITIES

### Storm Damage Response & Repair

- Evaluate repair techniques and pre-approve related activities (e.g. material disposal)
- Research, map and describe landslide activity
- Evaluate the relationship of the land/sea interface and marine sediment budgets
- Develop communication tools to improve interagency coordination

### Scenic & Habitat Conservation

- Identify favorite views and potential threats to scenic qualities
- Develop guidelines for planted landscapes
- Evaluate the need and placement of roadway signage

### Maintenance

- Develop a detailed inventory and evaluation of all highway culverts
- Evaluate vegetation management techniques and opportunities to fight the spread of invasive weeds

## “Roads no longer merely lead to places; they are places.”

— John Brinckerhoff Jackson

having potential to threaten the integrity of the special place that is Big Sur. Various policies of the Coastal Act and principles established under the National Scenic Byways Program (see page 3) expect that the highway corridor will be managed appropriately—provide a safe and enjoyable experience for the traveler while honoring the essential qualities valued by communities and visitors alike.

### Instituting a Collaborative Process

Central to developing a successful plan is working in a collaborative environment, recognizing the interests and needs of diverse stakeholders and soliciting their meaningful participation. Through various outreach efforts, representatives of public agencies, non-governmental and community organizations and the public get to learn more about each other's roles and responsibilities, gather information, debate issues and affect decisions. The result is intended to foster shared-responsibilities in corridor management that reflect community and agency values.

Under the guidance of an 18-member Steering Committee (see page 1), the CHMP planning effort is being led by Caltrans with a multidisciplinary study team including: geologists, biologists, engineers, planners and community involvement specialists. The Caltrans study team has canvassed the

## Key CHMP Milestones

Big Sur CHMP Initiated

Corridor Inventory Complete

myriad issues related to corridor management leading to the formation of six working groups for problem-solving:

- Storm Damage Response & Repair
- Scenic & Habitat Conservation
- Maintenance Practices
- Public Access & Recreation
- Funding Needs & Priorities
- Plan Implementation

A variety of activities in support of these groups are currently underway, including a corridor-wide inventory to assess intrinsic qualities (natural, scenic, historical, archaeological, cultural and recreational) and technical research (geology, waterways). The primary expectation from the working group activities is a set of management strategies and a structure for implementation.

## A collaborative approach that recognizes the interests of all stakeholders' points of view is central to developing a successful management plan.

A series of public forums is planned to solicit participation at key milestones during the plan's development and evaluation of environmental impacts. All input will be carefully considered and incorporated into the document that will become the Big Sur CHMP. Initiated in the aftermath of the 1998 El Niño storms, the Caltrans study team anticipates a draft plan in late 2001 with a final document in 2002.



AMERICA'S BYWAYS™



FHWA

Management Strategies Proposed

Draft Big Sur CHMP & Preliminary Environmental Review

Steering Committee Ratifies Big Sur CHMP

Environmental Document Complete & Interagency Agreements Adopted

## Big Sur Coast Highway: An All-American Road

Dramatic cliffs, crashing surf, vast ocean views, smooth marine terraces. Highway 1 along the Big Sur Coast includes some of California's—and America's—most stunning natural wonders. This 75-mile stretch of the Carmel-San Simeon highway is home to more than meets the eye. Its spectacular coastline holds many attributes that have made first-time visitors lifetime residents. Accordingly, the Federal Highway Administration offered its highest designation under the National Scenic Byways Program as an "All American Road" in 1996.

To the stakeholders with various roles in corridor management, this designation provides opportunities, but also carries responsibilities. The All American Road distinction is reserved for scenic thoroughfares that are more than thoroughfares: they are destinations unto themselves. Preserving the unique intrinsic qualities along the corridor merits the highest level of care and planning. The National Scenic Byways Program provides guidelines to assess intrinsic qualities, develop tech-

niques and implement strategies to protect and enhance these qualities along the corridor. The corridor management plan outlines the structure for the community together with multiple stakeholders to accomplish those goals.

### Take It Slow

Long before the highway was constructed, the region was home to three Native American groups, including the Ohlone, the Esselen and the Salinan. These first people developed a settlement and subsistence pattern that relied upon the resources of the sea and the land, dating back several thousand years. The descendants of these first people still consider the coast part of their homeland. By the early 18th century, Spanish missionaries began to arrive in increasing numbers. They brought with them agricultural techniques, construction methods, European culture and religion. Sadly, they also brought European diseases against which the native population had no immunities. Cholera and smallpox decimated their native communities.



Coast Highway Management Plan area limits.

Examination of various forms of historic information, combined with careful reconstruction of the life history of the coast's native people and their descendants has led to a more complete understanding of their unique lifeway.

Over the years, permanent settlements developed, and in the early 1920's construction began on Highway 1 along the Big Sur Coast. The highway was completed in 1937, greatly improving the once arduous passage along the coast.

Though the highway made the Big Sur Coast accessible, the ruggedness of the landscape attracted more artists than industrialists. The region became home to some of America's most famous writers, such as Henry Miller.

### Preserving the Tradition

The community that thrives on the Big Sur Coast is passionate about preserving the region's wild coastal ecosystem while allowing present and future generations the opportunity to experience and enjoy it. With Highway 1 providing primary access, it is important that all practical matters associated with managing this essential link do not inadvertently degrade the experience. The aim of the Big Sur CHMP is to provide this assurance.

## THE NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM

The National Scenic Byways Program, created in 1991 under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Act, was the first transportation legislation to grant funds for projects other than building roads. The program provides funding for enhancing, preserving and protecting a unique road and its adjacent environment.

A road can become a National Scenic Byway by being nominated by a sponsoring group after it has already been designated under a state byway program. Both the Scenic Byway and All-American Road classifications value the road's significance, however, an All-American Road is further distinguished as a destination in and of itself. There are currently 15 designated All-American Roads throughout the United States. Each All-American Road differs greatly from another, however they all reflect some distinct American culture and capture the unique essence of their region. For example, along the Beartooth Scenic Byway in Wyoming, one can

see some of America's most majestic scenery, see a grizzly bear and fly-fish in a mountain river, while the Las Vegas Strip All-American Road in Nevada is notable for its landmark hotels, bright lights and nightly excitement.

Six intrinsic qualities—the road's archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic characteristics—are the basis for Scenic Byway status and serve as guidelines for communities in developing their byway strategies. The program emphasizes the role of local community members in managing the byway and shaping its future. The byway's statement of purpose must recognize local needs and values, which in turn should be reflected in the byway's management plan. One byway program might focus on preserving the ecosystem while another might promote tourism and economic benefits. An ideal byway strategy reflects the community's vision relative to both preservation and promotion.



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## HOW TO BECOME INVOLVED

- Read the project information materials
- Attend community meetings and workshops
- Questions? Caltrans questions from Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties call (831) 423-0396. Big Sur CHMP questions, please call Aileen Loe at (805) 549-3103 or email [Aileen\\_Loe@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Aileen_Loe@dot.ca.gov) or visit [www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/](http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/)

## CHMP GLOSSARY

**Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (Big Sur CHMP)**—A guidance document that will establish a framework for continued safe and efficient operation of Highway 1 in a manner that preserves, restores and maintains the natural and scenic characteristics of the corridor.

**Stakeholders**—Representatives of groups, organizations or agencies who share an interest in corridor management principles and practices.

**Steering Committee**—A group of 18 individuals representing diverse organizations and interests that will guide the development of, and ultimately ratify, the Big Sur CHMP. This is the policy-making committee for the Big Sur CHMP.

**Working Groups**—Focus groups established to tackle specific issues, problem solve and make recommendations for improvements along the corridor. The Working Groups were created based on the themes that developed after scoping various issues of corridor management. Results of Working Group activities will be presented to the Steering Committee for review and final resolution.

**Intrinsic Qualities**—Unique and irreplaceable features, or resources that define the character (or essence) of an area grouped into six categories: scenic, natural, historical, cultural, archaeological and recreational.

**Scenic Byway (and All-American Road) Designation**—Federal Highway Administration designation as a unique resource worth preserving. All-American Roads must contain at least two of the six intrinsic qualities listed above to be eligible for designation and must provide an exceptional traveling experience that is so recognized by travelers that they would make a drive along the highway a primary reason for their trip. All-American Roads are the cream of the crop.



## How I See It

### STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW

**Jeff Norman, Consulting Natural Resource Biologist**

Jeff Norman has lived in Big Sur for over 30 years. He originally became involved in CHMP work through the Big Sur Multi-Agency Advisory Council (BSMAAC), where he represents local residents. Jeff's past positions with the US Forest Service and California State Parks provide him with important background knowledge for working on the CHMP. We asked him how he thought the CHMP would improve the preservation and maintenance of Highway 1.

"It will put all agencies on the same page with the same rules. I'd like to see a document that serves the majority of the community and has broad acceptance up and down the corridor. Two potential obstacles are the implementation of the CHMP—by that I mean making sure the document is used—and funding. Maintaining this stretch of Highway 1 will cost more than average maintenance on other highways, so coming up with funding could be a tricky process."

Jeff added that the CHMP development process is designed to be a wide-reaching forum, representing the gamut of those operating along the coast. The effectiveness of the Steering Committee and Working Group activities, he feels, will depend on stakeholders' attendance and willingness to voice their needs and concerns. "Ideally, all the issues will come out and will be considered in developing the CHMP," he said. "But that is also the challenge. The goal is to produce a very detailed document that has undergone intense scrutiny and includes a wide range of input. That's the way we'll get real long-term benefits."



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