



AGENCY: City of Fort Bragg
MEETING DATE: September 13, 2021
DEPARTMENT: Community Development
PRESENTED BY: H Gurewitz
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AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

TITLE:

Receive Report and Consider Introducing by Title Only and Waiving the First Reading of Ordinance 971-2021 Adding Chapter 7.18 (Feeding of Wildlife) to Title 7 (Animals) of the City of Fort Bragg Municipal Code to Prevent the Feeding of Wildlife in the City of Fort Bragg

ISSUE:

The feeding of wildlife on the Coastal Trail and other City properties has become an environmental concern and a potential health and safety concern.

ANALYSIS:

In 2015, the City of Fort Bragg opened the northern portion of the Coastal Trail at Glass Beach providing public access to the coastal bluffs along the City of Fort Bragg. The southern portion of the trail was completed in 2016, and the final connecting segment along the Georgia Pacific Mill Pond was completed in 2019. Since opening, the Coastal Trail has been a destination for locals and tourists alike to recreate and experience the coastal environment.

On February 22, 2021, the City received a letter from Terra Fuller, a local resident and biologist (Attachment 1) expressing concern about the impacts of humans feeding wildlife on the Coastal Trail. She specifically noted that feeding wildlife is a violation of the California Code of Regulations Title 14 Section 251.1 (Attachment 2) and that it is causing environmental damage.

A letter was also received from the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society (Attachment 3) stating *"the number of ravens attracted to our parks, especially the coastal trails, has escalated to the point where they are a threat to other bird populations."*

The letter from the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society also notes, *"Our concern when we see people on public beaches feeding Common Ravens is for the effects on many other birds as well as the Ravens themselves. Ravens are so intelligent they recognize and remember cars and people who bring them food, forming large flocks to take advantage of the concentrated food source."*

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society reports that they have conducted 494 surveys on the main beach of Glass Beach over last 14 years. They note a marked increase in the number of ravens over the last three years, and believe that it is the result of humans feeding wildlife.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife summarizes the concern with feeding wildlife in their “Keep Me Wild” program:

“If wild animals have access to human food and garbage, unnatural foraging behavior can begin. Wildlife venturing into neighborhoods puts both people and animals at risk. Wildlife become susceptible to vehicle strikes, pesticide poisoning, injury from other wildlife, and disease. Public safety may be compromised.”

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), a branch of the USDA, says that feeding wildlife can be a public health concern. They state that, *“too many animals in one place increases the chance of disease transmission to people and among other wildlife”* (Attachment 4). An additional article from APHIS states that ravens negatively affect the recovery of sensitive, threatened, and endangered species, including snowy plovers and can be carriers of West Nile virus (WNV).¹

Ravens can become a nuisance bird. Addressing this issue now reduces the likelihood of it becoming a more serious issue that could require abatement in the future.

On April 12, 2021, the City Council provided direction to staff to draft an ordinance for Council review and develop a public education program and plan.

City staff proposes to include the following activities to educate the public on the new ordinance and the impacts of feeding wildlife:

- Add a wildlife informational page to the City’s website. See Davis example: <https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/urban-wildlife/problems-with-feeding-wildlife>.
- Work with high school and elementary schools on projects to educate the community about feeding wildlife such as a poster or PSA contest.
- Put out Facebook posts and other PSAs during the busy summer season to educate visitors and remind locals of the new rules.

If adopted, the ordinance would apply to all City-owned properties including but not limited to: Bainbridge Park, Otis Johnson Park, Noyo Headlands Park and the Coastal Trail, Pomo Bluffs Park, around the Guest House Museum, around the CV Starr Community Center, and to private property within the City limits.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Introduce by title only and waive further reading of the proposed ordinance to prohibit the feeding of wildlife in the City of Fort Bragg.

¹ Peebles, Luke and Jack Spencer Jr. “Common Ravens.” Wildlife Damage Management Technical Series. US Department of Agriculture, Animal & Plant Inspection Service Wildlife Services. February 2020.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

- Make revisions and consider introduction at a later date.
- Take no action on the proposed ordinance.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The fiscal impact of this ordinance is minimal. The budget for signage is under \$5,000. Additional impacts will be a limited amount of staff time to develop supplementary educational materials.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACT:

This ordinance will have no impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

CONSISTENCY:

This project is consistent with the City of Fort Bragg’s Coastal General Plan, Element 4 – Conservation, Open Space, Energy, and Parks Goal OS-5 Preserve areas with other biotic resources and specifically Policy OS-5.1 Native Species: Preserve native plant and animal species and their habitat. The proposed ordinance does not conflict with any elements of the Coastal General Plan.

Additionally, the Coastal Trail was built under Coastal Development Permit 10-10. The Coastal Development Permit Findings state that the project will not adversely affect coastal resources. There was a biological study on the impacts of the Coast Trail on avian habitat, but it did not address the specific issue now being faced of humans feeding wildlife and the environmental impacts on sensitive bird species. It is consistent with the permit requirements and conditions to address this issue.

This ordinance would also apply to parks in the inland zone of Fort Bragg. Although there is no express goal regarding wildlife, the ordinance is consistent with the Inland General Plan Element 4 Conservation, Open Space, and Parks Element:

“The City wishes to preserve as much open space as feasible to provide habitat for native species of plants and wildlife, reduce sprawl, and maintain the aesthetic benefits of undeveloped land. The City also wishes to conserve natural resources and provide its residents with a full range of recreational opportunities. The goals, policies, and programs of this Element address these aims by establishing the framework for the protection and enhancement of natural resources, the environment, and open space and for the provision of recreational opportunities for Fort Bragg residents and visitors.”

The ordinance does not conflict with any element of the Inland General Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION/TIMEFRAMES:

Introduction of Ordinance on September 13, 2021

Adoption of Ordinance on September 27, 2021

Ordinance Takes effect on October 27, 2021

Order signs on or before November 3, 2021

Sign installation between November 3, 2021 – January 15, 2022 including:

- 1 new Park Rules sign at Alder St. Entrance to Coastal Trail (attached to bathroom)
- 6-7 “Please Don’t Feed the Wildlife” signs for the Coastal Trail and Pomo Bluffs Park.
- Two additional interpretive panels or revisions of existing panels

Educational Component

September 7, 2021: Send press release to the newspapers on the new ordinance

October 9 – 16: Add wildlife informational page to the City’s website. See Davis example: <https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/urban-wildlife/problems-with-feeding-wildlife>

October 16 – December 15: Work with high school and elementary schools on projects to educate the community about feeding wildlife such as a poster or PSA contest.

Ongoing activity: Put out Facebook posts and other PSAs during the busy summer season to educate visitors and remind locals of the new rules.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Letter from Terra Fuller
2. California Code of Regulations Title 14 Section 251.1
3. Letter from Audubon Society
4. APHIS
5. Ordinance 971-2021 to Add Chapter 7.18 Feeding of Wildlife

NOTIFICATION:

1. Bainbridge Park Notify Me Subscriber List
2. Coastal Trail Notify Me Subscriber List