



**AGENCY:** City of Fort Bragg  
**MEETING DATE:** April 12, 2021  
**DEPARTMENT:** Community Development  
**PRESENTED BY:** H Gurewitz  
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## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

**TITLE:**

Receive Report and Provide Direction to Staff on Addressing Issues with the Feeding of Wildlife in City Parks

**ISSUE:**

The feeding of wildlife, including ravens and ground squirrels, has negative impacts on the environment and public health, and has the potential to be a public safety hazard.

**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 Coast 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 Audubon Society is interested in working with the City of Fort Bragg to support measures that will curtail this activity.

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).<sup>1</sup>

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.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Direct staff to draft an ordinance, develop a public education campaign, and install signs to prohibit the feeding of wildlife on city properties including the Coastal Trail, Pomo Bluffs, and other City parks.

**ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):**

- Direct staff to prepare an ordinance only and exclude the education plan.
- Direct staff to develop a public education campaign including signs in parks, but no ordinance.
- Direct staff to install signs on the Coastal Trail and on Pomo Bluffs but take no additional action.
- Take no action.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

- The cost of developing an ordinance will be a maximum of \$1,200 in staff time and an estimate of \$2,000 in legal fees if attorney review is required.
- The cost of an education campaign would not exceed \$1,000 in staff time.
- The production and installation of signage including three interpretive signs on the Coastal Trail would cost approximately \$5,500 in material costs and approximately \$2,000 in staff time.
- Total fiscal impact of the recommended action is between \$10,000 and \$12,000.

**GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACT:**

This project will have no impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

**CONSISTENCY:**

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

This project is consistent with the City of Fort Bragg General Plan, Element 4 – Conservation, Open Space, Energy, and Parks Purpose:

“The City also 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, and to provide its residents with a full range of recreational opportunities.”

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.

**IMPLEMENTATION/TIMEFRAMES:**

Staff can prepare and have an ordinance ready for review by the Council meeting of May 10, 2021.

Initial public education can begin prior to Memorial Day (beginning of the summer tourist season).

The design, production, and installation of interpretive panels will require a minimum of six months.

Public education campaign activities will be regularly occurring throughout the year in collaboration with the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society and other environmental partners.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Letter from Terra Fuller, Biologist
2. California Code of Regulations Title 14 Section 251.1
3. Letter from the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society
4. APHIS flyer on feeding wildlife
5. “Fed Wildlife is Dead Wildlife” poster
6. PowerPoint Presentation

**NOTIFICATION:**

1. Mendocino Coast Audubon Society
2. Terra Fuller
3. Notify Me subscriber list: Coastal Trail