



CORRIDOR INTRINSIC QUALITIES INVENTORY

HISTORIC QUALITIES



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

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ATTACHMENTS

FIGURE 1. MAP OF BIG SUR COAST HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT PLAN AREA

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was prepared in support of the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (CHMP) for State Highway 1, between San Carpoforo Creek in San Luis Obispo County and the Carmel River Bridge in Monterey County. The CHMP is designed to establish coordinated management of the Highway 1 corridor along this widely treasured coastline. The primary goal of the CHMP is to preserve, protect, and restore the area's unique qualities while ensuring the continued safe and efficient operation of the highway.

The CHMP also fulfills the objectives of the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways program.¹ This program calls for an inventory of intrinsic qualities, those unique and irreplaceable features that define the essence of the corridor. This report's purpose pursuant to the Scenic Byways program is to provide an overview of the Big Sur Coast byway's existing historic qualities, one of six types of intrinsic qualities identified in the Byways Program. Inventory reports are also being prepared in support of the CHMP for the corridor's archaeological, cultural, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. This report is supported by – and is a companion to – a Geographic Information System (GIS²) database created from information collected in the field. This database that contains a detailed inventory of Big Sur's historic resources, focusing on those features that are visible from Highway 1.

The CHMP is a long-range planning document, designed to guide the management of the Big Sur Highway 1 corridor for years to come. These inventory reports and their supporting GIS database offer the most detailed and specific inventory of resources within the Highway 1 corridor along the Big Sur Coast that has ever been compiled.

This information resource not only provides the basis for CHMP management strategies, enhancement projects, and other implementation measures, now and for the future, but it also offers a valuable source of information for other resource management agencies along the coast. It is hoped that federal, State, and local agencies including the U.S. Forest Service, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, State Parks, Coastal Commission, and County of Monterey, to name only a few, will use this database. Such information sharing should facilitate their decision-making regarding highway-related activities within their jurisdictions and support their respective management planning efforts. For example, Caltrans and regulatory agencies can consult the database for early information about sensitive resources in the vicinity of a project or storm damaged location and be clear about a course of action to avoid, minimize or mitigate for impacts to these resources. The plans of the individual agencies will provide the structure and detail needed to ensure implementation of their CHMP responsibilities outside of those areas controlled by Caltrans.

It is also anticipated that these agencies will participate over time in updating and expanding the inventory database. Such information sharing and cooperation among all stakeholders will help to achieve coordinated planning among agencies along this stretch of coast.

¹ The guidelines for the Scenic Byway program are outlined at <http://www.byways.org>, and on the website for the Federal Highway Administration.

² A Geographic Information System provides the ability to store and view geographic information spatially; it is a computer-based application from which the mapping for this report was produced.

1.1 METHODS

The historic qualities inventory resulted in the identification and recordation of 91 historic properties along Highway 1 within the project limits. For the purposes of this inventory, “along the highway” was defined as visible from the highway. This criterion of selection was necessary to define a defensible study area. The level of recordation was that of identification, rather than evaluation.

Fieldwork for this project was conducted on four occasions: August, September, and December 2000; and on September 5, 2001. Each of the 91 properties was photographed and its location recorded on USGS topographic maps. Salient physical attributes about the property, such as architectural details and modifications, were also noted. The properties were then recorded on the identification-level Primary Record, or DPR 523 form, developed by the State of California for this purpose. The DPR 523 forms are not included in this report but are on file with District 5, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). As noted above, these data have also been entered into the GIS database for all intrinsic qualities along the route.

Prior to initiating the fieldwork, background research was conducted to gain a general understanding of the history of Big Sur. Research was undertaken at the California State Library, Sacramento; Shields Library at the University of California, Davis; and in the Big Sur Public Library, Big Sur. The general history presented in the Historic Context section of the report relies heavily on John Woolfenden’s *Big Sur: A Battle for the Wilderness, 1869-1981*.³

Property-specific research was also conducted to identify essential facts about the buildings – date of construction, use, historical associations, and so forth. Several of the more prominent historic resources in Big Sur have been well documented in previously published works, and many businesses have produced their own company histories, usually published either in pamphlet form or on an internet website. A meeting with the Big Sur Historical Society on May 23, 2001, followed by additional correspondence with Mary Trotter and Jeff Norman, provided invaluable historical information of both local and regional interest. Numerous personal and telephone interviews with long-time residents, business owners and employees, and other individuals familiar with the highway (such as Caltrans, U.S. Forest Service, and State Parks employees) also provided valuable insight.

1.2 SUMMARY OF HISTORIC CONTEXT

The present report summarizes the results of the survey and establishes a context through which the historic significance of the buildings identified may be evaluated. It does not discuss every property that was recorded in the field. Instead, this report has three primary purposes:

- To establish a historic context that identifies important themes in the history of this region;
- to identify important examples of the various property types associated with those themes;
- and to specify the data gaps, or information that could be pursued in the future to build upon the results of this inventory.

³ John Woolfenden, *Big Sur: A Battle for the Wilderness, 1869-1981* (The Boxwood Press, 1981).

The historic context for this inventory focuses on four major historic themes that exemplify the resources inventoried: pioneer (pre-highway) settlement; the development of tourist-oriented facilities after the highway was completed; the occupation of the area by notable individuals; and the development of public sector infrastructure. The discussion also includes an “other” category to deal with events and historic properties that are not reflected in the four major themes. These themes, or patterns of events, provide an understanding as to how and why buildings and structures were constructed during various historic periods. This thematic approach to the history of a region has been recognized by historic preservation professionals as an effective means of establishing a framework for understanding the potential significance of historic resources.

1.2.1 Pioneer Settlement

The pioneer era in Big Sur began during California’s Mexican Period (1821-1846) and lasted for over a century, culminating with the completion of the Carmel-San Simeon highway in 1937. The settlers who ventured into this region, with family names such as Pfeiffer, Bixby, Post, Harlan, and Dani, made a living through a variety of activities including subsistence agriculture, stock raising, mining, timber harvesting, and road-building.

Very few vestiges of this historical period remain as many of the buildings and structures associated with pioneer homesteads and early industries have disappeared, falling victim to deterioration, natural disasters, or modernization. The earliest of these historic properties is the Cooper Cabin, built in the 1860s and located in Andrew Molera State Park. Other important pioneer-era historic resources are the Post House, built over several years in the 1860s and 1870s, and the Swetnam / Trotter House, a late 19th century dwelling located at Palo Colorado. Further south, in Pacific Valley, is the Junge Cabin, a one-room redwood cabin built in 1920 by homesteader John Junge.

1.2.2 Tourist Industries

By the time the Carmel-San Simeon highway was completed in 1937, the pioneer era in Big Sur had come to an end. In its place, a new economy developed that was centered on tourism. Compared to the rugged roads that had previously served the Big Sur, the new highway provided easy access into and out of the region. The early families, which before had lived in virtual isolation, could now move freely up and down the coast. Perhaps more important to the economy of Big Sur was the fact that tourists could easily visit and experience first hand the region’s spectacular beauty.

Businesses designed to accommodate tourists had existed prior to the coming of the highway – Pfeiffer’s Resort, for example, was established in 1910 – but it was not until the 1930s that they were built in great numbers. Many tourist-related businesses from that period are still in existence. Perhaps the most notable early resort is Deetjen’s Big Sur Inn, built in 1936 by a Norwegian immigrant named Helmut Deetjen. Other notable highway-related businesses from this period include the Ripplewood Resort, the River Inn, and Loma Vista, all in the vicinity of the community of Big Sur. Further south are the Lucia Lodge and the resort facilities at Gorda. A second generation of highway-related resorts and businesses was established in the years following the end of World War II. Several of these exist today, the most famous of which is Nepenthe, a restaurant established by Bill Fassetts and his family in 1949. The Glen Oaks Lodge and Rocky Point Inn were also established in the post-war era.

1.2.3 Notable Individuals

Throughout much of the 20th century, Big Sur attracted notable individuals who established permanent or part-time residences there. Three residences along the highway stand out as particularly notable examples of this theme. In the Carmel Highlands is the D.L. James House, designed in 1918 by renowned architect Charles S. Green. Another residence notable for its architecture is the “Wild Bird” house, designed in 1958 by Nathaniel Owings, a partner in the nationally-recognized architectural firm, Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. Wild Bird was the permanent residence of Nathaniel Owings and his wife Margaret Owings, who had also gained fame as a prominent figure in the environmental movement in Big Sur and throughout California in the late 20th century. The third property is the ranch of Linus and Ava Pauling, situated in the vicinity of Gorda. Linus Pauling was an important scientist and political figure – the only American to earn two unshared Nobel Prizes.

1.2.4 Public Sector

Although historic and current residents of the Big Sur have celebrated their self-sufficiency, government has long played an important role in the history of the region. There are numerous public sector historic properties along Highway 1 that were built by local, state, or federal agencies. Probably the most significant federal sector property in the area is the Point Sur Lighthouse, one of the most visible and striking of all historic resources in the vicinity. Other public sector resources include the U.S. Forest Service ranger station at Salmon Creek, the maintenance station at Willow Springs originally built for the California Division of Highways (now used by its successor agency, Caltrans), and the gatehouses at the Point Lobos State Reserve. All of these resources were established in the 1930s, although some of the buildings in the complexes are of more recent vintage.

One of the most important public sector resources is the Highway 1 corridor itself, which has been listed in the National Register as a “linear historic district.” In addition to its many remarkable engineering features such as masonry railings, drinking fountains, and great highway bridges such as those at Bixby Creek and Wildcat Creek, the highway is also notable for its historic contribution to the region. Following its completion in 1937, it forever changed the character of Big Sur from an isolated frontier to a popular and easily accessible tourist destination.

1.2.5 Other

The inclusion of an “other” category in this summary history of Big Sur is important, because humans and human events do not always fit into neat categories. This category includes resources that clearly express an aspect of Big Sur history and culture, but cut across the four major themes. For example, Big Sur boasts two notable institutions devoted to those seeking peace and contemplation: the Carmelite Monastery, built in the Medieval Italian architectural style in 1931; and the Esalen Institute, an alternative learning center established in the 1960s. The Big Sur Grange Hall, built in 1949, commemorates the long pioneer era of the region and also serves as a public gathering place. Another property of community-wide interest is the Henry Miller Memorial Library, established in 1981 by Emil White, secretary and friend to author Henry Miller.

1.2.6 Data Gaps

The design of this inventory is such that not all properties that might be seen as associated with important events and persons in the history of the region will be recorded. Many of the best-known events associated with Big Sur occurred in buildings that are well beyond the highway viewshed. Furthermore, there are several ephemeral resources in existence along the roadway, including pack trails, traces of the original highway, old bridge abutments, and so forth. None of these ephemeral properties was recorded because there are no associated buildings. Although these off-road and ephemeral sites are not part of the intrinsic qualities of the highway, they are certainly part of the history of the county and the region and deserve recognition and further study.

1.3 CONCLUSION

Big Sur has had a long and interesting history. Its residents have pursued a broad range of professions, activities, and lifestyles. Given this diversity of activities and lifestyles, it may be reasonable to conclude that there would be an equally diverse group of historic resources that reflect this long period in the history of the region. Unfortunately, this is not the case. A large percentage of the pioneer-era buildings and structures have vanished, victims of neglect, natural disaster, or modernization. Many of the newer historic resources, particularly those associated with the new highway and the tourist industry it fostered, have suffered alterations that – to varying degrees – compromise their historic character. What remains in Big Sur, then, is a small but precious collection of buildings and structures that reflect and embody Big Sur's historic legacy. The purpose of this report is to identify those historic qualities that “stir an appreciation of the past” so that, in the future, they will be preserved, protected, and restored.

2 PLAN PURPOSE

The Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (CHMP) is designed to establish coordinated management of the Highway 1 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. The planning area is located along a portion of the historic Carmel-San Simeon Highway from San Carpoforo Creek in San Luis Obispo County to the Carmel River in Monterey County, also known as Highway 1 along the Big Sur Coast. The CHMP also fulfills the objectives of the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways program to update the Corridor Management Plan originally prepared in support of its All-American Road designation in 1996.

2.1 BACKGROUND

The ongoing natural processes that shape the unforgettable landscape in Big Sur also create the greatest challenges for maintaining a reliable highway. Perched on the steep western slopes of the Santa Lucia Mountains, which face the brunt of Pacific storms, the highway requires intensive maintenance and is in an almost continuous state of repair.

Landslides and washouts of variable severity result in frequent road closures; complex repairs to restore the highway can cause further delays and extend over long periods of time. With detours nearly non-existent, Highway 1 is the lifeline to several well-established communities. It also provides access to eight state parks and a large unit of the Los Padres National Forest. Considering the highway itself is a major travel destination, closures and extended delays reverberate through the coastal communities between San Luis Obispo and Carmel whose economies are heavily dependent on recreational travel.

With rapid response to restore highway travel after an event, coordination among many parties with an interest or regulatory authority can become tense under what sometimes appears to be competing interests. Working under these circumstances can result in sometimes-awkward solutions, delays and increased costs.

Meanwhile, the accumulated consequences from frequent repairs and related highway improvements have been seen as threatening the unique qualities and most sensitive resources found on this coast. Concerns about visual impacts from large cut and fill slopes, spread of invasive plants, impacts to marine and upland coastal habitats from repairs (including disposal of material) and proliferation of standard highway designs have all contributed to a sense by the community that the corridor is being gradually degraded.

After a particularly harsh winter in 1998, a focused effort by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to develop a coordinated management plan was initiated in the form of the Big Sur CHMP.

2.2 CORRIDOR INVENTORY

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:

- Archaeological
- Cultural
- Historic
- Natural
- Scenic
- Recreational

This report describes the historic qualities, which are defined in the Scenic Byway guidelines as follows:

Historic quality encompasses legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with physical elements of the landscape, whether natural or man made, that are of such historic significance that they educate the viewer and stir an appreciation of the past. The historic elements reflect the actions of people and may include buildings, settlement patterns, and other examples of human activity.⁴

The inventory for the Big Sur Coast has been developed to a greater level of detail than what would normally be expected for a Corridor Management Plan. For this corridor, all resource information has been assembled into a Geographic Information System (GIS)⁵ database to help meet larger objectives of the CHMP to facilitate regulatory decision-making on highway-related activities. These inventory reports and their supporting GIS database offer the most detailed and specific inventory of resources within the Highway 1 corridor along the Big Sur Coast that has ever been compiled.

This information resource not only provides the basis for CHMP management strategies, enhancement projects, and other implementation measures, now and for the future, but it also offers a valuable source of information for other resource management agencies along the coast. It is hoped that federal, State, and local agencies including the U.S. Forest Service, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, State Parks, Coastal Commission, and County of Monterey, to name only a few, will use this database. Such information sharing should facilitate their decision-making regarding highway-related activities within their jurisdictions and support their respective management planning efforts. For example, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and regulatory agencies can consult the database for early information about sensitive resources in the vicinity of a project or storm damaged location and be clear about a course of action to avoid, minimize or mitigate for impacts to these resources. The plans of the individual agencies will provide the structure and detail needed to ensure implementation of their CHMP responsibilities outside of those areas controlled by Caltrans.

⁴ Federal Highway Administration, *National Scenic Byway Program: Understanding, Inventorying, and Evaluating a Byway's Intrinsic Qualities*. Written by Whiteman & Taintor, 1999.

⁵ A **Geographic Information System** is a computer-based application that provides the ability to store and view geographic information spatially.

It is also anticipated that these agencies will participate over time in updating and expanding the inventory database. Such information sharing and cooperation among all stakeholders will help to achieve coordinated planning among agencies along this stretch of coast.

3 METHODOLOGY

This inventory of historic properties was conducted along Highway 1 in northern San Luis Obispo County and southern and central Monterey County. As noted, the purpose of this inventory was to identify historic buildings that contribute to the “intrinsic qualities” of the Scenic Byways roadway on Highway 1 between the San Carpoforo Creek Bridge in San Luis Obispo County and the Carmel River Bridge in Monterey County. Three assumptions were necessary to conduct this work: a definition of “along the highway”; a level of recordation; and definition of “historic.”

For this report, “historic” properties were defined as those that are 50 years old or older, or that possess some qualities that may warrant their inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places or the California Register of Historical Resources. Some properties that are less than 50 years old, such as the Esalen Institute and the Linus Pauling estate for example, were considered historic because they may possess exceptional significance.

“Along the highway” was defined as visible from the highway. The delineation was necessary to define a defensible study area.⁶ It is also consistent with the general goals of the “intrinsic qualities” studies of the Scenic Byways program, which emphasize the contribution of various types of features and resources – biological, historical, scenic, recreational, and others – to the experience of the users of the highway. The term, “visible from the highway” needed to be interpreted in a few instances, recognizing the dense vegetation and steep terrain that limit visibility for many properties. For example, the Cooper Cabin in the Andrew Molera State Park is only barely visible from the road; it was recorded. Three additional resources – the Junge Cabin on Forest Service land, the Livermore Cabin in John Little State Reserve, and the Pelton Wheel in Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park – are not actually visible from the highway but are very close to the highway; these were recorded because they are well-known historic properties and are very near the highway right of way. In addition, the stretch of the highway in Carmel Highlands is densely settled, making difficult a determination of whether any given building is “visible from the highway.” In this area, all buildings that appear to be more than 50 years old were inventoried.

For the purpose of this inventory, the level of recordation was that of identification, rather than evaluation. General practices of the cultural resource management profession make a clear distinction between two different levels of recordation: identification and evaluation.⁷ Identification is treated as a level of recordation that is sufficient to denote the presence of a historic property at a given location and to characterize the property. Evaluation is a more in-depth level of recordation, designed to characterize a property as to its historic significance. The decision to record at the level of identification was based upon an understanding of the purpose of the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan. The CHMP is a planning document, designed to guide the management of Highway 1 for many years. It differs in this sense from a more typical highway project – for example, the replacement of a specific bridge or the construction of a new highway on a new alignment – in which the potential impacts of the project are known and can be quantified and described. In the context of such a specific

⁶ The study area for the CHMP differs from one type of study to the next, with some studies (such as scenic values) ranging widely and others, such as archaeology, being more limited in scope. Our study area was defined in terms of resources visible from the highway.

⁷ The distinction is rooted in federal historic preservation guidelines. It is explained thoroughly in “Archeology and Historic Preservation: Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines [as Amended and Annotated],” available on-line at <http://www.cr.nps.gov>.

project, it is possible and necessary to assess the significance of all potentially historic properties in the project area so that effects can be determined. The properties identified in this report may be evaluated individually, as the need arises.

The historic qualities inventory along Highway 1, between the San Carpoforo Creek Bridge in San Luis Obispo County and the Carmel River Bridge in Monterey County, resulted in the identification and recordation of 91 historic properties. Fieldwork for this project was conducted on four occasions: on trips in August, September, and December 2000; and on September 5, 2001. The 91 properties were photographed and their locations recorded on USGS topographic maps. Salient physical attributes about the property, such as architectural details and modifications, were also noted. The properties were then recorded on the identification-level Primary Record, or DPR 523 form, developed by the State of California for this purpose. The DPR 523 forms are not included in this report but are on file with Caltrans District 5. As noted above, these data have also been entered into the GIS database for all intrinsic qualities along the route.

Prior to initiating the fieldwork, background research was conducted to gain a general understanding of the history of Big Sur. Research was undertaken at the California State Library, Sacramento; Shields Library at the University of California, Davis; and in the Big Sur Public Library, Big Sur. The general history presented in the Historic Context section of the report relied heavily on John Woolfenden's *Big Sur: A Battle for the Wilderness, 1869-1981*.⁸

Property-specific research was also conducted to identify essential facts about the buildings – date of construction, use, historical associations, and so forth. Several of the more prominent historic resources in Big Sur have been well documented in previously published works, and many businesses have produced their own company histories, usually published either in pamphlet form or on an internet website. A meeting with the Big Sur Historical Society on May 23, 2001, followed by additional correspondence with Mary Trotter and Jeff Norman, provided invaluable historical information of both local and regional interest. Numerous personal and telephone interviews with long-time residents, business owners and employees, and other individuals familiar with the highway (such as Caltrans, U.S. Forest Service, and State Parks employees) also provided valuable insight.

Part of the purpose of the present document is to establish guidelines that might govern future evaluations of the potentially significant properties that were recorded during the identification phase. The inventory program and allied research effort suggest that there are a limited number of important themes that characterize the history of this coastal region. Those themes are discussed under Section 4 below. In Section 5, the inventoried properties are characterized as to “property types,” an evaluative device rooted in federal historic preservation regulations and guidelines. Together, these two sections constitute what the Keeper of the National Register calls a “historic context.”⁹ The historic context is intended to serve as a framework for

⁸ John Woolfenden, *Big Sur: A Battle for the Wilderness, 1869-1981* (The Boxwood Press, 1981).

⁹ This definition of a historic context is presented in several formats by the Keeper of the National Register. It is presented most completely in: “Archeology and Historic Preservation: Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines [as Amended and Annotated],” available on-line at <http://www.cr.nps.gov>.

evaluating historic significance within the larger perspective of the history and types of historic resources within a region.

4 HISTORIC CONTEXT FOR THE BIG SUR COAST HIGHWAY REGION

This section presents a brief interpretive history of the region along the Coast Highway, a region commonly called “Big Sur” or “the Big Sur.”¹⁰ This section is not intended to serve as a definitive chronicle of events in that region. For that purpose, several lengthy histories exist, most notably John Woolfenden’s *Big Sur: A Battle for the Wilderness*.¹¹ Rather, this section is designed to present major themes that dominate the history of the region, patterns of events that resulted in construction of buildings and structures.

One danger in attempting to summarize the history of an area into a small number of historic themes is that the themes impose an order upon historic events that was not apparent when those events occurred. This approach also condenses many decades of human experience into a summary form, running the risk of ignoring many events and people whose contribution to that history is deserving of recognition. This report does not purport to represent an encyclopedic summary of all events that occurred at the Big Sur and doubtless excludes many events and people who were important to the area.

Nonetheless, a thematic approach to the history of a region has been recognized by historic preservation professionals as an effective means of establishing a framework for understanding the potential significance of historic resources. In the following discussion, the history of this region will be analyzed in terms of four dominant themes: pioneer (pre-highway) settlement; the development of tourist-oriented facilities after the highway was completed; the occupation of the area by notable individuals; and the development of public sector infrastructure. The discussion will also include an “other” category to deal with events and historic properties that are not reflected in the four major themes.

4.1 PIONEER SETTLEMENT IN THE BIG SUR COUNTRY

Before the completion of the State Highway in the mid-1930s, the California coast between Carmel and San Simeon was one of the most remote regions in the state, rivaling nearly any other region in the United States in this regard. The non-Indian settlers who ventured into this region were self-selected for the lifestyle of a pioneer, sharing much with the hardy settlers who had peopled the wilderness in all other parts of the United States throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. John Woolfenden records the details of this pioneer existence in his book, and other works, such as Rosiland Sharpe Wall’s *A Wild Coast and Lonely* and Susan Georgette’s *The Rough Land to the South*, provide insight into life on the coast through regional historical

¹⁰ The term, Big Sur, will be used to apply to the region, though it is recognized that the term is misleading. The term is most appropriately used only to refer to the northern settlements, those in the vicinity of the Big Sur River. Our application of the term is justified by common usage and by the absence of any other commonly used term for the larger area served by the Coast Highway between San Carpoforo Creek and the Carmel River.

¹¹ John Woolfenden, *Big Sur: A Battle for the Wilderness, 1869-1981* (The Boxwood Press, 1981). See also chapters on Big Sur and the South Coast in: Sharron Lee Hale, *A Tribute to Yesterday: The History of Carmel, Carmel Valley, Big Sur, Point Lobos, Carmelite Monastery, and Los Burros* (Santa Cruz, CA: Valley Publishers, 1980); and Augusta Fink, *Monterey County: The Dramatic Story of Its Past* (Fresno: Valley Publishers, 1978).

vignettes.¹² Robinson Jeffers captured the poetic essence of the pioneering life in several poems, including *The Women at Point Sur*.¹³

For the purpose of this inventory, the principal facts about these pioneer settlers are these: there are few remnants of this life; and the remnants that exist are generally isolated from their historic context. Prior to construction of the Carmel-San Simeon Highway, access to the interior of Big Sur was difficult and limited. Settlement was effectively concentrated in two regions: a small area near the Big Sur River and another settlement near modern Lucia, with minor settlements between the two.

By far the largest concentration of pioneering settlements was in the north, in the vicinity of the Big Sur River, near the present community of Big Sur. Much of this region had been granted as a rancho (Rancho El Sur, 1834) to Juan Alvarado, who would relinquish control to Capt. Juan Bautista Cooper in 1840. Cooper was an English sea captain who settled in Monterey in the 1820s and adopted the language, religion, and nomenclature of Mexican California (he had been born John Rogers Cooper). He was related to Alvarado by marriage. Cooper never actually lived at the rancho, but various family members and ranch workers continuously occupied it from 1840 onward. After Cooper's death, the rancho was divided between his widow, his son, and his two daughters. One of his daughters, Amelia, married Eusebius Molera. This joining of the names, Cooper and Molera, left a mark on notable place names throughout the region, including the Cooper-Molera Adobe in Monterey, the Cooper cabin (one of the most important historic properties in the Big Sur Region), and Andrew Molera State Park.

During the 1860s, taking advantage of the Homestead Act of 1862, American-born settlers began establishing homesteads in the region of the Big Sur River, south of the rancho, on land that was still part of the public domain.¹⁴ The "red-letter date" for permanent settlement in the region was 1869, when Michael and Barbara Pfeiffer homesteaded land just south of the Big Sur River, i.e. just below the southern boundary of the Rancho El Sur. Other pioneering families would move to the region in the 1860s and 1870s. Charlie Bixby settled at Mill Creek in 1868, which would be later renamed Bixby Creek. Also in the late 1860s, the Post family settled at the Post Ranch, just south of the Big Sur.

These early settlers engaged in any type of economic activity that might be supported by the local environment. All raised cattle, and many produced butter, eggs, or other commodities that could be carted by wagon to Monterey and sold for cash. In time, different groups of people would attempt to make money from the forests of the Big Sur, harvesting timber and tanbark. Others engaged in extractive industries, including mining of lime. The timber harvesting and mining operations were generally episodic in relation to the longstanding presence of the homesteaders. The mines and mills came and went quickly, leaving very little in the way of historic resources. Virtually all that remains from the pioneering era relates to homesteading by a small number of families.

Another important development in the settlement of the region came with the construction of the Coast Road, extending from Carmel to Post's Ranch. A road from Monterey to Rancho El Sur, which was little more than a wagon trail, was in place as early as 1855, the year in which the

¹² Susan E. Georgette, *In the Rough Land to the South: An Oral History of the Lives and Events at Big Creek, Big Sur, California* (Santa Cruz: University of California, 1981); Rosiland Sharpe Wall, *A Wild Coast and Lonely – Big Sur Pioneers* (San Carlos, CA: Wide World Publishing, 1989); Woolfenden, *Big Sur: A Battle for the Wilderness*.

¹³ Robinson Jeffers, *The Women at Point Sur* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927).

¹⁴ The land ownership history of the area is told most concisely in Woolfenden.

county declared it a public road. It was improved and realigned through the years, but the largest realignment came in 1886 in the area south of Bixby Canyon. This portion of the road still exists (it is now called the “Old Coast Road”) and is in use between Bixby Creek and Andrew Molera State Park. During the late 1880s settlers continued to build the road south to Post’s Ranch, and by the turn of the century it reached as far south as Castro Canyon. Although it was nominally a county road, the pioneer settlers themselves had built it but turned it over to the county for maintenance. Although the road was a primitive structure by modern standards, by comparison with the earlier wagon trails the Coast Road was a resource of incalculable value. It transformed life in the northern region in a manner that foretold the far greater impact of Highway 1 when it was completed in the mid-1930s.

The settlers in the Big Sur pursued a complex mix of occupations and lifestyles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, prior to the completion of the Carmel-San Simeon Highway. During this period, the old homesteaders were joined by miners and lumbermen as well as “jack of all trade” settlers who would pursue whatever line of work was available at the time. The complexity of this era is illustrated in the life of Sam Trotter. Trotter was born in Missouri but moved to the Far West as a young man. He settled initially in Boulder Creek in the early 1890s, where he began to work in the lumber industry. He worked for the Notley brothers, who harvested redwoods in the area above Santa Cruz. When the brothers later decided to establish a tanbark operation in the Big Sur area (Notley’s Landing near Palo Colorado was their creation, although it is now only a place name), Sam Trotter also moved to the region as an employee. Isaac Swetnam, a local homesteader, was also marginally involved in the operation.

Although the Notley brothers’ tanbark business was short-lived, Sam Trotter remained in the area, adapting to whatever employment opportunities were available. He married Adelaide Pfeiffer, the daughter of the first settlers in the area, bought Isaac Swetnam’s house at Palo Colorado, and lived and raised a family at that house between 1906 and 1923 (the Swetnam / Trotter house still exists and is one of the key historic resources along Highway 1). He tried his hand at timber harvesting but was employed chiefly in construction. Sam Trotter lived until 1938 – long enough to see the completion of the Carmel-San Simeon Highway. As a builder, he was also involved in the early transformation of the area from an agriculture-extractive base to a tourist- and summer home-oriented economy. He built the Trails Club, a 1920s-era facility that was incorporated into the Nepenthe restaurant in the late 1940s. He was also responsible for many of the earliest summer homes (and later permanent residences) at Coastlands, as well as a residence at Partington Ridge. Sam Trotter, in short, spanned several phases of history at Big Sur and his life history illustrates the lifestyle of the era between the 1890s and the 1930s.¹⁵

A parallel pattern of settlement occurred along the southern end of the region, in the vicinity of what is now called Lucia. The Harlan family was especially important in the settlement of this region. Wilber Harlan, a native of Indiana, homesteaded near Lucia in 1885, initiating what may be the longest period of settlement by a single family in the southern part of the region. [The Trotter family holds this distinction in the north; Sam Trotter married into the Pfeiffer family that had established itself in the region in 1869.] The Harlan family still lives in the area and is active in all aspects of its economy, from ranching to resort operation. Several other notable pioneer settlers joined the Harlan family, including the Dani family, which had settled in the region in the

¹⁵ Trotter’s fascinating biography is presented at length in Woolfenden, *Big Sur: Battle for the Wilderness*.

1870s. Wilber Harlan would marry Ada Dani, uniting two of the pioneering families in the region.¹⁶

The settlers at Lucia oriented their lives to King City and the communities to the south, much as the settlers in the vicinity of the Big Sur River oriented their lives toward Monterey to the north. If anything, the Lucia settlers were even more isolated than those to the north. The novelist, Lillian Bos Ross, wrote of the Lucia settlers: "Until the Big Sur highway was opened there was no road to the Harlan homestead. The ranch was a world in itself."¹⁷ Supplies could be transported to the area by wagon and pack trains from King City or via a sometimes-dangerous landing by boat from Monterey or San Francisco.¹⁸

Between Lucia and Big Sur River there were scattered settlements, as detailed by Susan Georgette in her oral history, *In the Rough Land to the South: An Oral History of the Lives and Events at Big Creek, Big Sur, California*.¹⁹ The title to Georgette's work signifies the difficulties involved in establishing place names in that part of California. Big Creek, not a commonly denoted region of the coast, is located far south of the community of Big Sur. Geographically and historically, it has far more in common with Lucia. Many of the individuals and families featured in her study, such as the Harlans, Danis, and others, were property owners in the both the Big Creek and Lucia areas.

One of the first impacts of the Carmel-San Simeon Highway was an opening of relations between settlers near the Big Sur River and those at Lucia, who had little contact in earlier years. Rosiland Sharpe Wall, whose family lived near Bixby Creek, recalls: "And naturally we got closer to our neighbors in the Big Sur and even at Lucia than we had before the highway was built. Now it took us little time to get there."²⁰

The highway was designed in part to ease the hardships associated with the pioneering life along the coast. Dr. John Roberts, a medical doctor who served the settlers in the area and appreciated first-hand the hardships of the settlers, was a driving force behind the construction of the highway. A real estate developer as well as a medical doctor, he also understood that the highway would probably change all aspects of life there, and that the highway would also open the area to tourism. Even Dr. Roberts probably did not anticipate how rapidly and completely the highway would transform life in the region. The old economy, built around subsistence agriculture and extractive industries, disappeared almost overnight. The transformation was so complete that very little remains to remind one of the century or so in which non-Indian settlers had subsisted in the area before the highway was built. The few resources that do exist, of course, are the more valuable for their rarity.

¹⁶ Woolfenden, *Big Sur: A Battle for the Wilderness*, 57. See also: Irene Marus Harlan, "Big Sur Pioneers: The Family of Wilber Judson and Ada Amanda (Dani) Harlan, San Lucia Mountain Range Pioneer-Homesteaders (1885)," 1988, copy available as part of the Big Sur History Collection at Big Sur Public Library.

¹⁷ Big Sur Historical Society, *Recipes for Living in Big Sur* (Big Sur, 1981), 62-63. Although primarily a cookbook, this publication includes a wealth of information, particularly with respect to the pioneer women of the area.

¹⁸ Georgette, *In the Rough Land to the South*.

¹⁹ Georgette, *In the Rough Land to the South*.

²⁰ Wall, *A Wild Coast and Lonely*, 201.

4.2 DEVELOPMENT OF TOURIST-ORIENTED FACILITIES

In retrospect, it appears that it was inevitable that the Big Sur area would be developed as a tourist attraction. The region, with scenery so spectacular that even great writers like Robinson Jeffers struggled to capture its essence, is far from unique in this regard. California has supported an active tourism industry since the 1860s. One by one, the scenic areas of the state were developed to support the seemingly insatiable appetite of Americans for enjoyment of the varied and interesting landscape of California. Lake Tahoe, Calaveras Big Trees, and the Yosemite Valley were all popular recreational spots as early as the Civil War era. The Big Sur region was one of the last of such areas to be developed as a tourist attraction, owing chiefly to accessibility problems, rather than the inherent qualities of the scenery. The tourist industry developed as soon as there were adequate means of transportation to support it.

It is tempting to conclude that the tourist trade was set in motion by construction of the Carmel-San Simeon Highway in the mid-1930s, and for the most part that conclusion is valid. There were, however, early attempts to build tourist facilities, even before the road had been completed. Thomas B. Slate and his wife, Bersabe Soberanes, opened the Hot Springs (at the site of the modern Esalen Institute) as a resort for a brief period in the 1880s.²¹ As early as the 1890s the Swetnams and Posts were accepting paying guests at their ranches.

The best documented of the pre-highway resorts was Pfeiffer's Resort, operated by the pioneer family of the same name. The family's decision to open a resort is understandable. All historical accounts of homesteading in the region emphasize that the settlers were persistently short of cash. Michael Pfeiffer would often leave his Big Sur ranch in the summertime to work for wages in the Salinas Valley, to provide some cash flow for the family. His son, John Pfeiffer, also homesteaded in the region. It was John's wife, Florence Pfeiffer, who, in 1910, established the first resort in the Big Sur Valley, not long after she and John were married. It was located at the site of the current Big Sur Lodge. By most accounts, the lodge initially served to accommodate miscellaneous travelers, including tourists as well as local ranchers traveling to and from Monterey.²²

The original Pfeiffer resort had operated for a quarter century before the Carmel-San Simeon Highway was completed, and no doubt contributed to the general public's awareness of the beauty of the Big Sur country. Combined with regular stage service, it made for a reasonably convenient tourist experience. Among the early "tourists" was Robinson Jeffers, who more than any other person popularized the beauty of Big Sur through his writings. Jeffers first visited the area in 1914 by taking a stage from Carmel and staying at the Pfeiffer resort.²³ He continued this practice for many years. The pioneering resort owned by the Pfeiffers showed two things: that people were interested in the area, and that a resort could be an additional source of revenue.

More than any other factor, however, it was the highway that induced the modern tourist industry in the region. It was not necessary for the highway to be completed to support tourist facilities because Big Sur was the attraction, not the road between Carmel and San Simeon. The road was under construction for nearly two decades, with construction occurring at the

²¹ Woolfenden, *Big Sur: A Battle for the Wilderness*, 43.

²² Woolfenden, *Big Sur: A Battle for the Wilderness*, 11-12.

²³ Wall, *A Wild Coast and Lonely*, 115.

north and south before meeting in the middle. Resorts began to spring up along the route as soon as parts of it had been completed.

Initially, the older pioneer families sponsored these resorts. This fact should not surprise: they owned the land. During the 1930s the Sharpe family tore down an older resort on the Coast Road, called Rainbow Lodge, and built the Bixby Inn along the new highway. The facility now known as the River Inn was initially operated by Ellen Brown, a daughter of Florence Pfeiffer. In 1937, Florence took over the operation. In 1943, another daughter, Esther Pfeiffer Ewoldsen, took over the inn and would continue to own it for many years.²⁴ The Post family also opened a restaurant and dude ranch, located at Rancho Sierra Mar.

Not all of the resorts were built by members of the pioneer families. Newer families and individuals arrived who were attracted to the area specifically because of its tourist potential. F.E. DeLamater established the Lucia Lodge in 1936. That same year Helmuth Deetjen, a native of Norway, settled in the Big Sur and established his hotel, Deetjen's Big Sur Inn, which is one of the best-preserved facilities from that era.

Tourist development of the late 1930s, however, proved to be premature for many of the fledgling operations. The developers of these resorts could not have anticipated the impact that World War II would have on automobile-based tourism. Gasoline rationing destroyed the industry. The traffic count at the Big Sur River Bridge declined from a high of about 2,500 per day when the highway opened to little more than 200 per day in the war years.²⁵ Many of the early inns simply closed during the war. The few that survived did so by catering to the local restaurant trade.

Following the end of the war automobile traffic quickly returned to pre-war levels. In 1946 traffic counts shot back up to 2,300. The return of automobile-based tourism brought about a second generation of construction in the late 1940s, and many of the resorts that exist today date to that period. Nepenthe, for example, was founded in 1949 by the Fassett family; it is still operated under its original ownership. Some planned resorts, however, never materialized. The land that is now the New Camaldoli Hermitage was purchased by investors in 1930 with the hope of developing a "dude ranch." For various reasons, the enterprise failed and much of the land was ultimately donated to the church.²⁶

Along with the private resort owners, the State of California and the U.S. Forest Service did much to sponsor tourism in the region. The site of the Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park was purchased from the Pfeiffer family in 1934 and is now one of the most popular parks in the state. The Point Lobos State Reserve was purchased at about the same time, at the northern extreme of what might be considered Big Sur. In time, other elements of the park system would be assembled in the area, altogether comprising one of the most integrated packages of state recreational areas in California. The Forest Service, which owns far more land in the area than the State Park system, has been less aggressive in providing overnight accommodations. Its land, however, includes some of the most popular vistas in the region.

²⁴ <http://www.bigsurriverinn.com>.

²⁵ The traffic counts were assembled for a separate report prepared by JRP Historical Consulting Services as part of the CHMP. It is entitled, "A History of Road Closures along Highway 1, Big Sur, San Luis Obispo and Monterey Counties, California," June 2001.

²⁶ Woolfenden, *Big Sur: A Battle for the Wilderness*, 55. The failure of this resort idea is presented in greater detail in Georgette, *In the Rough Land to the South*, and is considerably more complicated than the narrative as presented by Woolfenden.

Through the years a diverse range of services would be provided to accommodate the many visitors to the region, from gasoline stations to restaurants to gift shops. The region also evolved into an artist colony during the 1940s, when the tourist trade was at its nadir and accommodations were at their least expensive. The tourist trade did eventually capitalize on the public's growing interest in art, as several galleries were constructed throughout the region. Other facilities were developed which, while not entirely recreational in nature, did attract overnight visitors to the area. These include the Esalen Institute, which since the 1960s has attracted large numbers of visitors to the area for educational and inspirational purposes. Esalen and other unique accommodations are discussed in Section 4.5, under "Other Themes in the History of the Region."

In recent decades, the Big Sur has taken on an international tourist appeal and the resorts have gained high acclaim among upscale visitors. The most recently constructed resorts in the area carry overnight tariffs that rival those of the major resorts of the world. This phenomenon, while of great importance in understanding the economy of the region today, has occurred so recently as to defy the common definition of "historic" and is not treated at length in this report.

4.3 OCCUPATION OF THE AREA BY NOTABLE INDIVIDUALS

As discussed above, there was an interruption in the development of tourist accommodations in the Big Sur area during World War II. Gasoline rationing essentially killed automobile-based tourism throughout the United States. Automobile traffic slowed to insignificant levels and many of the old resorts closed. It appears that the Big Sur area was discovered by artists and writers during this period, chiefly because there was essentially no demand for tourism or summer vacation rentals. The lack of demand translated into low property values and rent, making the area attractive to artists of modest means. The wartime years, then, represented the beginning of the association of Big Sur with the artistic community, an association that would persist for many years and continues to this day.

Even before the war – indeed before the Carmel-San Simeon Highway had been completed – there were minor attempts to develop the region for summer homes and/or primary residences. The Coastlands project was initiated in the early 1920s, with Sam Trotter being involved in construction of the road as well some of the houses there. Partington Ridge was subdivided during the 1930s and was peopled by various settlers, many of independent means. With the coming of the war, the buildings that existed in the area in 1941 were suddenly available at reasonable cost. In time, artists would come to occupy many of the cabins and homes in the area, beginning a long association between the Big Sur and the artistic community. One notable arrival in 1944 was the novelist and painter, Henry Miller, who came to Big Sur after having been driven by the war from his home in Paris, France. Miller would occupy various cabins in the area – off and on – for nearly two decades. For much of the time he lived on Partington Ridge.²⁷ In time, many other artists would follow him to the area. The writer Lillian Bos Ross actually preceded Henry Miller to the area. She and her husband, Harry Dick (a notable sculptor), moved to Livermore Ledge (now part of the John Little State Reserve), where she lived in a small cabin and wrote several books that were set in the Big Sur region.²⁸ She later moved to Partington Ridge.

²⁷ The Miller cabin on Partington Ridge apparently still exists and is owned by his heirs. "Strangers in Paradise: Henry Miller Left His Children a Home in the Bliss of Big Sur," *San Jose Mercury*, (February 24, 1991).

²⁸ Big Sur Historical Society, *Recipes for Living in Big Sur*, 66-67.

Not everyone in Big Sur, however, was an impoverished artist. Many of the buildings at Coastlands and Partington Ridge had been occupied by people of independent means, including Nicholas Roosevelt, an American diplomat and writer and a cousin to President Theodore Roosevelt.²⁹ The diverse population of the area was captured in a 1949 article on the opening of the Nepenthe restaurant. The writer for "What's Doing," a Carmel publication, observed that outside visitors mingled with the local Bohemians at the event: "Solid citizens, bankers, ranchers, real estate men and women mingled freely with sandaled and jeaned and corduroy-shorted writers and painters and musicians and sculptors who took a few hours away from work to wish the Fassetts well on their opening day."³⁰

The region was particularly popular with young people during the 1960s. One writer refers to the 1960s as the "hippie era" of Big Sur history, in which "itinerant" youths visited the Big Sur area in great numbers.³¹ The hippie enclaves at Big Sur probably reflect many trends of that time, not the least of which was the association of the area with Bohemian lifestyles that dated to the 1940s.

The long trend at Big Sur, however, has been a dramatic escalation in property values, a fact that has affected the character of the population. While most pronounced in recent years, that trend dates at least to the 1960s, when the popularity of the region grew dramatically. The escalation was undoubtedly hastened by the actions of public agencies and non-profit organizations, which purchased many of the available parcels of private land and dedicated them to public uses. In time, escalating property values would limit the ownership potential in the area by artists, hippies, and any but the wealthy.

It is known that many of the wealthy purchasers of houses and cabins in the area have been celebrities. The use of the area in this respect is perhaps the least-understood aspect of the history of the Big Sur, because celebrities are, as a rule, reluctant to announce their home addresses. The television producer, Allen Funt, lived in the area for many years, near the Bixby Bridge. Al Jardine, former rhythm guitarist for the Beach Boys, has long owned land near the Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park and has maintained a recording studio there. It is known that Joan Baez, Ted Turner, Jill Eikenberry, Rosanna Arquette, Steve Martin, and Dean Stockwell have purchased homes in the area in recent decades. In 1999, the Monterey County assessor noted regarding the Big Sur housing market: "The segment of the market that is increasing is the people who are willing to spend a lot of money, like movie stars, Hollywood producers, famous musicians and accomplished screenwriters."³² The locations of these homes, however, are generally not known. Questions exist as to whether these homes are of historic significance, given the tenuous associations and recent periods of use. While the persons may be important, there are only weak associations between these summer homes and the careers of those people.

In a few instances, however, the association to well-known persons was more than transitory. Arguably the two most notable permanent (or at least more than transitory) residents of the Big Sur were Linus Pauling, who moved to the Gorda area in the early 1960s, and Margaret

²⁹ Nicholas Roosevelt's career is not well-documented. He wrote dozens of books, most of them concerning foreign policy. He also wrote a biography of his cousin, the president, and several cookbooks.

³⁰ "What's Doing," (May 1949), 14.

³¹ Tomi Kay Lussier, *Big Sur: A Complete History and Guide* (Monterey: Big Sur Publications, 1979), 52.

³² "Changing Face of Big Sur Real Estate: Rising Land Costs Force Locals Out as Big Money Moves In," *San Jose Mercury-News*, (March 1, 1999). See also: "Hollywood Jet Setters Choose Solitude, Views of Once-Bohemian Big Sur," *San Jose Mercury-News*, (June 13, 1992).

Owings, who moved to the Big Sur region in the late 1950s. Both have died in recent years, but their homes still exist and may be seen from Highway 1. (The resources are visible from the highway, although it is necessary to view them through field glasses to see any building details.)

4.4 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

A final major theme in the history of the area concerns the role of government in the lives of the people of the community. This is an especially important theme to this area because so much of the land in the region is owned by state and federal agencies. Although historic and current residents of the Big Sur have celebrated their self-sufficiency, government has long played an important role in the history of the region. As such, related resources rank among the more interesting of historic properties along the highway.

Throughout most of the 19th century, there was only a minimal presence of governmental agencies in the Big Sur country. The earliest notable act of public agencies in the area was the county's assistance in the construction of the Coast Road in the late 1800s, which helped provide a minimal level of ground transportation into the upper reaches of this region. Yet even this road was as much an act of self-help as it was a public resource. Most historical accounts indicate that the road was actually built by the Big Sur pioneers – the Pfeiffers, the Posts, and others – but was adopted into the county road system for maintenance.³³

The federal government contributed to the history of the area beginning in 1889, with the completion of the lightstation at Point Sur. The lightstation was, of course, designed chiefly to provide navigational aid to ships at sea. The presence of this structure, however, brought new groups of settlers into what was still a remarkably isolated part of the state and helped provide a sense of security to the homesteaders and other settlers in the region. More importantly, it provided a source of income to settlers who contracted work there.

The greatest single impact of the government in this area was construction of the Carmel-San Simeon Highway, completed in the mid-1930s. The highway transformed every aspect of life in the region, dispelling forever the isolation of the Big Sur. In addition to providing access for tourists, the highway brought with it a requirement for a permanent cadre of highway workers. This requirement, common to all state highways, was particularly important with respect to Highway 1, which has proved to be remarkably difficult to maintain.

In time, other public agencies would establish a presence in the area. The postal service first established a short-lived office called "Point Sur" in 1883. Since that time the U.S. Postal Service has had offices throughout Big Sur, occupying facilities at Post Ranch, Lucia, Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, and the River Inn, among others. The current post office, built in the early 1980s, is located at the Big Sur Center, south of Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park.³⁴ The U.S. Forest Service, which is responsible for maintaining much of the land in the region, established forest headquarters at Big Sur in the 1910s. The California Department of Parks and Recreation also maintains numerous campgrounds in the area. The agency is also responsible for maintaining many of the most valuable historic resources, including the lightstation at Point Sur, the Cooper Cabin, and the Molera Ranch House.

³³ Woolfenden, *Big Sur: A Battle For the Wilderness*, 8. He notes that the work on the road was done "with pick and shovel, mostly by the ranchers whose land it bordered."

³⁴ A history of the U.S. Postal Service in Big Sur is presented in Woolfenden, *Big Sur: A Battle for the Wilderness*, 77-84.

Other governmental agencies were active in the area, but on a more transitory basis. The U.S. Navy, for example, built a small station near the foot of the Point Sur Lighthouse. The base, called Naval Facility Point Sur, was established in 1956 when the Navy purchased 54 acres of private land and built 42 buildings and structures, most of them residential in nature. The facility was under the jurisdiction of the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey and was used, in the terse description of the Navy, “to conduct oceanographic research.” It included equipment used in monitoring underwater traffic, focused upon submarines. It was a direct response to the Cold War and the American determination to track the movement of Soviet submarines. There was a similar facility at Centerville, near Eureka, and other submarine tracking facilities were built on Navy land in the Channel Islands. The Navy site at Point Sur is now owned by the California Department of Parks and Recreation.³⁵

4.5 OTHER THEMES IN THE HISTORY OF THE REGION

It is always necessary to include an “other” category in any summary history of a region, simply because humans and human events do not always fit into neat categories. This is abundantly clear in the case of Big Sur country, which, in the opinion of Esther Pfeiffer Ewoldsen, a member of the pioneering Pfeiffer family, “has always been a haven for nonconformists.”³⁶

In addition to its attractiveness as a recreational destination, the remoteness of the Big Sur has also contributed to its popularity among those seeking peace and contemplation. Three important developments reflect this trend: the New Camaldoli Hermitage; the Carmelite Monastery; and the Esalen Institute. The New Camaldoli Hermitage was founded in 1958 by the Camaldolese, an order of Benedictine priests. It is occupied by priests but is also available for retreats by church members, who can stay in rooms or trailers. [The New Camaldoli Hermitage is located so far from the highway that it was not inventoried.] The Carmelite Monastery is a much older retreat for nuns, having been established in 1925, with the current building dating to 1931. It was remote at the time it was constructed, but is now at the edge of the community of Carmel Highlands. The Esalen Institute is a secular retreat that has operated at its current site since the early 1960s. Although no firm figures have been collected, it is likely that Esalen is among the most popular destinations along the Big Sur Coast. The non-profit organization describes itself as “a center for alternative education, a forum for transformational practices, a restorative retreat, a worldwide community of seekers. Dedicated to exploring work in the humanities and sciences that furthers the full realization of the human potential, Esalen offers public workshops, residential work-study programs, invitational conferences and independent projects that support our mission.”³⁷

There are two properties at Big Sur that function as social centers for a community that is otherwise lacking in public spaces. One is the Big Sur Grange Hall, which was built in 1949 alongside the Big Sur River. Another property of community-wide interest is the Henry Miller Memorial Library. Emil White, who had served as secretary and friend to Henry Miller while he lived in the Big Sur region, built the library in the mid-1960s. In 1981, White transformed his cabin into a memorial for his friend, who had died that same year. The library is officially

³⁵ JRP Historical Consulting Services and Foster-Wheeler Environmental Corporation, *California Historic Military buildings and Structures* (Sacramento: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, March 2000), Vol. 1, *Inventory of Historic Buildings and Structures on California Military Installations*, 4-79.

³⁶ Woolfenden, *Big Sur: A Battle For the Wilderness*, 13.

³⁷ <http://www.esalen.org>.

devoted to the memory of Miller and in that respect commemorates the artistic community and its role in the history of the region. The Grange Hall, although built after most of the agriculture in the area had disappeared, commemorates the long pioneer era of the region. From a practical standpoint, however, both buildings serve as community centers where fundraisers, public hearings, and other public events may be conducted. The main lodge at Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park and the Multi-Agency Facility can also accommodate community functions.

5 PROPERTY TYPES ALONG THE COAST HIGHWAY

As noted earlier, federal historic preservation guidelines attach great importance to the concept of a “property type.” A property type is simply a class of historic resource that may be associated with a particular historic theme. A motel, for example, is a predictable manifestation of the historic themes of the development of tourist accommodations along the Big Sur. A farmhouse is similarly a predictable type of property that might be associated with the use of the Big Sur for subsistence farming.

As envisioned in federal historic preservation guidelines, the property type becomes the key concept for evaluating significance. It allows the analyst to categorize buildings and structures in relation to themes that are known to be important to the region. The analyst may then begin to draw conclusions about the relative merit of known examples of a property type. It is known, for example, that Deetjen’s Big Sur Inn is the oldest unmodified example of hotel or motel in the region. Knowing the importance of that theme, the importance of hotels and motels as examples of that theme, and the importance of Deetjen’s relative to other examples, it is possible to draw conclusions about why Deetjen’s is such an important resource. A similar type of logic applies to farmhouses as examples of subsistence agriculture, and to other property types associated with the history of Big Sur.

The current inventory, however, was designed as an identification document and is not charged with the specific task of evaluating significance. The following discussion of property types is designed to lay the framework for evaluating significance but does not draw specific conclusions about significance, except in those instances in which properties have already been listed in or found to qualify for listing in the National Register.

5.1 PROPERTY TYPES ASSOCIATED WITH PIONEERING SETTLERS

For the purposes of this report, the “pioneer era” is defined as the 103-year period spanning from the date the first Mexican Land Grant was issued in Big Sur, in 1834, to the completion of the Carmel-San Simeon Highway in 1937. This period involved a variety of different activities, including subsistence agriculture, stock raising, mining, timber harvesting, and road-building. Given this diversity of activities, it may be reasonable to conclude that there would be an equally diverse group of historic resources that reflect this long period in the history of the region. Such is not the case, however, owing to two important factors. First, the episodic nature of some of these activities worked against the survival of large numbers of historic properties. For example, the several landings that were built along the Big Sur Coast to enable ships to anchor offshore and load materials were associated with short-lived enterprises. Not surprisingly, most of the landings have vanished, though traces of the Partington Landing still exist. As a second explanation, many of the known historic resources were destroyed after the highway was completed. Some were dismantled by the owners in the hopes of establishing a more modern group of buildings for commercial use. Many more were destroyed by acts of nature, whether fire or slides. For these reasons, the property types and examples of those property types associated with the pioneering era are quite limited.

Arguably, the most impressive collection of resources includes the farmhouses and cabins associated with the subsistence homesteaders who settled this region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Four properties are especially noteworthy in this regard: the Post House near

the Big Sur River (now part of the Ventana Inn); the Swetnam / Trotter House; the Cooper Cabin near the Big Sur River; and the Junge Cabin in the Pacific Valley.³⁸

The Post House was apparently built in stages between the late 1860s and late 1870s, attaining its current appearance in 1877. In addition to its architectural merit, the building symbolizes the yearning for some semblance of the amenities of civilization among the isolated pioneer settlers. The home still exists in a very high degree of structural and historical integrity, although its setting has been compromised to some degree by the development of major resorts in the vicinity. It is situated immediately alongside Highway 1 south of Big Sur and is the most accessible of the major properties associated with the pioneer era.

The Swetnam / Trotter House at Palo Colorado, like the Post House, is important architecturally as well as historically. Architecturally, the home appears to represent a unique specimen and is deserving of in-depth analysis from a structural standpoint. It appears that the building was constructed of rough-hewn redwood logs, chinked with a concrete mortar, and partially finished with beveled boards. The siding, however, was not added to the west façade, leaving exposed the interesting methods of construction.³⁹ It appears that the building has been in this condition for many years, suggesting that the exposure of the logs was intentional. Historically, the home is important because it was occupied and owned by several pioneering families. The best-known of these was Sam Trotter, who embodied the “jack of all trade” resourcefulness that was required of the settlers in this remote and difficult environment.⁴⁰

The Cooper Cabin is another key resource in commemorating the pioneer life in Big Sur. The small cabin, a three-room structure, was apparently built in the 1860s for Juan Bautista Cooper, owner and manager of the Rancho El Sur. It is notable for its unusual method of construction and also for its direct association with Captain Cooper, the first non-Indian to develop this region, even though he never actually lived at his rancho.⁴¹

The Junge Cabin is a one-room redwood log cabin that was built in 1920 by John Junge, who homesteaded this area. After Junge left the homestead in 1924, the cabin became a hunting club and for a period of time was owned by the Hearst family. The presence of this log cabin, a property type generally associated with the frontier experience of the 18th and 19th centuries, illustrates well the isolation that persisted in this area, well into the 20th century. The cabin has been listed on the National Register.

There are numerous related properties near Lucia (along postmiles 23-25 in Monterey County) that are associated with the Harlan family. The most interesting of these is an old cabin (known by the Harlan family as the “Hass House”) that appears to date to the early 20th century. The Harlan family complex, however, is especially noteworthy because it represents a rare phenomenon in California of multiple generations of families occupying the same space,

³⁸ There are several other important examples of historic resources from the pioneer era that still exist, but are outside of the study area. These include Michael and Barbara Pfeiffer’s house at the mouth of Sycamore Canyon, near Pfeiffer Beach, and the “Homestead Cabin” in Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, built by John Pfeiffer in the 1880s.

³⁹ At the time the house was constructed the road through the area, the Coast Road, passed to the east. The “front” of the building, the side facing modern Highway 1, was originally the rear of the house.

⁴⁰ This house was occupied by a variety of other pioneer families, including Isaac and Ellen Swetnam, who built the home. The Swetnams arrived in the Big Sur area in the 1880s and built the house in the early 1890s. Big Sur Historical Society, *Recipes For Living in Big Sur*, 51.

⁴¹ The building is analyzed for its historic and architectural significance in Kathleen E. Davis, “A New England Log House on the Central California Coast,” *Material Culture*, Vol. 21, No. 3, (1989), 27-39.

creating multiple generations of buildings as well. This overlaying of different generations may, however, work against National Register eligibility for some of the properties.

5.2 PROPERTY TYPES ASSOCIATED WITH THE EARLY RESORTS

In some respects, resorts represent the richest collection of historic properties within the Highway 1 corridor. Although recent by comparison with the pioneer properties, the resorts of the Big Sur are now reaching maturity, with many being more than 50 years old. Unfortunately, from the standpoint of historic preservation the resorts have, in many instances, been modernized and otherwise modified. There are only a small number that continue to reflect the architecture and operations of resorts from the 1930s and 1940s.

The key property in this regard is Deetjen's Big Sur Inn, located south of the community of Big Sur. The inn, which has been listed in the National Register, was built in the mid-1930s, as soon as highway access had been ensured. In this respect, it was typical of the many lodges that were built during the period. What is highly unusual is the Norwegian architectural program for the buildings, called for by Helmuth Deetjen, a native of Norway. Deetjen, who died in 1972, wanted to see the property retained in its original state, either by the Department of Parks and Recreation or another preservation-oriented agency. It is now operated on a non-profit basis by the Deetjen's Big Sur Inn Preservation Foundation. According to a travel consultant, "Accommodations at Deetjen's Big Sur Inn are rustic, still very much the way 'Grandpa' Deetjen built them. Heating is provided by fireplaces, woodburning stoves and electric heaters. The old handhewn doors have no locks or keys, yet may be secured from within. There are no phones and no TVs."⁴²

There are many other inns or motels in the Big Sur region that were constructed more than 50 years ago. It appears, however, that none retains such a high degree of integrity as Deetjen's. As noted earlier, the members of the Pfeiffer family started the River Inn in 1934. The facilities at Gorda date to the 1930s, although there are several newer buildings within the complex. The complex at Lucia also dates to about 1936 but has been modernized. Nepenthe, established in 1949, utilized the Trail's Club cabin that was built in 1925, but newer generations of construction include the addition of the restaurant and store in the 1960s. The complex at Loma Vista also apparently dates to the late 1930s, as does the Ripplewood Resort. None of these properties is unmodified. The question remains as to whether any of these older resorts retains sufficient integrity to warrant consideration for listing in the National Register. That evaluation will require extensive examination of the buildings on a case-by-case basis. It may be that some of the resorts will need to be treated as collections of buildings, some retaining integrity and others not. The River Inn, for example, clearly includes several generations of construction, as does Nepenthe.

Other properties are not resorts, but are designed to cater to the through traffic. This category includes gasoline stations. There is one notable gasoline station along this highway, although at the northern extreme of the Coast Highway: the Carmel Highlands Station and Store. Likely built in the mid-1930s, when the highway was first completed, this Mission Revival complex is a handsome example of its property type, though its integrity has been diminished somewhat with the recent conversion of the south half into a store.

⁴² <http://www.Bbchannel.com/bbc/p213711.asp>.

5.3 PROPERTY TYPES ASSOCIATED WITH VACATION HOMES AND PERMANENT RESIDENCES

As noted earlier, it appears that many well-known individuals have established permanent or vacation homes along the Big Sur. These celebrity homes, however, are difficult to evaluate for three reasons. First, it will be a complicated task to establish a connection because celebrities are generally reluctant to give out this information. Second, it is not easy to make a case for historical significance for a vacation home, unless the vacation home is used in some manner other than recreation. Finally, in many instances, these properties were acquired in recent years, and would need to be shown to be exceptionally important to warrant consideration for listing in the National Register. For these reasons, as a general rule it is unlikely that celebrity summer homes will qualify for listing in the National Register.

In a few instances, however, well-known individuals have settled in the Big Sur area on a more permanent basis, making it more likely that the properties might qualify for the National Register under Criterion B, "association with persons important to our history." Two examples stand out: the Linus Pauling Home and "Wild Bird," or the Owings House.

Linus Pauling and his wife, Ava Pauling, acquired this property in the 1960s. They purchased it from an elderly couple who wanted to move to town. At that time, there was only a small cabin without electricity or telephone. In 1963, the Paulings built the existing home, a substantial redwood and stone structure that was apparently designed by Pauling to fit his needs. He and his wife referred to the property as "The Ranch" and the home as the "Ranch House." Pauling acquired the home at a crucial juncture in his career. He had left the California Institute of Technology and had taken a position at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara. This affiliation allowed Pauling and his wife to live at this site for extended stays, although they did not live here full time until late in their lives. The Pauling House is located far downhill from Highway 1 and is hardly visible from the highway. It is nonetheless associated with a crucial figure in American science and politics, the only American to earn two unshared Nobel Prizes. Although it is less than 50 years old, the property should be regarded as having some potential for listing in the National Register, owing to the importance of this association under Criterion B.

The "Wild Bird" house similarly has strong associations with the lives of its owners, Nathaniel and Margaret Owings.⁴³ Nationally, Nathaniel Owings was well-known for his association with the architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, one of the most important firms in post-war United States. In terms of this house and the Big Sur country in which it is located, however, his wife, Margaret Owings was better known and arguably more important. Margaret was regarded as one of the key figures in the environmental movement in California in the late 20th century and was especially active in preservation of the Big Sur and sea life in the region. She was born in Berkeley, California, in 1913 but lived outside California between the mid-1930s and early 1950s. She married Nathaniel in 1953; he was her second husband. They built Wild Bird in 1958 and established it as their permanent residence, although they maintained several other homes as well. Nathaniel designed Wild Bird himself, steering far from the International Style for which his firm was famous. One architectural critic likened it to a Frank Lloyd Wright house in that it "combines wood, stone, and glass to create a form that is both sculptural and embracing, almost nurturing."⁴⁴ Nathaniel lived there until his death in 1984, as did Margaret until her death in 1999.

⁴³ The name of the house is variously spelled "Wildbird" and "Wild Bird."

⁴⁴ Paul Goldberger, "Revisiting Big Sur's Wild Bird," *Architectural Digest*, (June 1996).

Arguably the most notable private residence along the highway is the D.L. James House in Carmel Highlands, at the northern extreme of the Coast Highway. Charles S. Greene (of Greene & Greene, the seminal designers of Craftsman homes) designed the estate in 1918. This remarkable example of stone masonry construction seems to grow naturally from the stone outcropping upon which it was constructed.⁴⁵

5.4 PROPERTY TYPES ASSOCIATED WITH PUBLIC SECTOR

There are numerous public sector historic properties along Highway 1, which have little in common except that they were built by local, state, or federal agencies. The resources reflect the need for buildings to help maintain the infrastructure in this rugged area.

The Coast Road (now called the Old Coast Road) is an important resource in the region, although it is scarcely visible from modern Highway 1. As discussed with respect to pioneer era properties, the Coast Road was as much the product of self-reliance as it was the work of the public sector. Most histories of the area agree that members of prominent pioneer families actually built the road and turned it over to the county for maintenance. The road has been found to qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Arguably the most significant federal sector property in the area is the Point Sur Lighthouse, one of the largest and most impressive of all historic resources in the vicinity. This resource is important in every respect imaginable: for the remarkable design of the lightstation and related buildings; and for its long role in safeguarding navigation along this dangerous coast. The property is also of interest for its symbolic value regarding the relationship between the lighthouse keepers and the people of the region. The federal employees lived literally on a mountaintop, far removed from the general population of the region.

There are other remnant elements of the presence of the public sector at Big Sur, most dating to the years just after the highway had been completed. The California Division of Highways built a maintenance station at Willow Springs shortly after the highway had been completed, although nearly all of the buildings that are present there were built in more recent decades. There exists an older ranger station of the Forest Service at Salmon Creek; it dates to 1931, indicating the station was built contemporary to the highway reaching this point.

In addition to new construction, the public sector has done much to preserve historic resources that were originally built for private parties. The California Department of Parks and Recreation in particular owns many of the most important historic resources cited in this report. Other important resources are owned by the U.S. Forest Service, Monterey County, and non-profit organizations.

The key public sector resource along Highway 1 is Highway 1 itself. The entire highway has been found to qualify for the National Register as a "linear historic district." The eligibility was based chiefly upon the sensitive manner in which the roadway was fitted into this scenic area. The great bridges – at Bixby, Wildcat, Big, and other creeks in the area – were found to qualify individually for the National Register, as great achievements in the science of bridge design.

⁴⁵ This home is highlighted in: Randall L. Makinson, *Greene & Greene: The Passion and the Legacy* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs-Smith Publisher, 1998). D. L. James retired in the Carmel area after having founded a successful mercantile business in Kansas City, Missouri. He was an uncle to Jesse and Frank James, well-known bandits from Missouri.

The highway as a whole was found to qualify for the National Register because of the small but nonetheless important design elements elsewhere, including masonry railings, drinking fountains, and retaining walls. The historic highway features were recorded in great detail in a previous inventory effort.⁴⁶ The Highway 1 Historic District does not, however, include the paved roadway, which is routinely upgraded and replaced. The roadway was evaluated by Robert Pavlik of the California Department of Transportation and inventoried by Far Western Anthropological Research Group, under contract to Caltrans.

5.5 OTHER PROPERTY TYPES IN THE REGION

The “other” category is especially rich, denoting the highly eclectic nature of life at Big Sur. These are property types that are of potential importance to the region, but that do not fall into the categories treated elsewhere.

The Carmelite Monastery of Carmel is situated at the northern extreme of what is commonly seen as the Big Sur country; visually and geographically, it is part of Carmel Highlands. This complex includes both a large cathedral and the Villa Angelica, a summer home for the nuns. The entire complex was designed by the Boston architectural firm of Maginnis and Walsh in 1931 and appears to draw upon late Medieval Italian architectural traditions.

As noted earlier, there are two Big Sur buildings that are used most often for community gatherings. One is the Grange Hall on the banks of the Big Sur River, a building that was constructed in 1949 on land that was donated for the use of the community. The other is the Henry Miller Library, which is situated in a cabin that was built in 1966 for Emil White, a longtime friend of Henry Miller. In 1981, upon Miller’s death, White renovated the older cabin for use as a library and bookstore, devoted to Miller’s work.

Although these “other” properties are of interest, many possess characteristics that work against their listing in the National Register. Religious properties are generally excluded from National Register listing unless they possess non-religious significance, including architectural importance. The Carmelite Monastery falls into this category. The Henry Miller Library is less than 50 years old and might be regarded as a commemorative property, another class of excluded properties. The exception is the Big Sur Grange Hall, which is more than 50 years old and has a special place in the community; it should be assessed for potential National Register eligibility.

⁴⁶ The highway elements were initially inventoried and evaluated in Robert C. Pavlik, “Historic Resource Evaluation Report: The Rock Retaining Walls, Parapets, Culvert Headwalls, and Drinking Fountains along the Carmel to San Simeon Highway.” Report prepared for the California Department of Transportation, Environmental Planning Branch, District 5, San Luis Obispo. 1996. The highway elements were recorded in: Far Western Anthropological Research Group, “Cultural Resources Inventory of Caltrans District 5 Rural Highways, Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties, California: Coast Highway 1,” March 1999.

6 DATA GAPS

This inventory effort for historic “intrinsic qualities” identified 91 properties that were within the view of the highway and that have potential historic significance. These properties collectively capture the intrinsic qualities associated with historic properties along this route. The structure of this inventory, however, works against the recordation of all properties that might be seen as associated with important events and persons in the history of the region, owing to geographical restrictions and an emphasis on buildings and structures that still exist. The following comments and recommendations are designed to point toward further research that will amplify and build upon the findings of this study.

6.1 LOCATIONS FOR EPHEMERAL DEVELOPMENTS

It is known that there were dozens of short-lived economic activities along the Big Sur Coast, including logging and tanbark operations as well as mines. These enterprises in turn gave rise to numerous coastal landings, which were odd structures that allowed raw material to be carried to an anchored ship. There were landings at Partington, Anderson Creek, Bixby Creek, Notley’s at Palo Colorado, and Rockland Landing at the mouth of Limekiln Creek; several existed in the Pacific Valley area. Of these, only the Rockland and Partington landings were recorded because of their visibility from the highway, and because remnants of the original structures still exist. Two other properties associated with the pioneer era of Big Sur are the Mansfield Cemetery, located near the USFS Pacific Valley Guard Station, and Plaskett Family Cemetery, located on USFS grounds shared by the Pacific Valley School. In both cases, the resources are within the highway right-of-way, but no associated resources – such as head stones or grave markers – are extant. There are several other ephemeral resources in existence along the roadway, including pack trails, traces of the original coast highway, old bridge abutments, and so forth. None of these ephemeral properties were recorded because there are no associated buildings. The resources are more akin to historic archaeological sites than to buildings or structures.

6.2 PROPERTIES LOCATED AWAY FROM THE ROADWAY

Many of the best-known events associated with Big Sur occurred in buildings that are well beyond the viewshed of the highway. Henry Miller and other well-known artists, for example, lived on Partington Ridge, which is some distance from the highway. Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s cabin, the site of Jack Kerouac’s lost weekend recorded in *Big Sur*, was apparently along the Old Coast Road. There are dozens of buildings at Coastlands, some of which are likely of historic interest.

Recommendation:

These off-road sites are not part of the intrinsic qualities of the highway but are certainly part of the history of the county and the region. An inventory should be undertaken by a responsible local party, perhaps through the auspices of the counties.

6.3 PROPERTIES ASSOCIATED WITH NOTABLE INDIVIDUALS

From time to time, many notable people have lived or had extended stays at the Big Sur. The identity of these people and the locations of their stays are probably known among long-term residents of the area but not recorded in written form.

Recommendation:

This class of property is best recorded through extensive use of oral history. A local organization, such as the Big Sur Historical Society, is especially well situated to undertake an inventory of this sort.

7 LIST OF PREPARERS

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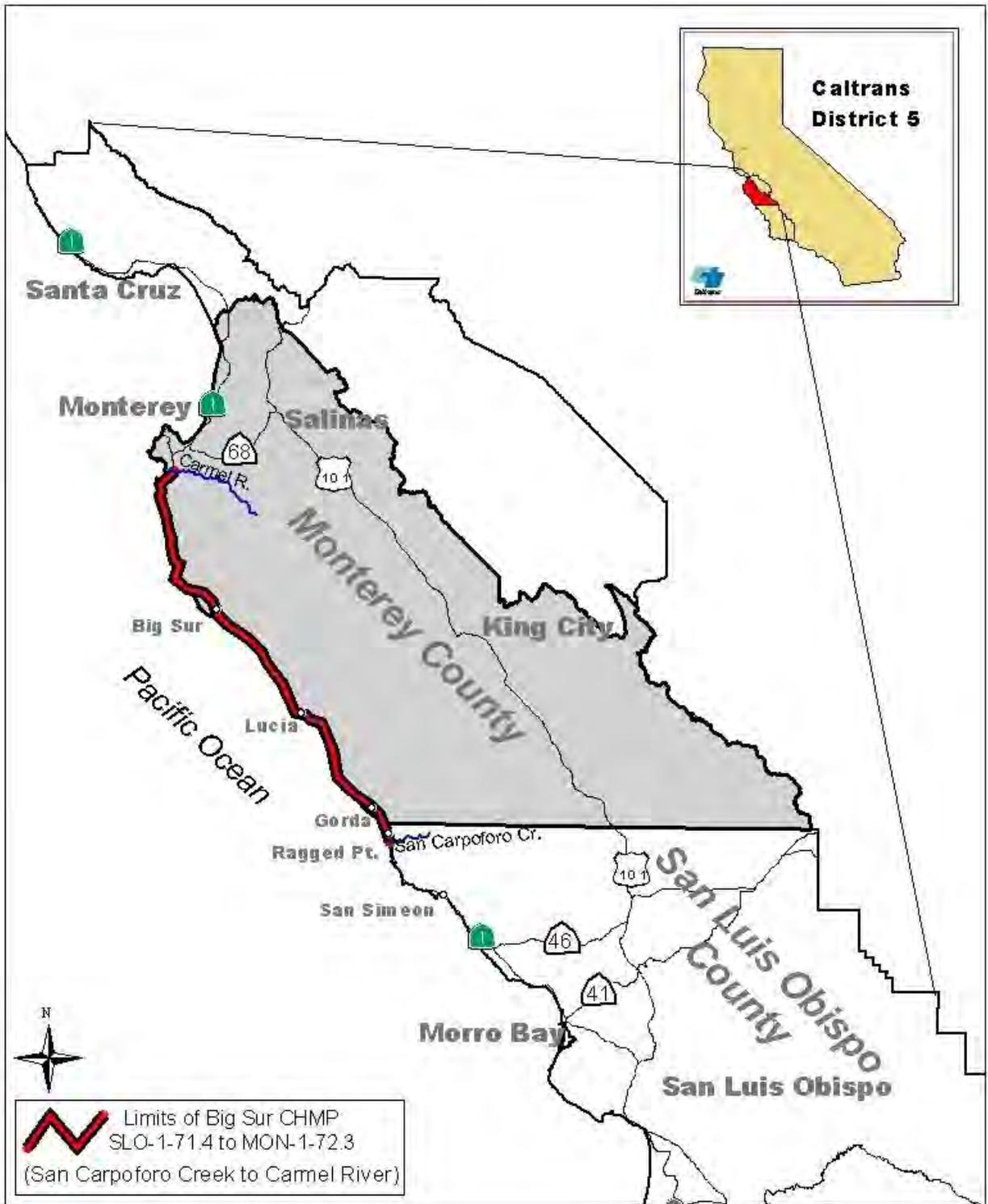


Figure 1. Map of Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan Area