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By James Feenan at 4:15 pm, Jul 30, 2024

Dear Sirs/Madam:

It has come to my attention that the Board of Supervisors is entertaining a change to our zoning laws that would allow "Transient Habitation -- Low Intensity Camping" on virtually any property in the rural portions of our county. This idea should be dropped immediately. The potential for environmental destruction resulting from such an idea far outweighs any possible perceived benefit. If for no other reason, I would hope the Board would refuse to open County rural areas to camping because of the danger of fire. We've seen the horrendous effect of fire throughout California; Mendocino County doesn't need to repeat the horror of Paradise, CA and many other small California towns. It would take but a single unattended campfire, a cigarette, a dragged tow chain, a fire cracker, or an act of arson or simple idiocy to destroy thousands of acres along with an untold number of homes. Additionally, many rural homes already have limited water available, campers will only make that situation worse. And where does their garbage go? Do you really think that it will end up at a disposal site rather than alongside our roads or dumped down embankments or tossed into streams? And what of the impact to wildlife due to pollution and/or habitat loss?

The idea of Transient Habitation -- Low Intensity Camping is very poorly conceived. The potential costs far, far, outweigh any assumed benefits. We saw the destruction of our rural areas due to the heavy influx and development of marijuana farming, legal or otherwise, let's make sure that sort of thing doesn't happen again. If you want to get a sense of the negative side of the camping proposal, ask the folks along Highway 128 near Philo if they would want uncontrolled camping in and around their dry grasslands and forests.

I ask you, as an owner of a number of rural properties, do not allow this Transient Habitation exemption to pass. If the argument above isn't enough to convince you of the horrendous and frightening potential, consider the financial effect that multiple lawsuits resulting from a camper-caused fire will have on our County.

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