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**From:** [Cassandra Prenn-Vasilakis](#)  
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**Subject:** Public Comment on Item #6c - Mendocino County Planning Commission 11/7  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 6, 2024 3:02:25 PM  
**Attachments:** [Public Comment re. Item #6c -- Planning Commission Meeting, 11 7 2024.pdf](#)

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Hello,

Please find attached Hipcamp's comment for tomorrow's Planning Commission meeting.

Thank you,  
Cassandra

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# HIPCAMP

November 6th, 2024

Mendocino County Planning Commission  
501 Low Gap Road  
Ukiah, California

**Re. Agenda Item 6c: Discussion and Possible Direction to Staff Regarding Establishing a New Use Type of Transient Habitation: Low Intensity Camping, which would allow for a limited number of short-term commercial campsites on properties within the Inland areas of the County.**

Dear Chair Paulin and Mendocino County Planning Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on the establishment of a new use type of Transient Habitation–Low Intensity Camping in Mendocino County.

We appreciate the Planning Commission’s attention to this topic, and thoughtful evaluation of the benefits and potential impacts associated with rural recreation and camping that have taken place in Mendocino County to date.

Hipcamp partners with landowners in all fifty states and across four countries to open access to private lands for public recreation. Our work is focused on increasing access to the outdoors and on enabling private landowners to participate in and benefit from their local recreation and tourism economies.

With this in mind, we ask that you support and recommend a policy that enables landowners to host a small number of campsites on their properties, for the purpose of creating income diversification opportunities for rural residents and expanding access to the outdoors in Mendocino County.

Private landowners have long been welcoming visitors to Mendocino County and rely on the income they earn hosting campers to pay their property taxes, make mortgage payments, keep farms economically viable, and invest in stewardship and sustainable management practices on their properties. Given this, we are supportive of a policy that would better enable these rural recreational activities while establishing guardrails to ensure incidental camping on private land is well-managed.

It is in the spirit of our shared goals and vision for outdoor access, rural economic development, and land preservation that we offer the below ideas. We look forward to hearing your feedback on what this land use can and should look like in Mendocino County, and are happy to be a resource to the Commission and to Planning and Building Services throughout this process.

Thank you for your thorough consideration of this topic, and please let us know if we can answer any questions or be supportive in any way.

Thank you,  
Cassandra

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**Permitting requirements and associated costs** – Low intensity, incidental camping is an impactful but supplemental source of revenue for landowners in Mendocino County. We are very supportive of regulations that set standards for and manage these activities, and ask the Commission to consider permitting requirements that are financially accessible for landowners and that will ensure an inclusive process.

**Occupancy –**

- Consider aligning the County’s occupancy requirements for private campsites with those for sites on public lands, typically 6-8 people per site
- Include an upper occupancy limit as well as a cap on the number of total allowable sites that is tied to the size of the property
- Consider allowing for up to 2 tents and 1 RV per campsite
- A density requirement of one site per acre would – when combined with setback requirements from off-site residences – further mitigate the concerns raised about potential impacts

**Hosted sites –**

- At an earlier Board of Supervisors’ Meeting on this topic, the Board discussed driving distances and response windows for landowners and managers; consider a requirement that the responsible party live within 30 minutes of the property and be available by telephone on a 24-hour basis when guests are present
- Most, if not all, of the landowners that currently partner with Hipcamp in Mendocino County reside or work on the property they welcome campers to – but we wouldn’t want an on-site occupancy requirement to unintentionally pose a barrier for other kinds of operators (farmers who do not live on the same parcel, land trusts offering camping at fee properties / preserves, etc.)

**Parking** – Recommend making it explicit that on-street parking is not permitted, and on-site parking must be made available

### **Fire safety –**

- Require a safe campfire setup and extinguishment including designated location(s) with appropriate setbacks, educational materials detailing safety expectations, and a fire extinguisher at each campsite
- Consider a requirement that landowners notify guests of fire safety considerations and best practices before their stay begins (this information is often required when utilizing an online platform, but individuals may choose to offer sites another way – personal website, other advertising, etc.)
- Low intensity camping areas must follow and adhere to all applicable local, state, and federal fire regulations and bans

**Duration of stay –** Consider a maximum length of stay that is consistent with those enforced at campsites on public lands; up to 14 consecutive days occupation by a single party

**Trash –** Consider a requirement that trash be removed from the premises after each occupancy

### **Facilities –**

- Consider supporting dry campsites for self-contained campers; sites without facilities and amenities and where landowners can provide potable water, if they choose, by bringing it onto the property rather than requiring additional well-water use
- Recommend requiring that landowners provide a human waste management system (or limit their offerings to sites for self-contained vehicles), including but not limited to a connection to sewer or septic system, a compost toilet, portable toilet, or equivalent
- Consider screening requirements for sanitation facilities

**Consideration for agricultural operators –** We understand that there are agricultural properties where the concerns expressed in previous meetings on this topic may not be as relevant. We ask the Planning Commission to consider whether there may be an opportunity to create a streamlined process that would better enable farmers and ranchers to pursue camping-based agritourism activities and enhance the economic productivity of their agricultural operations.