

9/12/2021

To: Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

Re: Hip Camps

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I am concerned about the increase of Hip Camps in our County. Hip Camps are like an Air BNB for tourists who want to camp. Private citizens set up campsites on their property that are then advertised and accessed through the Hip Camp site. These camps can be located in residential areas and in areas that may be heavily wooded.

My concern is 2 fold:

Campers are allowed to build fires in these camps. While the Hip Camp sites asks their Hosts to be aware of fire ordinances, sites advertise that campfires may be built in the camp. My understanding is that there is a campfire ban in the county. But I was able to go to the Calfire web page and fill out a form, watch a 2-minute video, complete an 8-question quiz and print out a campfire permit for my home in Albion. Additionally, my understanding is there is an exception for fires for the purpose of "heating and warming". I can find no clear guidance in County documents regarding guidance for this practice. Talking with residents who have seen the campfires built by these tourists indicate that tourists are not fire savvy. Safety is only as good as the Host. A Host allowing fires on their property, to me, indicates a lack of good judgment and concern for the safety of their neighbors.

Secondly, how will these camps be monitored for safety and proper set up? In one camp trees were removed and streambeds were bulldozed through. Neighbors reached out to enforcement but it took 2 months of multiple problems with the camp host before action was taken. Code Enforcement is already overwhelmed. We have seen the failure of a complaint driven system with the proliferation of illegal cannabis grows. How can we keep the same thing from occurring with an over abundance of Hip Camps?

Possible suggestions could include

- 1, An emergency ordinance banning all campfires in the County until the rainy season begins. Or at least clearer guidance as to what the campfire ban currently is.
2. Enforcement of the Bed tax: County could monitor the Hip campsite and be sure all camps were properly signed up with the County to pay their Bed tax. Not only is this a source of revenue but also lets Hosts know that they cannot fly under the radar
3. Educating the Hosts that they are liable for any fires that begin on their property. I do not know if this is common knowledge for Hosts. Perhaps they would willingly

consider prohibiting campfires (which they can do) if they understood the risk they were taking themselves if they allowed fires

4. Partnering with Hip Camp to help with monitoring these sites. They want their sites to be safe and offer a good image for their business. It is a win win if participating camps are well run with attentive Hosts.

The County needs to think about the overall impact of a proliferation of these camps and the impact to water and land resources. We do not want another issue of too many camp sites that cannot possibly be monitored such as the illegal cannabis grows. Let's learn from our previous experience.

Thank you for your attention to this matter

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