



MONTEREY
MONTEREY COUNTY CONVENTION
& VISITORS BUREAU



Case Study

Destination Stewardship Plan Safeguards Big Sur

Industry

Travel & Tourism

Services

Sustainability Consulting

Destination Management and Stewardship

Date of Service

July 2019 - July 2020

Situation

The iconic 70-mile stretch of central Californian coastline known as Big Sur was suffering from the effects of overtourism, which was negatively impacting the natural and cultural heritage of California's most visited tourism destination, as well as the quality of life of its residents. The Community Association of Big Sur, in partnership with the Monterey County Board of Supervisors and the Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau, contacted Beyond Green Travel, a subsidiary of PTG Consulting, to develop a visitor management plan for Big Sur based on sustainable tourism destination stewardship to optimize tourism's positive benefits and minimize its negative impacts, utilizing sustainable tourism strategies and recommending solutions for effective destination management.

Solution

Through an extensive multi-stakeholder engagement process, resident surveys, on-site assessments, a dedicated project website, and the creation of a local steering committee of community and business leaders to help guide the process, Beyond Green Travel created a Destination Stewardship Plan to enable Big Sur community stakeholders to successfully address specific challenges related to visitation in the destination. The plan included both short- and long-term recommendations for implementation, leveraging existing frameworks as well as providing new strategies for protecting Big Sur's natural and cultural heritage for future generations, while benefitting from carefully planned and managed visitation.



Results

- The Big Sur Destination Stewardship Plan (DSP) was accepted by the community of Big Sur as a document to guide decision-making to ensure that visitation, both current and future, is based upon careful planning, monitoring and management to create a better and more sustainable future for Big Sur’s environment and its communities. The plan was officially accepted by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors in December 2020 and is now recognized as a model visitation management plan in the state. Among dozens of both short- and long-term recommendations, key outcomes for Beyond Green Travel’s implementation included:
- Development of a “Go Green” visitor day pass to generate funding for a “Sustainability Fund” to protect Big Sur’s natural and cultural heritage, in addition to providing support to community initiatives to mitigate visitation impacts
- Implementation of a visitor management framework for the back-country hiking areas of Big Sur that are managed by the U.S. Forest Service, which have suffered significant negative impacts, including illegal camp fires. Beyond Green Travel’s recommendation as part of the DSP led the U.S. Forest Service to begin implementation of this planning framework in 2021
- Creation of a 12-month pilot program to redirect, manage, and monitor visitor traffic and access to Bixby Bridge, among the most popular tourism attractions in California, gathering data to develop long-term solutions to the impacts of over-visitation at this iconic historic landmark
- Establishment of a “Community Corps” of Big Sur residents and volunteers to help educate visitors on respectful behavior and safe environmentally friendly activities while visiting the destination

“To protect and preserve the rugged, scenic, natural beauty of Big Sur and its cultural heritage, benefit the local economy, and foster a welcoming and sustainable community for generations to come.”

— Big Sur Destination Stewardship Plan Vision Statement