



**Jim Hart
Sheriff – Coroner
County of Santa Cruz**

June 17, 2016

N. Patrick Veesart
Enforcement Supervisor, Northern Districts
California Coastal Commission
Central Coast District Office, Ste. 300
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: Opal Cliffs Recreation District
Violation File Number V-3-06-012

Dear Mr. Veesart:

The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office is responsible for providing public safety services in the unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County, California. Our mission is accomplished through open communication and collaboration with community residents, governmental organizations and continuous professional development within the department.

My office has a long, well established working relationship with the Opal Cliffs Recreation District (OCRD) and is familiar with District's Opal Cliffs Park and their operations. Our relationship has evolved on the basis of our agreed goals of maximizing public beach access while ensuring the safety of the public and surrounding neighborhood and residents.

Based on our long history with the District and the park, I would like to offer the following observations regarding your letter to the District dated June 7, 2016.

I request you reconsider your demand that OCRD "...remove the fence, gate, and guard...no later than Thursday June 30, 2016." I have lived in this community my entire life and have been employed by the Sheriff's Office for 28 years and I cannot recall there ever not having been a fence and gate at the park.

Aside from the fact that I have never seen a security guard at the gate, removal of the physical fence and gate from the park will create an immediate and continuing dangerous nuisance that will facilitate increased criminal activity, parking and traffic control

problems, reduce public safety in the adjacent neighborhood and increase calls for service requiring Sheriff Office resources to undertake supervision, enforcement and intervention of the inevitable nighttime use of the park by persons involved with illegal activity.

In considering Opal Cliffs Park, it is unlike the larger Pleasure Point / East Cliff Drive area for a number of reasons, not the least of which are the open undeveloped public street nature of East Cliff Drive which allows deputies to effectively patrol. Opal Cliffs Park, on the other hand, is located within a densely populated residential neighborhood without good sight lines for effective observation from patrol staff. Coupled with the cliffs, it is more akin to Sunny Cove Beach, which has become a high crime area which the County has been unable to dedicate sufficient resources for collection of trash and upkeep.

In the last 12 months (June 1, 2015 through May 31, 2016) my office managed 605 calls for service at Sunny Cove Beach for a wide variety of criminal activity including drug dealing, drug and alcohol use/abuse, fights, assault and battery, public urination and defecation, speeding, parking problems, sex crimes and fireworks. Much like the Opal Cliffs Park, Sunny Cove Beach is surrounded by a beautiful neighborhood and the beach itself is quite small. The crime occurring in the Sunny Cove Beach area is causing serious problems for homeowners, with many residents stating they have had enough and are considering selling their homes and moving from the beach area. In contrast, during the same time period my Deputy Sheriffs responded to nine calls for service at the Opal Cliffs Park and surrounding area.

It is a matter of fact that OCRD and the Sheriff's Office have worked for years to provide services related to providing public access to the beach, which is accessed by a staircase adjacent to a steep cliff edge, while attempting to ensure that nighttime criminal activities are not allowed to be unintentionally facilitated. I believe that the fence and gate are critical to ensuring the future success of our efforts.

While there may be compelling Coastal Act reasons for updating permits related to OCRD, I don't believe there is a reasonable justification to remove existing facilities onsite without first ensuring that suitable public safety amenities are planned and approved for their place.

I urge you to withdraw your demand that OCRD remove vital public safety facilities, and ask that you collaborate with OCRD regarding your permit concerns. In that regard, the Sheriff's Office stands ready to assist your agency and OCRD to ensure your efforts proceed as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jim Hart', is written over the typed name and title.

Jim Hart, Sheriff-Coroner
Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office