



**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY GROUP**

**of the Ventana Chapter**

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Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors  
704 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz CA 95060

June 10, 2026

RE: Oppose Proposed Parking Fee for County Parks

Dear Supervisors,

The Sierra Club has recently become aware of the proposed parking fee pilot program for selected high-use Santa Cruz County parks. We are strongly opposed to instituting a parking fee for any County parks. County parks provide an important and highly valued 'third space' for our community members, especially seniors, families with young children, less affluent residents, and community events, gatherings, and sports. Higher use rates for parks such as Pinto Lake are a strong indicator of the higher need for them by residents in those areas of the county who may have insufficient yard space, fewer alternative outdoor and community venues, and be less able to afford other recreation options. The residents who use these parks most heavily are precisely those who have the greatest need for them.

Our County parks are currently funded through taxation of our County residents and tourists. These parking spaces have already been funded. It is highly regressive to require Santa Cruz County residents to pay twice for access to these community spaces. We recognize the budget challenges faced by the County park system and appreciate that the parking fee program offers accommodations for public assistance recipients. However, most users of county parks do not fall into any category to receive a discount and would have to pay the full amount.

We also have concerns as to how the program would be implemented and monitored; for instance, would the program allow cash payment, or would it be credit/debit or pass only, as is the case with downtown City of Santa Cruz garages? What additional infrastructure would be needed--and at what cost--to operate a payment system? Cashless payment methods which require the use of a card, smart phone or other electronic transfer already present a significant barrier to access for less privileged users, who are unbanked at far higher rates than most residents. These systems should not be considered for use at County parks.

Further concerns include the unintended discouragement of park users due to the fee and a consequent drop-off in usage, and the potential for an increase in parking demand in surrounding neighborhoods by park visitors. As this proposal is for a pilot program only, Sierra Club urges that, if adopted, the program should contain an automatic reassessment within six months of implementation including surveys of public response and careful tracking of usage rates to determine the program's future.

County parks are a powerful statement of our shared values and a vital part of our commons. A community space, especially one supported by our tax revenue, must ensure open and equitable access to all community members.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Michael Guth  
Chair, Santa Cruz Group of the Sierra Club