

**From:** [george swiggum](#)  
**To:** [CDD Comments](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: Mono hip camp  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 16, 2022 11:01:37 AM

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**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]**

----- Forwarded Message -----

**From:** Stephanie Wolff <[panamawolff@gmail.com](mailto:panamawolff@gmail.com)>  
**To:** "georgeswiggum@yahoo.com" <[georgeswiggum@yahoo.com](mailto:georgeswiggum@yahoo.com)>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 30, 2021 at 09:45:40 AM PDT  
**Subject:** Mono hip camp

Mono County Supervisors and residents,

I am writing today in support of George Swiggum's Mono Hip Camp proposal on his private property on Cottonwood Canyon Rd. I have known George for 20 years and have been visiting his property on Cottonwood Canyon Rd since he first purchased it. George is a responsible property owner as well as an advocate for sustainability and the environment. He is not the type of person that is going to allow campers and visitors disrespect and trash the property.

America has a campground shortage right now. I'm sure Mono County has some high rank in US counties visited by campers and we are falling short on space for them. Now with the much needed enforcement in dispersed camping I would think that Mono County would welcome property owners willing to convert and manage their properties as campgrounds.

I understand that neighbors may not want visitors in their neighborhood, similar to how nightly rentals can be frowned upon. However we are a County based on tourist dollars and we need to be able to come up with creative ideas to continue to encourage tourism and protect our beautiful forest and open spaces.

I believe that George's Hip Camp would be a great way to add a few more spots to our campgrounds under the supervision of someone who will not allow visitors to trash or negatively impact this amazing land.

Thank you

**From:** [Jeff W.](#)  
**To:** [CDD Comments](#)  
**Subject:** Hip Camp proposal, re 8/18 PC meeting  
**Date:** Monday, August 15, 2022 6:00:22 PM

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**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]**

Dear Planning Commission,

I am writing in opposition to the Hip Camp proposal. I am a full-time resident of Mono City.

The north shore community already lacks adequate fire services and water to battle fires.

The Camp would also open the door for more dispersed camping and greater fire risk, particularly with the history of nonpermitted festivals at the site.

The local fire department has already opposed this project.

Further, this project counters the Mono County General Plan, which should not be eroded away with "Special Plans."

Thanks for your attention and consideration,

Jeff Wyneken

**From:** [E Brown](#)  
**To:** [CDD Comments](#)  
**Subject:** Hip Camp  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 16, 2022 9:34:13 AM

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**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]**

Dear Planning Commission Members and others

I am adamantly opposed to the proposed Land Designation change regarding the Hip Camp project for ALL the reasons that have been communicated in letters submitted by the opposition. My fear, is the chance of increased fire risk in an area that is already challenged by fire danger, as well as the impact on the environment and residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Eva Brown  
Mono City resident

April 27, 2022

Mono County Planning Commission  
Attention: Bentley Regehr  
PO Box 347  
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93456

**RE: OPPOSITION to Swiggum Hip Camp Proposal, 228 Cottonwood Canyon Road, Lee Vining**

Dear Mr Regehr and Planning Commissioners,

I wanted to let you know that I **oppose** approval of the proposal to allow for a private campground in the midst of the north shore of Mono Lake community.

I have lived on Cottonwood Canyon Road full time for over 25 years, and part of that time was at 228.

While at 228 I was a tenant of George Swiggum's. In that time he was never a full time resident, and still isn't. He used the property as a second home and a place to have multi-day parties that would start at dusk and go on to sunrise. I prefer the peace and tranquility of the north shore and the loud music of these parties were disturbing to not only myself, but many neighbors in the area. A private campground will bring more noise to the area. Maybe not all-night parties, but still a disturbance to those that live in the homes next to Swiggum's property, at the very least. I did not expect someone to purchase property out here with the intent of changing their zoning, from Rural Residential to one of commercial use, which would allow a flow of strangers staying in my neighborhood. The noise level from generators, that campers are allowed to bring, and use, as well as any that the applicant will be forced to use to supplement the lack of grid electricity, will increase not only noise pollution but also the chance of fire.

All of us who live out here know the fire danger in the sage brush habitat is always high, unless there is full snow coverage which is rare now. People who do not live here are ignorant of this. **Campfires, a tradition for those camping, should never be allowed in this environment.** They are not necessary. We do not have a volunteer fire department out here and rely on Mono City and Lee Vining volunteer fire departments and the BLM station in Lundy Canyon in emergencies. By the time any of those entities get here a fire could well be out of control. I have a few stories, that I won't detail here, of fires in this area. We have been lucky, so far, or maybe it is because many of us who live out here are here full time. We are more concerned than a tenant, of a absentee owner of a private campground, might be. How many stories have you heard about a campfire that was innocently left smoldering that started a large fire?

Water here is precious. With the drought continuing on, there will be less as there hasn't been a lot of snow in the Bodie Hills. The water also has an arsenic level that the government says is fine for personal home use but is not allowable for commercial use. Not likely that these campers will bring their own water to a campground that advertises it has potable water.

There are several other problems with this proposal that have been outlined in Michael Light's letter to you. I agree with all of what he has said there, and I do not feel that I need to repeat them.

I bought my property here in 1996 because of the incredible view and quiet solitude. I'm sure that is what the other neighbors enjoy. A commercial campground in the area will change that. There are zoning codes for a reason. Please do not do a run around of them for the sake of-, what exactly? George Swiggum has never been open to the neighborhood about his plans for a commercial campground on his property. He doesn't have to be, but that is not being a good neighbor. I, and many here in the neighborhood, have concerns that he has probably not taken into consideration, or perhaps he just doesn't care. His past actions have shown a lack of care. As I told him after his first all-night party “the noise doesn't stop at his property line”. The effects of this possible change in the zoning will affect all of us who live on Cottonwood Canyon Road. I ask again that you do not allow this proposal to go through.

Sincerely,

Kathi Richards  
Full-time Resident of Cottonwood Canyon Road,  
PO Box 310, Lee Vining, CA 93541  
760-937-4196

**From:** [Paul](#)  
**To:** [CDD Comments](#)  
**Subject:** public comment re: Hipcamp proposal  
**Date:** Friday, August 12, 2022 12:08:23 PM

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**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]**

My name is Paul Ashby. Thank you for allowing me to comment on this proposal.

I've been a frequent visitor to Mono Basin since 2014. I nearly always stay with friends in the Cottonwood Canyon area. It's my favorite area to hike and explore. While visiting, I also work on photography, video, music, and writing. I find the place endlessly inspiring, relaxing, and regenerating.

I value the natural beauty, the wildlife, the solitude, the quiet, the clear air, the nearly-nonexistent traffic, and the friendly people -- who share my love and appreciation for all these vital elements. None of these things should ever be taken for granted. Cottonwood is yet one more magical puzzle piece of the Basin, my favorite place.

In view of the unique and fragile nature of the Basin in general, and the Cottonwood area, specifically, it's necessary to voice my numerous concerns regarding the proposed expansion of the Hipcamp property.

- \* The existing Hipcamp business ran for an extended period without proper permits. When ordered to cease operations until such permits were obtained, it continued to publicize its business online, accepted reservations, and allowed visitors to camp -- in direct and continued defiance of Mono County's business and zoning laws.
- \* The owner organized at least one massive holiday-weekend party, without notifying locals in advance, and caused neighbors to feel under siege with excessive and extended noise, traffic, and parking issues.
- \* At least two neighbors, whose properties border the Hipcamp property, have had unpleasant encounters directly related to the business while it was being run without proper permits.
- \* The project proponent, and owner is, often, an absentee landlord, and has been difficult to contact when issues arise.
- \* The business is in an area known for its high winds, and is south and upwind of the Bodie Hills wilderness, a fragile transition ecosystem covered, in part, by sagebrush, juniper, and pinon pine. Adding fire rings and propane tanks -- and, more often than ever, neophyte campers, under minimal (if that) supervision -- directly endangers these ecosystems, as well as the people who own residences nearby

The area's distance from emergency services means expansion of the business would also bring with it an unacceptable expansion of fire risk.

There are appropriate projects, places and times for additional recreation opportunities in the Mono Basin. The Hipcamp expansion proposal is the wrong project in the wrong place at the

wrong time.

I trust the Planning Commission will take these issues under serious consideration, and deny this proposal.

Thank you,

Paul Ashby  
Moraga, CA

Mono County Planning Commission

May 6, 2022

Attention: Bentley Regehr

Subject—Consideration of Permit Request(s) North Shore Mono Basin Neighborhood: 228 Cottonwood Canyon Road (Swiggum Property)

Planning Commission, Staff and Interested Parties:

Thank You for having a well-established and consistent process for allowing the public to comment on proposed changes in use and development proposals for lands in Mono County. I particularly applaud staff for the excellent job I've observed they do in supporting the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC) whose meetings I consistently attend.

I am writing to you in the matter of "HipCamp", a proposal for a formal change in use of 20 acres located on the east side of the Cottonwood Canyon Road (CCR). This is of significance to me personally, in part because I own a 20-acre rustic homestead located to the west of CCR, purchased in 1988 and used as a part-time residence since that time.

While I choose to keep my homestead rural and sparse, it nonetheless has great value to me and provides wildland habitat in a seasonal/ephemeral watercourse setting. The latter is true because Bridgeport Creek runs through the westerly side of my property (and three other 20 acre parcels adjacent to the north). Though it may seem odd (and is irrational), landowners in this neighborhood actually intentionally chose properties that are off-grid, silent, empty and wild.

The purpose of my comments is to encourage you to please **take no action on the permit application**. I ask this because the proposal would allow/encourage the expected and current uses/activities allowed under the Rural Residential zoning classification to change dramatically, with associated impacts. Before taking this irrevocable step, it is essential that the County leaders **complete their broader review and establish policies for dispersed camping in the County, and specifically in the Mono Basin**.

The dispersed camping review initiative has been successfully initiated and ably led by Supervisor Gardner and others, but it has not come to resolution. Ideally, one result of the would be preparation and approval of maps that specify in what subareas and locations commercial, internet-driven dispersed camping can an occur in an effective, safe manner. While this needs to be done county-wide, in the interim, Mono Basin sub-areas/locations could be identified in a consensus process undertaken through the RPAC forum. Key questions to ponder for example could include: *Why is dispersed camping no longer allowed by federal agencies up Lundy Canyon Rd.? If not acceptable there (with water, fire protection, stores and trails nearby), why would it be supported by the County on CCR where none of the above resources exist and neighborhood values will be compromised?*

Thorny issues raised by dispersed camping are myriad and well-documented in the record of public meeting(s) hosted by the County. Examples of just a few of these that are paramount **in the HipCamp proposed remote location** include: fire danger, public safety, private property incursion/privacy, litter, noise disturbances and unfair property value impacts. Occasional, supervised free camping presents lesser challenges, but commercially driven, internet-marketed locations greatly magnify these concerns. Though this proposal may seem "small" in the context of KOA-style industrial scale campgrounds, it clearly creates an in-perpetuity right



for: *up to 21 campers onsite at a time, multiple tent camping spaces, 10-15 parking spaces, three fire rings, and two developed RV sites with hookups.* HipCamp clientele and attendant vehicles will require power that will come from generators, which will create major noise and emissions in an intentionally quiet, undisturbed area—values for which the Scenic Area itself was created to preserve. This proposal is the tip of an iceberg for others to follow once permitted and operating, an example of potential “acceptable, allowable” development to all who pass by. This presents a threat to one of the very few neighborhood residential areas that exist in the Mono Basin.

If taking formal action is a necessity on May 19, I urge you to **oppose** this proposal. Approval would set an unfortunate expectation that basically any rural residential parcel can be eligible for commercial dispersed camping uses. Your decision to approve this application would be precedential in landowners’ expectations if not actual legal provisions. Approval could well lead to a flood of proposals dotted throughout the county, rather than in appropriate, fire and public safe geographies located near bicycle paths, water recreation, hiking trails and other amenities desirable to vacationing guests. These latter locations would best be specifically identified, designated and mapped by the County, to provide quality information and guidance to those in search of non-disruptive legal camping sites.

A final caveat to note, if the project is approved, the permit and conditions of approval become permanent and are transferrable to future property owners. Incremental expansion of the approval would likely be deemed incremental and easily approvable. This piecemeal spreading of potentially hazardous fire-prone uses over the wild landscape of the Basin should be avoided (and is avoidable).

In closing I respectfully request the Planning Commission to stand by the provisions of the 1) Mono County General Plan; 2) the Mono Basin Community Plan, and 3) the adjacent Scenic Area protections. These essential, long-approved and community-developed legally binding documents do not envision or support commercially driven dispersed camping uses of rural residential parcels or scarce residential neighborhoods in the Basin.

Sincerely,

Grace Anderson  
376 South Bodie Hills Drive

Cc  
Board of Supervisors, Mono Basin Bob Gardner

**Attachment A:  
Remote Location Dispersed Camping Impacts and Hazards**

**Fire Danger:** Properties in the Cottonwood Canyon/Goat Ranch area, lie outside any assigned Fire District. Region fire protection entities (395/Lundy and Mono City/ Fire Protection District) oppose any changes allowing commercial camping. The campground would allow a stream of essentially unsupervised vacationing strangers, unfamiliar with Mono County fire risks and procedures, to have multiple dispersed large fires on the parcel. Applicant does not live in or near the County and would instead expect a renter with no authority to oversee. This is a public danger and fire hazard to the entire neighborhood; depending on wind speed and direction, all of Mono North Shore, along with Lundy Canyon and possibly Mono City could be at fire risk.

**Scenic and Safety Values.** The proposal outlines development of an otherwise isolated, untouched and pristine Area 3 (see proposal maps) west of Cottonwood Canyon Road, where a new RV campsite is to be built with toilet/septic, 1000 gallon water tank, solar electric system, fire ring, tent camping and tables, and new driveway in, separated from the presently developed portion of property on CCR east. This West campsite complex would be visible to all who drive lower Cottonwood Canyon Road. It would result in invasions to properties on South Bodie Hills Drive and greatly increase safety and fire hazard for all landowners to the west. *Under no circumstance should this element of the proposal be approved.*

**Litter.** The distance of two miles approximately between Cemetery Road and CCR has been “adopted by Grace and Bob” officially through the CalTrans highway litter abatement program. I am that Grace and have been picking up litter along the road by myself since the death of Bob nine years ago. I know how much more trash accumulates in locations along the road where pullouts exist or side-road intersections occur. Traffic generated by HipCamp would substantially increase the burden trash places on locals who are the only ones to retrieve it. No public trash receptacles exist anywhere east of Mono City.

**Private Property Intrusion.** All property owners in the area maximize the current broad open-space and wild values, in part by having **no fences**. As guests seek entertainment in this no services/no activities remote location, they will inevitably wander onto the property of others. There are no boundary markers or indications of property lines. While this may not be intentional, nonetheless, visitors do comprise real and additional risk for nearby property theft, dog intrusion/barking, as described above, litter. This approval would result in general intensification of property use far beyond the single residence and accessory dwelling units allowed by Rural Residential/RR zoning.

**Noise/Health/Traffic:** Up to 21 campers (and pets) would generate a significant amount of noise upon arrival, departure and at night campfires. Increased traffic on Cottonwood Canyon Road and in the overall area is a major noise, aesthetic and health (dust) impact for which there is no identified mitigation.

**Open-Ended Permit Schedule:** Completion and “occupancy” of all elements of this proposal could be spread over a five-year time-period. If this occurs, it is critical that any permit approval be conditioned on full compliance with all conditions and codes before any commercial use is considered legal under sanitation, water, fire and safety standards.