

RECEIVED

JUN 23 2025

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Public Comment  
on J.2

---

Public Comment - Agenda Item J2

---

From Cassandra Prenn-Vasilakis <cassandra@hipcamp.com>

Date Mon 6/23/2025 3:35 PM

To COB <COB@co.humboldt.ca.us>

 1 attachment (3 MB)

Comment-Humboldt County Agenda Item J2 (6\_24\_25).pdf;

**Caution:** This email was sent from an EXTERNAL source. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments.

Hello,

Please find attached Hipcamp's comment on Agenda Item J2 for tomorrow's Board of Supervisors Meeting.

Thank you,  
Cassandra

--

Cassandra Prenn-Vasilakis  
Hipcamp | Senior Manager, Government and Community Relations  
Work: 415-612-8775  
Cell: 347-573-5200  
She/her

June 23, 2025

Humboldt County Board of Supervisors  
825 5th Street, Room 111  
Eureka, California

Re. Agenda Item J2: *Letter of Opposition Unless Amended to Assembly Bill (AB) 518 (Ward) Regarding Low-Impact Camping Areas Unless Amended to Address Safety and Agricultural Protection Concerns*

Dear Chair Bushnell and Humboldt County Board of Supervisors,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on Supervisor Wilson's proposed amendments to California Assembly Bill 518, introduced by Assembly Member Ward and co-authored by Assembly Members Rogers, Ortega, and Connolly.

We appreciate the Board of Supervisors' attention to this legislation and are glad to see the County engaging with the intent and potential benefits of AB 518. We are writing to offer a few clarifications, **as all of the concerns raised in Supervisor Wilson's proposed letter of opposition are addressed in the bill** and standards to ensure human health, environmental safety, agricultural protection, and local control are **already in place**. Given this, and on behalf of the 35+ conservation, recreation, and agricultural organizations listed in the attached coalition letter, **we respectfully urge the Board to vote "No" on Item J2 and instead support AB 518 as written.**

Currently, state law requires that landowners obtain both a local permit and a state permit to operate more than one campsite. The state permit, originally designed for mobile home parks and large-scale commercial campgrounds, is a duplicative and costly process for well-managed, small-scale camping areas that already have local approval – and it comes with development requirements that are incompatible with agricultural production, rural character, and the preservation of open space. **AB 518 simply removes the requirement for a state permit for qualifying landowners who already have local permission to host campers.**

In addition, AB 518 has an opt-in clause for counties. It is not a mandate and is intended to affirm local control and provide options for counties that want to support low-intensity camping and camping-based agritourism uses, without imposing any requirements on those that don't. Humboldt County does not have to allow low-impact camping locally. If Humboldt County does decide to opt-in to the exemption created by AB 518 and draft an ordinance to support low-impact camping, **AB 518 sets the floor – not the ceiling – for these uses.**

We are excited to see Humboldt County support the development of additional camping opportunities to enhance rural and farm-based tourism income and provide more low-cost recreational access. We share Supervisor Wilson's perspective that these uses must be well-managed. With this in mind, we have worked closely in coalition with dozens of organizations across the state as well as with Assembly Member Ward to ensure AB 518 establishes a minimum set of standards that will increase health, environmental, and agricultural protections for low-impact camping areas while affirming local control for land use decisions –



- **Enhanced Local Control:** AB 518 returns the right to regulate small-scale camping to counties without imposing a one-size-fits-all state mandate about how to do so. AB 518 does not require a county to authorize low-impact camping. It establishes minimum requirements for a county that, by ordinance, elects to authorize low-impact camping. These ordinances exist across the state and it would limit the local control of other jurisdictions to impose at the state level an additional set of standards and requirements. Land use is primarily a local issue -- municipal and county governments know best if, where, and how to offer this type of camping safely if they want to do so. Humboldt County can create locally-relevant standards that will support and manage these uses via an ordinance.
  - Today, issues related to safety and environmental health at small-scale camping areas are already handled by local code enforcement – not by the state. Nothing will change as AB 518 does not grant any landowner the right to create new camping areas without going through the proper permitting channels at the local level.
  - AB 518 already requires that all online hosting platforms provide a means for the operator of a low-impact camping area to include any permit or registration number required by the county on the online listing.
- **Safety and Environmental Standards:** AB 518 already requires low-impact camping areas to comply with applicable state and local fire safety requirements. In fact, the environmental and safety requirements in AB 518 are exactly the same as in existing state law under the Special Occupancy Parks Act. Other counties have created their own fire and environmental safety standards in addition to those required in the bill and by the state. Humboldt County may choose to create additional requirements as well.
  - AB 518 does not loosen environmental or safety standards at low-impact camping areas. The state already defaults to local regulations on fire safety, human health, and environmental impacts for small-scale camping. AB 518 simply exempts qualifying landowners who already have local approval to host campers from burdensome state development standards that include floodlighting, paved roads, and built and gendered bathhouses.
  - California's [Joint Strategy for Sustainable Recreation and Wildlife Resilience](#) makes it very clear that the state does not intend to halt recreation in the face of changing climate and longer fire season. Instead, the strategy recommends diversifying recreation opportunities to ensure families can continue to get outside while supporting rural economies.
  - Camping is a fire-safe activity and no more risky than overnight guests staying in a short-term rental with outside space or residential homeowners with access to a backyard bbq. In fact, according to the National Fire Protection Association and [its research](#) on ignition sources of brush, grass, and forest fires in the U.S., campfires are ranked as the least common ignition source in their data set.



- **Agricultural and Timber Land Protections:** AB 518 already limits the number of campsites per property to 9 and sets a density limit of 1 site per acre (so if you have a 5 acre property, you can only have 5 sites). In addition, AB 518 has strong support from the California Farm Bureau Federation, California Certified Organic Farmers, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, and a number of farm trail organizations specifically *because* it will support the viability of working landscapes and create economic opportunities for farmers that are compatible with agricultural production and accessible from a cost and permitting perspective. Humboldt County may choose to further restrict camping activities on working farms and ranches locally; AB 518 just establishes minimum requirements for a county that, by ordinance, elects to authorize low-impact camping. Counties are encouraged to write additional regulations as is appropriate within their jurisdiction.
- **Infrastructure Standards:** AB 518 requires that low-impact camping areas comply with all applicable local requirements including for the disposal of human waste and trash, as well as local zoning, permit, lot size, and setback requirements. It also requires that, in the absence of applicable local requirements, low-impact camping areas maintain sanitation facilities that are fully-self contained or connected to a permitted sewage disposal system and remove all garbage from the premises after each occupancy. Counties already have their own standards for these uses and Humboldt County may introduce additional infrastructure standards as well. Individual counties are the entities best suited to determine where and how they want to manage these concerns.
- **On-Site Management Requirements:** AB 518 requires that a property manager be available by phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This requirement is the minimum, and a number of counties have already introduced their own hosting standards with additional requirements. Humboldt County could do the same, but the state shouldn't impose additional requirements on other counties that are best suited to determine what is appropriate for their own communities.

AB 518 is critical to expanding access to the outdoors across California, supporting rural tourism economies, and diversifying income for farmers and ranchers. By creating a new framework for camping at the state level, AB 518 removes unnecessary and expensive state barriers, giving local governments the chance to opt-in to creating options for rural and agricultural landowners to host low-impact camping on their properties.

Low-impact camping harnesses the financial power of outdoor recreation to create sustainable revenue for farmers, landowners, and small businesses while supporting conservation of valuable, undeveloped landscapes. For these reasons and on behalf of the organizations listed in the attached coalition letter, we respectfully ask the Board to consider supporting Assembly Bill 518 without qualification.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Prenn-Vasilakis  
 Senior Manager, Government and Community Relations, Hipcamp, Inc.  
[cassandra@hipcamp.com](mailto:cassandra@hipcamp.com)



June 23, 2025

Honorable Aisha Wahab  
Chair, Senate Housing Committee  
1021 O Street, Suite 8530  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Kelly Seyarto  
Vice-Chair, Senate Housing Committee  
1021 O Street, Suite 7120  
Sacramento CA 95814

**Re: AB 518 (Ward): Low-impact camping areas – SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Wahab, Vice Chair Seyarto, and Committee Members:

Assembly Bill 518 is critical to expanding access to the outdoors across California, supporting rural tourism economies, and diversifying income for farmers and ranchers. By creating a new framework for camping known as "low-impact camping areas" at the state level, AB 518 cuts through red tape and returns land use decisions regarding small-scale campground permitting to local governments who opt in.

Outdoor recreation hit a record high in past years with more than 20 million Californians getting outside annually, representing \$81.5 billion in value added to the California economy in 2023. But nearly half of all campers report difficulty finding available campsites. There are too few outdoor recreation accommodations for Californians and visitors, and this bottleneck is having negative impacts on outdoor access, rural economies, and recreation businesses. With reports that nearly 4,000 additional campsites could close across California this year due to federal budget cuts, local communities need as many tools in their toolbox to manage demand for camping and support their outdoor recreation economies.

**AB 518 addresses these issues by removing unnecessary and expensive state barriers to campsite permitting, giving local governments the chance to opt into creating options for rural and agricultural landowners to host low-impact recreation on their properties.**

Low-impact camping harnesses the financial power of outdoor recreation to create sustainable revenue for farmers, rural landowners, and small businesses while supporting conservation of valuable undeveloped landscapes. For these reasons, we urge you to vote YES on AB 518.

Sincerely,



Alyssa Ravasio, Founder and CEO  
**Hipcamp, Inc**

Pam Hill, President  
**Apple Hill Growers Association**

Mike Lynes, Director of Public Policy  
**Audubon California**

Bill Gamber, Owner  
**Big Agnes Inc.**

Kaylita Johansson, Founder  
**Black Surfers Collective**

Gurbax Sahota, President and CEO  
**California Association for Local Economic Development**

Laetitia Benador, Policy Manager  
**California Certified Organic Farmers**

Steven Fenaroli, Director of Policy Advocacy  
**California Farm Bureau Federation**

Lexie Gritfeld, Executive Director  
**California Outdoor Recreation Partnership**

Stephanie Stephens, Executive Director  
**California Parks and Recreation Professionals**

Jake Bayless, Board President  
**California Trails Foundation**

Johnny Irwin, Executive Director  
**City Surf Project**

Adam Anderson, Owner  
**Coloma Lotus Whitewater**

Evan Wiig, Director of Membership and Communications  
**Community Alliance with Family Farmers**

Laurel Brent-Bumb, CEO  
**El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce**

Gordon Helm, Director  
**El Dorado County Farm Bureau**

Mike Owen, President  
**El Dorado County Farm Trails**

Elaine Hogan, Executive Director  
**Great Redwood Trail Agency**

Jazzari Taylor, Policy Advocate

## **Latino Outdoors**

Josh Simpson, Co-Founder  
**Little Kamper LP**

John Wentworth, CEO  
**Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access  
Foundation**

Kim Suarez, Raw Materials Specialist  
**Marmot**

Hannah Wintucky, Government Affairs  
Manager  
**Outdoor Industry Association**

Rue Mapp, Executive Director and Founder  
**Outdoor Afro**

Ben McCue, Executive Director  
**Outdoor Outreach**

Ankit Jain, CEO  
**Pathloom, Inc.**

Matt Oesterle, Founder and CEO  
**Ramble**

Alicia Jarvie, Head of Community and  
Government Affairs  
**REI Co-op**

Drew Saunders, General Manager  
**Salewa**

Adriana Guerrero-Nardone, Executive Director  
**Salted Roots**

Susie Murphy, Executive Director  
**San Diego Mountain Biking Association**

Sam Hodder, President and CEO  
**Save the Redwoods League**

David Polivy, CEO  
**Tahoe Mountain Sports**

Meredith Caccese McConvill, Founder  
**Top Rope Media**

Rico Mastrodonato, Legislative and Policy  
Director  
**Trust for Public Land**

Elliot Gault, Senior Manager, Government  
Affairs  
**VF Corporation**

Irene Davis  
**Visit San Benito**