



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Humboldt Baykeeper to Coastal Commission: Don't cave in to billboard bullies

Humboldt Baykeeper calls on the Coastal Commission to hold firm in the face of billboard company CBS Outdoor's 11/8/2013 letter threatening legal action if the Commission requires billboard removal along Humboldt Bay as a condition of approval for Caltrans' Indianola interchange project. Billboards are regulated by Caltrans, which issues permits under the California Outdoor Advertising Act.

CBS Outdoor claims that billboard removal would be a taking of their property. "Billboards can only be situated on property with landowner approval," stated Baykeeper Policy Director Jen Kalt. "And under the Outdoor Advertising Act, Caltrans permits must be revoked when landowners withdraw that approval."

Humboldt Baykeeper wants billboards removed because they are on public lands in an area designated scenic by Humboldt County, and many were built in tidal wetlands. Several public agencies – the Humboldt Bay Harbor District, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and North Coast Rail Authority have called for billboard removal from their lands for years, and yet Caltrans continues to renew these permits. These agencies have returned or refused payments for billboards on their properties, essentially rescinding the billboard leases.

"To claim a takings is ludicrous," stated Baykeeper Executive Director Jessica Hall. "Billboard companies have not paid for many of these billboard leases for years, they've taken a free ride on public lands. A land owner grants the privilege of placing a billboard, it's not a right. It's a basic property rights issue – and in this case, much of that property is the people's land, public property. The Coastal Commission should stand up to corporate freeloaders of public space – something Caltrans has refused to do all these years."

Billboards have been banned in four states: Vermont (1968), Hawaii (1927), Alaska (1959), and Maine (1979), further calling into question the validity of any constitutional claims.

The Coastal Commission will be finalizing Conditions of Approval for the Indianola interchange/101 Corridor Safety Project at a hearing this Thursday in Newport Beach.

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