

5/25/71

Skyline Drive Shows Beauty, Problems

A drive down the Skyline in May when wildflowers are out and the landscape is green and washed, gives the motorist a unique experience of shifting vistas of forest, Bay, and Ocean extending from Mt. Tamalpais to Monterey Bay.

A Committee for Green Foothills tour of the same area highlights what is actually happening to land use in contrast to the drawn-on-paper plans for a Skyline Scenic Recreation Route. In San Mateo County there is evidence of building, logging, grading, and resubdivision easily visible from the road. In Santa Clara County, ambitious plans for expansion of parks and trail systems depend on acquiring money from various sources.

According to the grand plan, a narrow slow speed road designed for recreational driving would follow the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains through four counties from San Francisco to the Pajaro River. Recreation would be enhanced by roadside parks, corridors, and feeder trails to other parks and urban areas.

The planning structure to achieve this dream exists in a joint powers agreement among four counties and seven cities. Several committees are at work planning the grand concept. Portola Valley's Sam Halsted chairs San Mateo County's Skyline Recreation Highway Advisory Committee.

Where the present Half Moon Bay Road intersects Skyline Boulevard, the open rolling field dotted with wildflowers will be on the route of a freeway connecting San Mateo and Half Moon Bay. At its meeting in Redwood City May 19 and 20, the State Highway Commission heard requests from the cities of San Mateo and Half Moon Bay for construction of the route as early as 1973, according to Mrs. Pat Barrentine, Executive Secretary for the Committee for Green Foothills.

Nearby, a two and a half acre site being purchased by the State Division of Highways gives a panoramic view of the ocean from a setting of giant cypress trees. To the north can be seen the San Francisco watershed where a new road may some day connect San Bruno with the present Skyline.

Heavy forests of redwood and Douglas fir enclose the highway most of the way to Skylonda. Everett Farwell's rhododendron nursery showed most of his 500 varieties in dazzling bloom under the redwoods. Other points of interest include King's Mountain's modern Fire Station and Community Center complete with recycling station and the giant Methuselah redwood, 1800 years old, which still shows old fire scars.

Frequent rows of mail boxes indicate the highly residential nature of the area. Large ownerships in-



(Photo by Marion Softky)

HORSES IN THE FOREGROUND and a house notched into a hillside site show two faces of the Skyline its

clude the protected lands of the San Francisco watersheds and Huddart Park, but much of the area is in five to ten acre lots, some much smaller. Many properties are for sale.

At the old Brock's King's Mountain Inn site which has been recommended for purchase as an outlook the view of Purisima Canyon does not show the logging operation. A 250-acre development plan for Purisima Canyon is proposed, with hearing set for May 26 before the San Mateo County Planning Commission.

Farther south the Donahoe property, site of logging operation now the subject of a current county lawsuit, is often the setting for weekend motorcycle sports. The whole Skyline area serves as a motorcycle park, local residents complain.

South of Skylonda the forest gives way to open rolling hills where cows and patches of woods serve as foreground to spectacular views of the Ocean and Bay. Along this section there are almost no places to get out of the car and walk since one of the two picnic sites donated by private landowners has been shut due to trespassers, motorcyclists and wholesale garbage dumping. Any development would be visible on these hillsides, far beyond the 2000 foot maximum of the County's Scenic Corridor, which provides architectural control but no zoning restrictions.

Near a field of grazing horses the range of problems which threaten the Skyline are visible. Mrs. Richard Schwind of the South Skyline Property Owners Association can point to an open hill scarred

rural beauty confronted by the pressures of growing population and pressures for development.

by two roads, one of which turned out to be a "mistake," she says. Another house sits in a hole created by a grading violation, she pointed out. This area is being developed by the process of successive resubdivision into 4 lots, with over 20 lots created so far but no overall plan. Another unsuccessful logging operation was followed by an unsuccessful application for a motorcycle park in an area now being sold off in 40 acre lots. "The people who buy want to divide and sell off . . . there is no overall plan," Mrs. Schwind said.

On the east, most of the way from Skylonda to the County line at Page Mill Road is in Portola Valley while on the west the County extends most of the way to Highway 9. Some of this land is in agricultural preserves to hold down taxes, but more, zoned one to five acres, is not.

In Santa Clara County there are plans to develop a linear park along Skyline to the Castle Rock Area and linked by trail to key Bayside areas. The Castle Rock complex, which Mrs. Dorothy Varian has largely inspired, was described as a do-it-yourself park created completely by private donations. She is still seeking funds to buy several key parcels.

In San Mateo County, planning for the Skyline Route is progressing slowly. Money from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund might be available if an application could be made by July 1. Some of San Mateo County's \$800,000 Environmental Contingency Fund might be used for acquisition along Skyline. This is the fund the Supervisors appropriated last year for the environment but have so far refused to spend.