

## **The Wildlands Conservancy**

### **Estero Americano Coast Preserve: Community FAQ**

#### **1. Why has there been a sudden increase in visitors?**

While the Preserve was open for six months with steady, manageable local use, a "perfect storm" occurred in early January 2026. A combination of unsolicited media coverage, holiday weekends, unseasonably good weather and rare surf conditions drew an unprecedented influx of visitors. Data shows that visitation has peaked and is steadily trending downward.

#### **2. Can TWC implement a daily "visitor cap" or reservation system?**

Public access is not merely a policy—it is a legal requirement. The Preserve is governed by:

- A Recreational Covenant with Sonoma County.
- A Coastal Development Permit from the California Coastal Commission.
- Funding requirements from the State Coastal Conservancy.

These mandates require the Preserve to remain open to the public from sunrise to sunset. While TWC are monitoring usage, any change to access levels involves complex legal rights regarding the public's right to reach the California coast.

#### **3. How is the environment being protected from "over-use"?**

Our stewardship philosophy focuses on visitor behavior over raw numbers.

- Active Monitoring: Rangers patrol the 5-mile trail system daily to check for erosion, litter, or habitat disturbance.
- Legal Protections: The land is protected by a Conservation Easement and strict deed restrictions that prioritize the protection of endangered species and the watershed.
- Education: Rangers are on-site to enforce "Pack It In, Pack It Out" principles and ensure hikers stay on designated paths.

#### **4. What is being done about parking and traffic safety?**

The Inter-Agency Working Group is working on:

- Red-Striping: Strategically implementing "No Parking" zones determined by experts to ensure human health and safety is a priority.
- Signage: Adding clear markers to prevent blocking of emergency access routes.
- Staffing: Increasing ranger presence during peak weekends to manage roadside parking and safety.

#### **5. How is sanitation being managed?**

TWC has increased the maintenance cycles for on-site restrooms and increased servicing of trash and recycling receptacles. During peak visitation periods, our team scales up service frequency to ensure facilities remain clean and adequate for the volume of users.