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AB-518 Low-impact camping areas. (2025-2026)

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Assembly Bill No. 518

CHAPTER 157

An act to amend Section 18862.43 of, and to add Part 2.3.5 (commencing with Section 18890) to Division 13 of, the Health and Safety Code, relating to land use.

[Approved by Governor October 01, 2025. Filed with Secretary of State October 01, 2025.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 518, Ward. Low-impact camping areas.

Existing law, the Special Occupancy Parks Act, establishes requirements for the construction, maintenance, occupancy, use, and design of special occupancy parks. Existing law defines "special occupancy park" to mean a recreational vehicle park, temporary recreational vehicle park, incidental camping area, or tent camp.

This bill would specify that, for purposes of that act, a special occupancy park does not include a low-impact camping area, as specified, that is located in a county that has enacted an ordinance, as specified, authorizing low-impact camping and meeting specified requirements. The bill would impose specified requirements on owners of private property offering low-impact camping area sites and on online hosting platforms. The bill would define a "low-impact camping area" to mean any area of private property that provides for the transient occupancy rental of a temporary sleeping accommodation, as defined, for recreational purposes that is not a commercial lodging facility. The bill would specify that a low-impact camping area is not a special occupancy park if, among other things, it meets certain requirements, including compliance with applicable local requirements relating to waste disposal and quiet hours, as specified. The bill would require that a county that has authorized low-impact camping to take specified actions, including, among others, to establish a registry of low-impact camping areas, as specified, and to notify the Department of Housing and Community Development of the county's choice to authorize low-impact camping areas. The bill would also require all state and local eviction processes applicable to a special occupancy park to apply to a low-impact camping area.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 18862.43 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

18862.43. "Special occupancy park" means a recreational vehicle park, temporary recreational vehicle park, incidental camping area, or tent camp. "Special occupancy park" does not include a low-impact camping area, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 18890, if the low-impact camping area meets all of the requirements of subdivision (b) of Section 18890 and is located in a county that has enacted an ordinance, subject to the requirements of existing law, authorizing low-impact camping.

SEC. 2. Part 2.3.5 (commencing with Section 18890) is added to Division 13 of the Health and Safety Code, to read:

PART 2.3.5. LOW-IMPACT CAMPING

18890. (a) For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

- (1) "Camper" means an individual or individuals all camping under one reservation or registration.
- (2) "Commercial lodging facility" has the same meaning as the term "hotel" is defined in subdivision (a) of Section 1865 of the Civil Code.
- (3) "Low-impact camping area" means any area of private property that provides for the transient occupancy rental of a temporary sleeping accommodation for recreational purposes that is not a commercial lodging facility.
- (4) "Online hosting platform" means a digital marketplace that facilitates the booking of low-impact camping areas.
- (5) "Recreational vehicle" has the same meaning as that term is defined in Section 18010.
- (6) "Temporary sleeping accommodation" includes, but is not limited to, a tent, yurt, or recreational vehicle.

(b) A low-impact camping area is not a special occupancy park, as defined in Section 18862.43, if it is located in a county that has enacted an ordinance, subject to the requirements of existing law, authorizing low-impact camping and meets all of the following requirements:

- (1) Provides for the transient occupancy rental of a temporary sleeping accommodation, not exceeding 14 consecutive nights per camper and not exceeding 28 nights per calendar year per camper.
- (2) Includes no more than nine temporary sleeping accommodations, of which no more than four may be concurrently occupied by recreational vehicles, as defined in Section 18010.
- (3) Does not include a temporary sleeping accommodation that is rented out for permanent human occupancy.
- (4) Does not allow for onstreet parking.
- (5) Complies with applicable state and local fire safety requirements.
- (6) Complies with applicable state and local tax and fee requirements, including, but not limited to, the payment of local transient occupancy taxes.
- (7) Complies with applicable local requirements for disposal of human waste, or in the absence of applicable local requirements, maintains sanitation facilities that are fully self-contained or connected to a permitted sewage disposal system serving the property.
- (8) Complies with applicable local requirements for disposal of trash, or in the absence of applicable local requirements, requires all solid waste to be removed from the premises after each occupancy and onsite trash receptacles to abide by applicable animal-protection trash best practices or requirements.
- (9) Complies with applicable local requirements for quiet hours, or in the absence of applicable local requirements, enforces quiet hours from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- (10) Complies with applicable local requirements relating to low-impact campsites, low-incident camping, or incidental camping, including, but not limited to, local zoning, permit, lot size, and setback requirements.
- (11) Designates an operator or property manager who is available by phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- (12) Includes no more than one temporary sleeping accommodation per acre and is located on a parcel of two acres or more.
- (13) Requires all temporary sleeping accommodations to be located no less than 200 feet from any offsite residence and no less than 30 feet from any adjoining property or road.
- (14) Is not located on a site that meets both of the following:
 - (A) A site that is a legal parcel or parcels located in a city if, and only if, the city boundaries include some portion of either an urbanized area or urban cluster, as designated by the United States Census Bureau, or, for unincorporated areas, a legal parcel or parcels wholly within the boundaries of an urbanized area or urban cluster, as designated by the United States Census Bureau.

(B) A site in which at least 75 percent of the perimeter of the site adjoins parcels that are developed with urban uses. For purposes of this paragraph, parcels that are separated only by a street or highway shall be considered to be adjoined.

(15) Has not been used as a special occupancy park for the last five years unless both of the following are true:

(A) The area was a special occupancy park before January 1, 2024.

(B) The area met the requirements of this subdivision on January 1, 2023.

(c) A county that has authorized low-impact camping shall do the following:

(1) Establish a registry of low-impact camping areas which may include, but not be limited to, the number or operators authorized in the county, a site address of such areas, the number of lots and types of temporary sleeping accommodations, the facility owner and operator names, the date a low-impact camping area is established, summaries of all code enforcement investigations associated with low-impact camping areas, amendments to this information, and any other relevant information deemed appropriate by the county.

(2) Establish a complaint program to support code enforcement related to low-impact camping areas.

(3) Require all low-impact camping owners or operators to post, in a conspicuous location, any permit or registration required by the county to operate the low-impact camping area, and contact information for the county for complaints or information related to low-impact camping areas.

(d) A county that has authorized low-impact camping shall have administrative and enforcement authority over this section and shall alert the Department of Housing and Community Development of the county's choice to authorize low-impact camping areas pursuant to this section.

(e) Any owner of private property that offers a low-impact camping area site shall include in any posting on an online hosting platform the name of the authorizing county and any required license, permit, or registration number, if required by the county.

(f) An online hosting platform shall include both of the following in any internet website listing:

(1) The name of the county in which the low-impact camping area site is located.

(2) A dedicated field for an operator to include any license, permit, or registration required by the county to operate the low-impact camping area site.

(g) (1) An online hosting platform shall remove any listing for a low-impact camping area from the platform after notification by the authorizing county if all of the following conditions are met:

(A) The license, permit, or registration number associated with the listing is invalid, expired, or has been revoked or the county has a prohibition on low-impact camping areas that applies to the listing.

(B) Before notifying the online hosting platform, the county has provided written notice by United States mail to the property owner of the low-impact camping site that it is not authorized to operate.

(C) The county provided a notification to the online hosting program that included all of the following:

(i) The listing Uniform Resource Locator (URL) and the property address of the low-impact camping area.

(ii) The name of the low-impact camping area operator, if known.

(iii) The notice of violation sent from the county to the property owner.

(iv) A citation to the local ordinance or code that was violated.

(2) The online hosting platform shall remove the listing within seven days of receiving the notification from the county described in subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1).

(h) This section does not authorize an individual to access private property without the permission of the landowner.

(i) This section does not require a county to authorize low-impact camping. This section establishes minimum requirements for a county that, by ordinance, elects to authorize low-impact camping.

(j) All state and local eviction processes applicable to a special occupancy park, as defined in Section 18862.43, shall apply to a low-impact camping area.