

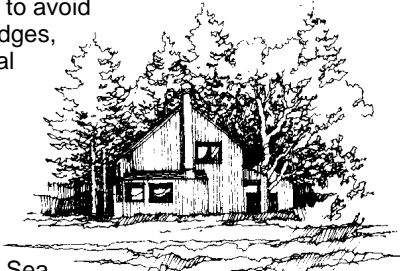
Within those restrictions, Sea Ranch homes achieve wide variation in size and expression of individual taste. They range in size from small-scale clustered "walk-in" cabins to large compounds. Home sites may have sweeping ridge or ocean views from their locations on the meadow, alongside the golf course, on the ocean front or in secluded forest settings. Approximately half the land is in "commons" owned by The Sea Ranch Association and protected by The Sea Ranch Restrictions. These expanses create free-flowing, open space that reduces the impact of buildings on the landscape.

**H**as The Sea Ranch philosophy been realized? Answers vary, but the general consensus is that it has. The Sea Ranch and its individual homes continue to appear in architectural and home magazines such as *Progressive Architecture*, *Architectural Record* and *Sunset*.

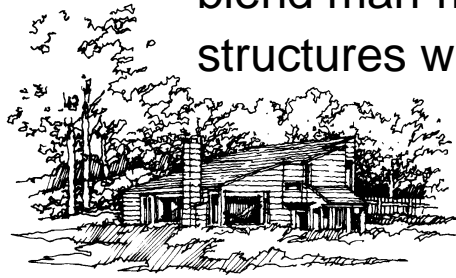
Sea Ranch has passed the halfway point of "build-out" and the diversity of owners requires a balance among the interests of those who make The Sea Ranch their primary residence, those who own second homes here, and those who occasionally visit for recreation or solitude. A dynamic tension among these groups surfaces whenever decisions must be made about the future of The Sea Ranch. However varied Sea Ranchers' reasons for coming to the area, there is one overriding theme: they love The Sea Ranch environment and the remarkable beauty of the California Coast.

**Enjoyment of The Sea Ranch can be ensured with a few precautions:**

- ◆ Watch the ocean where incoming tides and sleeper waves rapidly inundate beaches and rocky ledges.
- ◆ Stay on the trails to avoid crumbling bluff edges, protect the natural habitat, respect private property and ensure hikers' safety.
- ◆ Keep pets on leash (a Sonoma law and Sea Ranch rule) as wildlife is abundant. Hunting or discharge of firearms is prohibited.
- ◆ Be aware that smoking and fires on common areas are prohibited due to the extreme risk for wildfires in dry forest and grasslands during fire season. Deposit ashes from fireplaces, stoves and barbecues in a covered metal container placed on a non-combustible surface until they are cold to the touch.



**T**he Sea Ranch consists of a rugged landscape dotted with distinctive homes extending about twelve miles along Highway One. The building design constitutes an architectural vernacular that is world renowned. Its hallmark is the attempt to blend man-made structures with their natural setting.

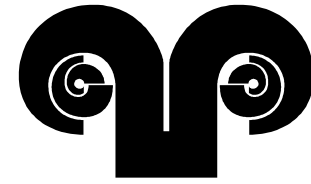


This information is intended to enhance your understanding of the spirit of The Sea Ranch community and its background.

**The Sea Ranch Association**

975 Annapolis Road  
P.O. Box 16  
The Sea Ranch, California 95497-0016  
707-785-2444 / Fax 707-785-3555  
[www.tsra.org](http://www.tsra.org)

© 1999 The Sea Ranch Association



# The Sea Ranch

## HISTORY

**T**he first recorded visitors to this land now known as The Sea Ranch were the Pomo Indians, who were hunters and fishermen. They made seasonal trips to the coast to gather kelp and shellfish.

Settlement proceeded slowly. Access by land and sea was difficult and navigation was hazardous. In 1846, Ernest Rufus, a naturalized Mexican citizen, received a land grant of five Spanish leagues stretching south from the Gualala River to Ocean Cove. Called the "Rancho de Hermann" and later simply German Rancho, it was one of the last Mexican land grants since California broke away from Mexico three months later.

The previous year Rufus had invited another German, Frederick Hugel, to the land he had selected. Hugel built a cabin on the hill above the present Equestrian Facility, fenced in pasture, and built a warehouse near the bluff from which he planned to ship and receive cargo. He raised cattle and horses, and planted fruit trees, potatoes, green peas and other vegetables. Farming was continued after Hugel by German immigrants William Benitz and Charles Meyer. In 1855 William Bihler and Charles Wagner bought the northern 2.5 leagues of the rancho and imported livestock to improve the local stock. By 1857 Bihler had bought out his partner.

Adam Knipp and Bihler's nephew, Christian Stengel, who had sailed to California in 1858, managed Bihler's livestock operation. They gradually bought the 3220 acre ranch from Bihler

beginning in the 1860s. Between 1872 and 1882 Robert Rutherford bought a 985-acre section south of the Gualala River from Bihler and 13 years later lost it to bank foreclosure. The Knipp-Stengel operation

flourished, and in the early 1880s the partners built the landmark Sea Ranch barn that is now in the National Register. In 1903 Knipp and Stengel began selling off their land to Bender Brothers Mill and Lumber Co., which also acquired the Rutherford ranch.

The Bender Brothers built the Del Mar Mill on Del Mar Point, which burned in 1910, and a store, a saloon, a warehouse and the Del Mar School along the existing county road. The school still stands at the southwest corner of Leeward and Deer Trail.

Starting in 1910, Walter P. Frick bought fragments of the ranch and unified them as the Del Mar Ranch. Ranching continued under Frick's ownership; however he never

lived at the ranch full time but maintained a summer cottage on the site of the present Del Mar Community Center. He leased the ranch to a group of Russian immigrants. It was Frick who had the hedgerows planted as windbreaks beginning in 1916 and who replaced the cattle with sheep.

Frick died in 1937, and the ranch and sheep were auctioned off in 1941 for back taxes. Both were purchased by Margaret Ohlson and her four sons for \$125,000, and the Ohlson family held it for 23 years. Both the Ed Ohlson house, which is part of the Del Mar Community Center, and the former home of brother Elmer Ohlson, which is near the Knipp-Stengel barn, were built during the 1950s.

## DEVELOPMENT

**I**n 1963, architect and land planner Al Boeke recommended that Oceanic California Inc. (OCI), a division of Castle and Cooke, buy the land. He envisioned a unique community for people with a reverence for this rugged coast. The ranch was bought from Ohlson for \$2.3 million.

A select group of professionals was hired by CCI to plan a development that would blend visually and ecologically with the surrounding landscape. Models were constructed to illustrate their concept of dynamic conservation. This noble experiment faltered in the 1970s when public opposition to the development of California's coast led to the adoption of Proposition 20, the Coastal Initiative in 1972, and the California Coastal Act in 1976. However, continuing efforts are made to preserve the early planners' vision despite the need to comply with these laws which required modification of the original plans and subsequent OCI sales of portions of the original tract.

The California Coastal Commission reduced the planned density of development by approximately 50 percent, and a long-standing dispute over public access between The Sea Ranch Association and the Coastal Commission resulted in a building moratorium. In 1980, special legislation, the Bane Bill, resolved the conflict and allowed building to proceed. Five public access points from Highway One to specific beaches and a trail along the northern bluff were conceded in order to lift the moratorium.

OCI sold the timberlands in 1986 and the Lodge, golf course and employee housing in 1988, The purchaser,



Sea Ranch Village Inc., subsequently sold the Lodge in 1998 to the Power brothers who plan to expand the Lodge and develop adjacent commercial property. With the sale of The Sea Ranch Water Company to the association, OCI's presence at Sea Ranch

ended in 1997.

The Sea Ranch Association, which represents all lot owners, has inherited the responsibility for maintaining the original concept of a community living in harmony with its environment.

## DESIGN CONCEPT

**T**he Sea Ranch architectural philosophy is built upon respect for the natural landscape in all its variations: shoreline, meadows, uplands and forests.

Sea Ranchers are asked to "live lightly on the land". When they buy their lots, they must subscribe to the Declaration of Restrictions, Covenants and Conditions, known as the "CC&Rs" which, among other things, contain restrictions designed to minimize the impact of man's activity and constructs on the landscape.

The Sea Ranch Design Committee, an autonomous body composed of professionals in planning and architecture, must approve all construction and landscaping through the design review process. Nevertheless, only owners themselves can assure that their homes abide by the early vision. Among the principles that guided the original conception are the conviction that nature should predominate; that the character of the community should be rural not suburban; that the unique character of the North Coast should be maintained; and that simplicity, not flamboyance, is a goal.

The design criteria, including height, bulk, setback and siting, are meant to capitalize on the opportunities suggested by each site's natural setting. Roof forms reflect the slopes of hills and the angle of wind-sculpted trees. Minimal overhangs allow homes to bow to coastal winds and capture solar heat. Thoughtfully placed fences, berms and retaining walls screen vehicles and utility yards. Natural wood exteriors, non-reflective finishes, and hidden light sources respect The Sea Ranch covenant with the natural environment. Only native plants and trees are planted in order to blend with the surrounding vegetation for even greater unity between home and nature. There are no visual property lines.