



**Post Ranch Inn**  
B I G S U R

## **Environmental Stewardship & Community Support**

*This document provides a recap of the environmental stewardship and community-support efforts that are currently in practice at the Post Ranch Inn in Big Sur, California.*

### **NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION**

#### **1. Land, Sea & Wildlife**

- A unique natural environment where flora, fauna, and people all seem to thrive, Post Ranch maintains a 100-acre site that includes 90 protected acres of open space. The land is fortunate to be home to a number of indigenous species, including several that are rare, endangered, or threatened. These include the Smith's blue butterfly (SBB), California red-legged frog (CRLF), California condor, which has all been reported in Post Ranch's diverse habitats. Open space is maximized to encourage inhabitation by other wildlife, including coyotes, bobcats, deer, hawks, quail, falcons, foxes, wild turkeys, and ring-tail cats. To ensure these species continue to flourish at Post Ranch, an extensive program of activities is in effect, including conservation, site management, habitat protection and enhancement, employee and contractor training, and guest education.
- Post Ranch and its neighboring lands feature 13 diverse plant communities, including forest, shrub, grassland, and aquatic habitats. In particular, these environments are home to two species protected by the Endangered Species Act through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: the threatened California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii*), which breeds in the aquatic habitat of Post Ranch's pond in the center of the property; and Smith's blue butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*), which feeds and breeds in the Sea Cliff Buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*) found in the California sagebrush scrub habitat on a west-facing slope below the Sierra Mar restaurant. Post

Ranch is undertaking various measures to protect these species and enhance their habitat, including:

- Revegetate the pond and adjacent areas to restore emergent wetland and native scrub habitat for CRLF; what is CRLF?
  - Implement water quantity and quality enhancement measures for the pond
  - Eradicated crawfish and non-native fishes in the pond
  - Seed, propagate, and out plant buckwheat plants to restore native habitat
  - Eradicate various invasive plants, including French broom and others
  - Develop educational programs for guests and staff, including a detailed brochure in the guest compendium
- To ensure these goals are met, various conservation and monitoring efforts are in place. For the Smith's blue butterfly, Post Ranch maintains existing areas that support Sea Cliff Buckwheat and restore California sagebrush scrub habitat on 0.7 acres. For the California red-legged frog, the pond and its upland habitats within 300 feet are protected. A conservation easement has been recorded to ensure that 36 acres of butterfly and frog habitat are protected.

To monitor these activities, Post Ranch works with a biological monitor familiar with Monterey County's habitats and special-status species, who reports regularly to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Also, the conservation easement habitat is monitored by the Big Sur Land Trust.

- An ongoing habitat conservation plan discourages invasive non-native flora and fauna. Eradication of invasive, non-native plants, like Genesta and Pampas grass, is done manually, aided by organic products. Other native species are replanted to encourage wildlife. Post Ranch conducts these activities in conjunction with industry experts, the Big Sur Land Trust, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
- The inn has been active in the identification of Sudden Oak Death in Big Sur, participates fully in efforts to remove diseased trees, has planted a new oak tree for each that succumbs, and promotes the health of the forest with assistance from an ecologist and independent scientist. As part of these efforts, a study was conducted with three objectives. First, soil acidification in and around oak trees showing symptoms of Sudden Oak Death and poor health was mapped and measured compared with soil conditions in and around healthy oaks. Second, suitable non-toxic nutritional strategies were

applied to reduce soil acidity and nutritionally bolster the trees' natural immune systems and health without using toxic pesticides. Finally, the results were objectified and recorded.

- Forest management is an ongoing project designed to maintain healthy woodlands and protect flora and fauna. Activities include regular clean-up of debris, pruning, and recovery of fallen trees chipped to use the inn's pathways.
- The inn maintains onsite gardens with vegetables, herbs, flowers, and fruit trees used by the restaurant.
- Over 150 redwood and oak trees and other landscaping have been added, providing privacy, wind protection, shade, and beauty.

## **2. Water**

- Post Ranch Inn created the first commercial gray water system approved in Monterey County.
- Post Ranch Inn ensures water use is measured daily and performs an annual energy audit, including wattage and propane. Water quality is monitored and tested weekly.
- There are seven wells on the property regularly monitored to ensure they are not over-pumped or overused.
- Potentially damaging plant material is regularly removed from the pond to enhance the pond's health and aerate it for the critters that live there.
- Water-efficient landscaping is used, focusing on native and drought-tolerant plants that are tended with organic fertilizer

## **3. Solar**

In March 2009, Post Ranch switched on a 990-panel solar installation, the largest hotel solar project in California. The solar array reduces the inn's carbon footprint. Key points include:

- According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the system is estimated to reduce carbon emissions by approximately 600,000 pounds annually.
- The solar array consists of 990, 210-watt photovoltaic (light to electricity)

solar panels that will produce almost 350,000 kWh of pollution-free electricity per year. The installation is a grid-connected system operated in parallel with the utility grid. When less solar power is produced than demand requires, the PG&E utility grid supplies the difference. When more solar power is produced than demand requires, the meter turns backward, generating a credit with the utility, which Post Ranch can use as needed.

## **ECO-EFFICIENCY**

### **1. Activities or Products to Reduce Usage of Energy, Chemicals or Other Resources**

- Water is conserved in guest rooms by low-flow showerheads, water faucets, and toilets.
- Laundry detergent is biodegradable and hypoallergenic, with botanicals and active herbal ingredients. Steps are also taken to minimize the overuse of laundry detergent and related chemicals.
- The resort uses industrial-size equipment to wash linens. In addition, only full loads of laundry are washed to maximize water and energy efficiency.
- Guests can assist in these conservation efforts by displaying an in-room magnetic sign on their door, indicating a change of linen is not necessary that day.
- Natural light and ventilation are maximized.
- South-facing windows in guest rooms have been tinted to lower energy use.
- Guest rooms are stocked at turndown each evening with refillable glass bottles used in lieu of plastic. Also, in-room is stainless steel water bottles that guests can use at the inn or take home.
- Low and zero-VOC paints are used.
- No chemical pesticides or herbicides are used on the property. Pests are controlled by cedar-based, pump-spray products, and natural predators such as bats that live in the area.
- LED and low-voltage lighting are used throughout the property, including in all guest rooms and the restaurant. In addition, down lighting is used outdoors to minimize light pollution.

- Building orientation and operable windows enhance natural ventilation and provide fresh ocean breezes.
- A protective film has been placed on ocean-facing windows to reduce the sun's harmful effects, maintain room comfort, and save energy.
- Single-use plastic bottles and Styrofoam are not used anywhere on the property. Guests are provided fresh water in glass bottles. Biodegradable soaps, shampoos, and lotions are provided in larger containers refillable and minimize waste.
- Collateral material is printed on recycled paper, and an effort is made to use soy-based inks.
- The inn provides reduce rate housing on the property to 60 employees, plus 40 family members, in 32 apartments.

## **2. Use or Better Use of Organic/Earth-Friendly/Sustainable/Recyclable Products or Resources**

- Sheets and towels are made from 100% certified organic cotton. In addition, the sheets are custom made in Los Angeles, with no chemicals or dyes.
- Guest soaps are flower-based, and other in-room guest amenities are earth-friendly. Purchase and promotion of these specialty products also support small, regional businesses and cottage industries.
- Post Ranch implements and follows an extensive, property-wide recycling program for paper, newspaper, cardboard, cans, glass, aluminum, and compost from the restaurant. Also, to minimize waste and packaging, we use and produce recycled and recyclable materials.
- Each guest room has a recycling bin to make collection easy and accessible. Wastebaskets are lined with recycled paper instead of plastic bags. Recycling bins are also kept at maintenance, housekeeping, and in the employee break rooms.
- Packing materials are reused for shipping.
- Smooth local stones distinguish the Jade Pool, each carefully placed by hand, which showcases the area's natural resources and add beauty. Famed for its awe-inspiring ocean views, the pool is bejeweled with dark green pieces of Big Sur Jade, the only vein of jade that is washed by the sea.
- An onsite nursery grows native plant seedlings, which are transplanted onto the property when appropriate.

- The Post Ranch Mercantile store features organic or natural-fiber clothing and attractive, unique products, usually by talented artists or artisans crafted by hand.
- The resort uses fair-trade organic coffees and teas. Fresh organic fruits are juiced at the inn each day.
- Plant waste is chipped, mulched, and returned to the earth.
- The public property restrooms provide cotton hand towels.

### ***Sierra Mar Restaurant***

- Post Ranch's award-winning restaurant supports small producers and the regional economy by serving all-natural free-range beef and poultry and fresh, onsite, or locally-grown seasonal organic vegetables and fruit. We source from 75-80% of our proteins, vegetables and fruits from a 120 mile radius from Big Sur.
- We support sustainable fishing practices and do not serve endangered or threatened fish in the restaurant by following the Monterey Bay Aquarium [Seafoodwatch.org](http://Seafoodwatch.org) website guidelines. If possible, seafoods purchased from local fishermen and other foods from local producers or farmers' markets.
- Sierra Mar uses biodegradable containers made of corn starch.
- The Chef's garden provides fresh produce, vegetables, and herbs for our guests to enjoy.

### ***Post Ranch Spa***

- Immersed in the natural world, the Post Ranch Spa is a leader in environmental consciousness, social responsibility, and guest appeal.
- The full menu of spa treatments unites guests with nature elements, utilizing organic products, supporting local businesses, and recycling renewable energy. Certified organic linens and skincare products, eco-friendly detergent, and filtered laundry water for irrigation are examples of green standards.
- Inspired by local history and community, the Post Ranch Spa offers signature spa products to nurture guests. These aromatherapy blends are combined with our flower essence.
- remedies for massage oils, body butter, and bath salts. Essences of selected Big Sur flowers are solar-infused in spring water, offering the flowers' vibrational imprints.

- Elements of ancient rituals and Mother Nature play a large role in the Post Ranch Spa's program themes. Reflecting the abundance, healing energy, and history of the Post Ranchland, organic gardens have been planted to promote relaxation and reconnection to nature further. Medicinal plants and flowers from these gardens are used in our signature spa products. The active ingredients' facial and skin care products contain natural fruit acids, medicinal herbs, flowers, vitamins, and minerals.
- Reflecting the inn's approach to accent the best of Big Sur, the healing jade stones used in Post Ranch Spa's Hot Stone Therapy were collected with care from a local beach by a staff member, who has been on the inn's bell staff since its opening. Big Sur is the only place in the world with a vein of jade washed by the sea.
- The honey used in our honey facials is collected by one of the first spa staff members; she is also a beekeeper with 18 hives whose honey is pollinated from Post Ranch flowers. This local honey is also used in the restaurant.
- With every treatment, guests are offered recyclable glass or stainless-steel water bottles instead of plastic bottles.

### **3. Design & Construction of Green or Greener Buildings**

- It is hard not to be aware of the environment at Post Ranch Inn. The coastal getaway was designed with bio-structure architecture using the natural materials of glass, wood, stone, and passive solar heat. Efforts were made to avoid cutting trees when the property was developed.
- The innovative organic environmental design was intended for people to feel a part of nature rather than observers. The earth-sheltered Ocean Houses with sod roofs blend into the landscape and reduce heat loss; the stilted 9 ft. Tree Houses were designed to protect the fragile root balls of nearby redwood and oak trees. Native gardens growing in courtyards give a private landscape experience, bringing the enjoyment of the outdoors and the indoors blending seamlessly together.
- A master wood craftsman designs and builds guest room furniture in an on-property carpentry shop. Since the inn's inception, Mark Sullivan and his son Joaquin Sullivan have created beautiful, hand-crafted pieces, including beds, tables, and chairs. In addition, trees that fall on the property are retrieved from the forest and made into benches along the pathways.

- CORTEN Steel is a material used throughout Post Ranch for siding and roofs. CORETEN is stronger than timber, ceramics and terracotta and it's more durable than mild steel because the rust patina creates a protective barrier and prevents the material from rusting through. In a way, it is also a much more flexible building material because it remains extremely strong regardless of its shape.
- Reclaimed wood, including old-growth redwood from old wine casks, adds a rich, deep red color to many guestroom walls.
- Old bridge timber wood is used for the pathway between the reception building to Sierra Mar, and to line many of the pathways around Post Ranch Inn.
- Post Ranch repurposed two Army Surplus Quonset Huts that the Post Family purchase after WWII. The family used them for tack room, farm shop and dry storage. They now house the Post Gallery and the on-property Sullivan Family Workshop mentioned above.
- The mercantile and shipping/receiving building are old schoolhouse trailers that were repurposed for these spaces.
- The large metal doors on most of the Post Ranch rooms are refurbished old schoolhouse doors that were stripped and finished.
- The bar top in Sierra Mar is mutated mahogany (quilted Honduras mahogany) that came out of a creek bed in Honduras. It was sitting in that creek for a long, long time. Our on-property woodworker, Mark Sullivan built it and refinished it. This bar top and old growth redwood wine cask mentioned above were both sourced and finished at Arborica in Marshall, CA.
- Most of the wood used in the guest rooms for headboards, beside tables and worktables is Bubinga, a north Africa hard wood which was being sustainable grown when Post Ranch was being built.

#### **4. Energy Efficiency**

- Employees are encouraged to walk to work from employee housing or carpool from the Monterey Peninsula.
- Guests are transported in fuel-efficient Lexus hybrid vehicles. Guests'



vehicles are parked away from the hotel rooms, avoiding traffic and emissions, and ensuring a serene environment.

## **5. Purchasing**

- Post Ranch Inn seeks out suppliers, distributors, local cottage suppliers, and business partners that meet environmental and social standards equivalent to those we set for our products and services.
- Purchasing operates with a number of environmental criteria, such as:
  - Products are eco-friendly and reusable when possible.
  - Preference is given to purchasing environmentally superior products and office materials.
  - Purchasing products is done in bulk whenever possible to minimize packaging, preferably in recyclable or reusable containers.
  - Items in the Mercantile store emphasize organic goods and local hand-crafted pieces.

## **6. Indoor Environmental Quality**

- Post Ranch Inn is designated as a non-smoking facility.
- The property implements an indoor air quality management plan to ensure guests' well-being, including maintenance and monitoring. In addition, Post Ranch has retained an indoor air quality expert, who advises Post Ranch on the many ways to maximize fresh air in the rooms and throughout all indoor public spaces.
- The inn uses low-emitting materials to reduce indoor air contaminants' amount, including adhesives, paints, coatings, and carpeting.
- Lighting and heat are designed to maximize guests' comfort, including radiant heat on most guest rooms or bathroom floors.
- Guest rooms and public spaces are designed to make the most of the site's daylight and exceptional views.

## **OUTREACH & EDUCATION**

### **1. Guests**

- The late Bill Post's great-grandparents homesteaded the ranch in the mid-1800s, and today Post family history is proudly displayed throughout the hotel. Honoring connections with the past, each guest room is named after Big Sur pioneers, family members, and community, including many hardy, industrious women.
- In-room compendium includes information on Post Ranch's endangered species and what is being done to protect them.
- On select evenings, weather permitting, employees trained as amateur astronomers align a state-of-the-art tracking telescope for guests to view the stars.
- Guests are encouraged to enjoy various complimentary place-based activities, highlighting the ecological, community, and individual resources at Post Ranch or in the Big Sur area. These vary by season and year and have included:
  - Guided walks with a naturalist
  - Bird watching - each guest room offers binoculars and a pamphlet that describes and identifies local birds
  - Whale watching
  - Hikes on the extensive trail systems of nearby state and federal parks
  - Yoga, meditation and Tai Chi
  - Edible Chef's garden tours

### **2. Family of Employees**

- The staff follows the Post Ranch Inn Environmental Principles in all aspects of business. Environmental factors in performance evaluation systems are utilized for individuals and business units.
- Post Ranch Inn encourages employee education programs, especially in the area of environmental protection.
- Training programs and demonstrations share important knowledge and the inn's commitment to the environment and community with staff and others. These include:
  - CPR and AED (use of a defibrillator)

- Benefits of recycling
- Fire protection
- Safety sessions and fire extinguisher use
- Subsidized housing is provided for 60 employees.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH, INVOLVEMENT & COMMITMENTS**

- Post Ranch and caring guests participate through generous contributions to The Big Sur Community Fund, which was established to raise funds to support local charitable organizations. 100% of the funds collected are used for charitable purposes. Post Ranch has selected a number of local non-profits to support, including the Big Sur Health Center, the Captain Cooper School, the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County, the Ventana Wildlife Society, and the Big Sur Fire Brigade as the recipients of these funds. The vast majority of Inn guests have chosen to support the Big Sur Community Fund's efforts.
- Post Ranch contributes numerous resources to the local community through charitable giving, employee volunteerism, including sitting on many of the local Board of Directors, and in-kind contributions of goods and services. Local organizations we support include:
  - Ventana Wildlife Society, which aids the reintroduction of California condors into the Ventana Wilderness.
  - Big Sur Historical Society, which utilizes space to store their archival materials at the Post Ranch. In addition, the inn donated 100 copies of the Post Ranch history book to the society's museum.
  - Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade, for which land was made available for a firehouse and a local ambulance company.
  - Monterey Jazz Festival
  - Big Sur International Marathon
  - Big Sur River Run
  - Big Sur Grange
  - Big Sur Health Center
- Other organizations to which land has been made available at no cost include a public/private radio tower for emergency broadcasts to the community, a site for seismic monitoring devices to detect earth movement, and a helipad used for medical emergency response.

- Post Ranch Inn has selected one critical issue, affordable health care in Big Sur, to create positive change for the Post Ranch Inn community. Beginning in 1997, the Post Ranch Inn recruited all local businesses to donate \$2 per employee a month for the creation, management, and maintenance of a non-profit health center. This commitment to the community has increased the success of being awarded grants from foundations to further the local health care cause.

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