

Martins Beach fight heads to state Capitol

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The fight over access to the picturesque Martins Beach near Half Moon Bay moved to the state Capitol, as lobbyists and activists attempted to sway state lawmakers ahead of a crucial vote Wednesday on a bill to reopen the sandy haven to the public.

The bill by Sen. Jerry Hill, D-San Mateo, would require the State Lands Commission to buy a road or obtain access rights so that the public can use Martins Beach. A Senate vote on the bill is scheduled for Wednesday. If it passes, it would move on to the state Assembly for consideration.

Billionaire property owner Vinod Khosla, who purchased the land containing the only public access road to the beach - and then closed the road - has been locked in a court case with the Surfrider Foundation over access.

Khosla hired top-tier lobbyists from California Strategies to defeat Hill's bill. That prompted proponents of Hill's bill to head to Sacramento as well.

"We aren't taking any chances," said Rob Caughlan, former president of the Surfrider Foundation. "When Khosla put all that money into lobbying, we thought, 'Oh, we better get to Sacramento.' "

The Surfrider Foundation accused Khosla in a March 2013 lawsuit of flouting the California Coastal Act by blocking public access to the beach, located about 6 miles south of Half Moon Bay.

Steven Baugher of Martins Beach LLC, the company Khosla established to purchase the beachfront land in 2008 for \$37.5 million, is listed as hiring California Strategies on May 20. The lobbying firm includes former Assemblyman Rusty Areias, who was a California Coastal

Attorneys

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Practice Areas

Environmental Law

Land Use and Coastal Public Access

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commissioner, and former Environmental Protection Agency Secretary Winston Hickox.

An opposition letter Areias gave Hill's office says California was asked multiple times if it wanted to buy private property for public access to the beach, but passed. The letter says Martins Beach is private, from the sandy beach to submerged tidelands seaward of the mean high tide and therefore the state's coastal public access policies don't apply. Caughlan called that claim "bogus"... *(To read the entire article, please click [HERE](#))*