

# Martins Beach trial ends, judge has 90 days to issue ruling

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The question of whether a billionaire landowner must provide public access to a San Mateo County beach was turned over to a judge Wednesday after final court arguments were made in a case that's seen as a major test of California's coastal access laws.

Attorneys for nonprofit Surfrider Foundation argued before a packed courtroom that Vinod Khosla should be forced to open the gate to Martins Beach, contending the venture capitalist is flouting the California Coastal Act by keeping the public from getting to the ocean next to his property.

But Khosla's attorneys fired back that their client is merely protecting his land rights.

A decision on the issue, which has lingered since shortly after Khosla bought the 53-acre beach property south of Half Moon Bay in 2008, will hinge on a technical reading of the state's nearly four-decade-old coastal laws, which attorneys clashed over in rigorous detail Wednesday morning.

San Mateo County Superior Court Judge Barbara Mallach is expected to make a decision on the case within 90 days.

The Surfrider Foundation sued Martins Beach LLC in March 2013, alleging that Khosla illegally put up a locked gate on road to the beach, painted over a billboard welcoming people there and hired armed guards to keep people out - all allegedly changes in coastal use and requiring permits.

"During the first 15 months that the defendant owned the property, thousands of people used the beach and visited the coast," said attorney Eric Buescher, who is co-counsel for Surfrider. "Today only a small

## Attorneys

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## Practice Areas

Environmental Law

Land Use and Coastal Public Access

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