



**Humboldt County
Farm Bureau**

**Humboldt-Del Norte
Cattlemen Association**

John Miller
Humboldt County Planning Department
3015 H Street
Eureka, CA 95501-4484

June 14, 2012

RE: Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Review (DEIR) of the Humboldt County General Plan Update

Dear Mr. Miller,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the process of updating the Humboldt County General Plan. After reviewing the DEIR, we have the following comments.

Implementation Plan-It is our understanding that the Update needs to include an 'implementation plan'. The plan would include the approved implementation measures that would serve to carry out the plan's policies, standards, etc. It would also indicate the relative priority of each of the implementation measures accompanied by an estimated cost and the timing of completion. We note that the Appendix that relates to this item has been left blank.

It is our recommendation that the plan be completed now and considered by the Commission so that the Board of Supervisors may see what the Commission's perceptions are as to the implementation of the recommended update.

In addition, the feasibility of implementation of the Update needs to be considered. Without a comprehensive plan, we do not see how it could be found to be feasible to implement the plan (or gain compliance with the measures contained in the environmental document).

Notice of Preparation (NOP) and the implementing zoning maps and regulations- the NOP indicates that along with the Update to the General Plan, the implementing zoning (maps and regulations) were to be prepared and considered. Somewhere along the line, the County has chosen not to fully develop the maps and regulations. What environmental effects may be anticipated as a result of this decision? How will the proposed mitigation measures be enacted since the regulations are not with the plan (and the Environmental Document is not a set of regulations)? What are the anticipated effects of adopting the Update to the Plan without the implementation measures?

In recent years the greatest conversion of agricultural lands out of production has been transference to public ownership. The environmental impact of this has not been adequately assessed.

The DEIR does not adequately describe the impacts of the alternatives upon which decision-makers would base decisions. Typically a DEIR assesses the impacts of all of the alternatives and the decision making body relies upon that to choose the appropriate alternative. With the approach applied here the decision makers have no assessment of that various alternatives.

On some of the technical items the Planning Commission made decisions on the item to not include it and staff has brought several of the items back through mitigations in the DEIR. By this mechanism, it seems that staff is overriding decisions that the Planning Commission has made.

The group also has more specific comments on items on the DEIR as follows:

- The merger mitigation (FR-IM4) proposed in the DEIR reverses the unanimous Planning Commission decision to "Revise Merger Ordinance to delete the requirement of merger of substandard TPZ lands, not

currently under a Williamson Act Contract, from Article II.” The mandatory merger ordinance should not be available as a mitigation. This would interrupt the Williamson Act parcels and conservation possibilities because of the decreased value as a result of the merger.

- The group is concerned about the development of traffic impact fees (C-Px) as well as the addition to vibration to the noise control ordinance (N-IM7x). It seems that the latter would interfere with the right to farm ordinance.
- Regarding FR-S2 Forestland-Residential Interface (FRI) -- Where does this mitigation apply? It is unclear whether it is the project or to the areas adjacent to the project.
- The mitigation on TMDL (p 31) should be “as appropriate follow the TMDL applicable to the given project” The County should not impose additional regulation.
- On WR-Px Important Groundwater Recharge Areas, the important recharge areas must be identified, using a public process, before applying.
- As part of the Streamside Management Areas Definition Review (BR-IMx4), if changes are recommended the environmental effects of and changes to the definition need to be assessed. It is important that agricultural landowners have the flexibility to operate in the SMAs where the activities do not have significant adverse impacts since increasing SMAs to 150 ft. and not allowing maintenance for existing agricultural operations there is a net loss of 9 acres in every 40 of the county’s prime agricultural soils. Expansion of SMAs is a conversion of use from agriculture to habitat. There is science that managed grazing within riparian zones is beneficial.
- The planning commission unanimously supported deletion of the proposal to develop a County-wide Habitat Conservation Plan. BR-IMx5 runs contrary to that decision. It was determined to be infeasible.
- Agriculture and forestry activities should be exempt from AQ-S1 Construction and Grading Dust Control as per the grading ordinance.
- It is unclear to the group how Mitigation Measure 3.12.5.4e (the GHG plan) addresses objectionable odors. The Planning Commission has not reviewed the GHG plan.
- The group would encourage the prompt development of the Map of Scenic Areas so it is clear where the specific measures apply. For that matter, the group recommends development of maps in several areas where they are being relied upon for the application of various measures. Without the maps neither the public nor the decision makers know the ramifications of the measure application.
- Given the provisions in the California Forest Practices Rules, timber management should be exempt from BR-Px Landmark Trees

Please feel free to contact us if we can be of assistance. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Humboldt County Resource Lands Working Group

The Buckeye ~ Humboldt County Farm Bureau

Humboldt Del Norte Cattlemen Association ~ Large Timberland Owners Group

Forest Landowners of California (Humboldt Co. Representatives)