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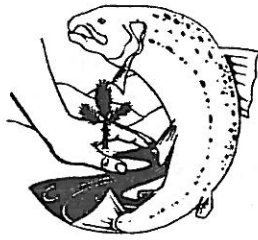
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June 10, 2009

Re: Land Use Element for the Humboldt County General Plan Update

Dear Planning Commissioners,

The Mattole Restoration Council thanks the Planning Commission for this opportunity to comment on the current draft of the Land Use Element of the County's General Plan Update (GPU). We also acknowledge the years of work that County Planners have undergone in sorting out their mandates and protocols with public input to create a plan that addresses both future growth of the County and protection of our natural resources and private property interests. We focus our comments in ways that best address an imperative to planning that balances human activity with ecosystem health. We also address the need to minimize unnecessary and/or expensive regulations for rural landowners who are committed to maintaining or restoring natural watershed processes. Our comments are general in focus with a few exceptions while we look forward to providing additional input in future months.

Please include the following in your policy setting where appropriate. All language that ends in an * is similar to or directly from our most recent version of the Mattole Watershed Plan. All underlined text is from the current land use summary tables with our comments in italic.

Encourage water conservation, especially in areas suffering from low water flow:

- Facilitate low-cost, easy permitting of large capacity water storage tanks or ponds in rural areas in order to decrease domestic water withdrawals during summer months.*
- Explore and encourage low-cost water conservation measures such as grey water irrigation systems and alternative sewage disposal (that utilize water conservation designs). For example: Change RL-P2 from: Future subdivisions and zone changes in rural residential areas must evaluate the cumulative impacts of water withdrawals and on-site septic systems. To: Future subdivisions and zone changes in rural residential areas must evaluate the cumulative impacts of water withdrawals and *appropriate sewage disposal systems.*
- Ensure that property taxes are not increased when landowners improve their water storage capacity.

- Address the appropriateness of rural development in watersheds with limited water supply by promoting seasonal storage and water forbearance agreements.*

Ensure adequate water quality and quantity for all aquatic species:

- Identify key aquatic resources in each watershed and their limiting factors/thresholds in order to avoid further impacts from development.*
- Create policy that directs homebuilders/remodelers in the use of non-toxic materials and safe hazardous materials disposal.
- Protect riparian areas with adequate set backs from any proposed development.
- Restore riparian function by encouraging stream crossing upgrades.*

Promote proper rural road maintenance and design:

- Standardize new rural road construction that limits sediment pollution and promotes groundwater infiltration.*
- Offer tax relief for landowners who personally fund large road upgrade projects that minimize sediment pollution in our waterways.

Promote large acreage working land conservation for wildlife habitat:

- Provide incentives for landowners that voluntarily limit future development through conservation easements or conservation improvements.*

Promote the protection and maintenance of forest ecosystem values as a primary purpose for keeping lands timbered across all ownerships.

- Add to any discussion of timber production areas the above purpose. For example in FR-P3: Support effective and lower-cost timber management and regulations as a strategy to maintain timber production and forest ecosystem services as the primary uses of forestlands.
- (We agree with following) FR-P5: Support continuance and funding of forest improvement and management programs for ranches and homesteads.

Protect and maintain agricultural land for food production to promote sustainable communities into the future.

On behalf of the Mattole Restoration Council, I respectfully submit the above comments.

Sincerely,



F. Jeremy Wheeler
Executive Director