

From: Josh Brown [mailto:joshmbrown@hotmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, October 15, 2009 3:28 PM

To: Spencer, Martha

Subject: Public Comment on the Forest Resources section of the Land Use Element of the General Plan Update

10/15/09

Dear Planning Commission-

As a fifteen year Humboldt County resident who has campaigned for the preservation of our redwood forest and at times earned a living working in the restoration economy of these severely degraded watersheds, I would urge you to adopt Alternative A in regards to the future management of Humboldt County's Forestlands.

The fact is Humboldt County's watersheds are heavily impaired by decades of overcutting, heavy road building and unchecked water use causing increased winter flooding of downstream properties, decreased summer flows, and dwindling native salmon populations. We have also seen a loss of forest ecosystem values ranging from high value timber products to wildlife habitat to diversity of species in these watersheds.

In adopting Alternative A for the General Plan I urge you to include these specific

1) Separate zoning for Industrial and Non-Industrial timberlands containing less stringent requirements for small landowners.

Non-Industrial Timberlands (ownership of less than 5000 acres) would allow for one house per 160 acres for all future subdivision, with several options for smaller existing parcels being actively managed for timber or forest ecosystem values continuing as TPZ. Others would be eligible for immediate rezoning for residential use.

Industrial Timberlands (ownership of more than 5000 acres) would allow for one house per 600 acres. Fewer than 20 landowners own more than 5,000 acres.

2) Easier rollout of TPZ for "substandard" parcels.

For lands zoned TPZ, immediate rollout would be proposed for smaller parcels that are no longer being managed primarily for timber production. The County should bear the administrative costs of TPZ rollout.

3) Continuing TPZ Tax Status on lands managed for either timber production or forest ecosystem values.

Management practices could include thinning, habitat restoration, road decommissioning, erosion and sediment source reduction, etc. and verified with THP, NTMP, or Forest Restoration Management Plan. I specifically urges you to look into Richard Gienger's proposal for a new zoning category called Restoration Zoning that would promote restoration activities that restore and promote forest ecosystem values and long-term forest management. It would provide incentives (such as continued TPZ-style tax status) for landowners in watersheds dominated by non-industrial timberlands, and would reward such activities as reduction of erosion and sedimentation, reduction of fuel hazards, increase of the commercial and wildlife values of forestland, watershed/fisheries restoration, carbon sequestration and other related activities.

4) Establish a Community Forest Acquisition and Management Program

Community Forests can provide recreational opportunities, protection for fish and wildlife habitat, community income from sustainable timber harvest, and can function as a buffer zone between residential areas and industrial timber production zones. (I use the Arcata Community Forest quite often and consider it a crucial piece of Humboldt County's superb quality of life)

I also urges the county to reclaim its options to adapt Timberland Regulations and Timber Harvest Plans to local needs and conditions, such as

-Regular review of THPs, especially for cumulative effects on impaired forest ecosystems and watersheds.

-Formal investigation of need for county-specific California Forest Practice Rules.

-Multidisciplinary Forestry Review/Advisory Committee with mission to reverse impairment of forest ecosystems and watersheds.

It's time to bring the management of Humboldt County's forest into the 21st Century. Our forestlands are our dominant natural resource. Everyone from government to small landowner to the timber corporations need to better steward the land. The best place to start is by adopting a strong Alternative A.

Thanks for your time-

Sincerely,

Josh Brown
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