

November 19, 2009

Mr. Jeff Smith, Chairman
Planning Commission
County of Humboldt
825 Fifth Street
Eureka, CA. 95501

Subject: Agricultural Exclusive (AE), Agricultural Grazing (AG) & Agricultural Grazing Ranchland (AGR) Land Use Designations.

Dear Chairman Smith and the Planning Commission:

I recently asked staff a few questions regarding the AE, AG and AGR land use designations and the ability to rebuild a residence should it be destroyed by fire, flood, landslide, etc. I was told by staff they are not addressing any questions or issues raised by the public unless they were directed to do so by the Commission. Staff suggested I request that your Commission direct staff to respond to my questions or issues.

Under the AE, AG and AGR designations, "*Residential uses must support agricultural operation.*" Under the proposed language, residential uses on lands designated AE, AG and AGR **may** be allowed with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) if staff determines that the residential use is incidental to and supports the agricultural operation. All existing residence on lands planned AE, AG and AGR will become *qualified non-conforming uses* under the proposed language. In addition, under Alternative B, I understand that existing residential uses on TPZ lands will also become *qualified non-conforming uses*. Meaning, a CUP will be required should the residence be destroyed.

I'm concerned that there are a number of existing residences on lands designated either AG or AGR which are not large enough for the intended use or do not have existing cattle or other grazing operations. As identified in the proposed Land Use Element the AG and AGR designations are dry-land cattle grazing designations. Both designations only support cattle grazing and limited timber management activities. The AG designation specifies a density range of 20 to 160 acres and the AGR designations has a density range of 160 to 600 acres. Of course, as mentioned above, residential uses must **support** the agricultural operation.

I'm told by local cattle ranchers that the areas **minimum** carrying capacity is about one unit per 40 acres. The UC Extension Farm Advisor (Deborah Giraud) told me the State and Federal carrying capacity is one unit per 35 acres. Therefore a cattle operation of even just 20 to 25 head of cattle would require at least 700 acres. Assuming \$400 per calf, a rancher with 25 head of cattle will gross about \$10,000 annually. When expenses (fencing, vet bills, feed, etc.) are factored in, the economic viability of cattle operations is certainly questionable at best. Therefore it appears that any parcels less than 600 acres would not support economically viable dry-land cattle grazing operations, which is the purpose of the AG and AGR designations. Obviously, there's concern that the Department will create 100's of substandard parcels, not economically viable for their intended use and at the same time take away the possibility of ever building a residence on those parcels.

I respectfully request that the Commission direct staff to respond to following questions:

1. How many AG and AGR parcels are less than 160 acres?
2. How many AG and AGR parcels are greater than 160 acres?
3. How many AE, AG and AGR parcels will have qualified non-conforming uses (houses) on them?
4. Will existing residences be allowed to be rebuilt with or without a CUP?
5. Will the owners need to demonstrate that their houses are needed or required to manage the land?

Thanks for your consideration of the information contained herein. I and I trust that the Commission looks forward to having staff respond to these very important questions. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please don't hesitate to call me at 943-1900.

Sincerely,

Kevin Caldwell

Kevin Caldwell

Copy:
Board of Supervisors