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Humboldt County Planning Commission
Community Development Department

July 21, 2011

Dear Commissioners and Staff,

Humboldt Baykeeper thanks you for your hard work on the Humboldt County General Plan Update and for the opportunity to comment on the Water Resources Element.

The Water Resources Element is the most important chapter for our organization because it is the guiding tool for continued recovery and viability of our rivers, streams, Bay and coast. There are three areas within the Water Resources Element that we would like to highlight including; water quality regulations, stormwater and nutrient discharges.

Storytellers will tell you that Humboldt County once had rivers and streams so rich with fish that you could nearly walk across their backs to get to the other side. This is not the case today we have the opportunity to mitigate degraded water quality by enhancing our County's implementation of water quality regulations. Water quality can also be greatly enhanced with proper planning for stormwater flows.

Stormwater issues have become a very important piece of planning across the state, and Humboldt County sees plenty of rain to know that stormwater flows are very important on the North Coast. Humboldt County has an opportunity to be a leader in promoting low impact development (LID) to allow for groundwater recharge and reduce the transport of pollutants such as oil, grease, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, litter and other contaminants in to Humboldt Bay and ultimately the ocean. Stormwater can naturally migrate through our County if we protect our natural drainage courses from development impacts that would fill-in these streams and prevent the natural treatment waterways provide to enhance water quality.

Nutrient loads from agriculture can also threaten water quality as agriculture land is mostly located at low elevations with shallow groundwater tables and are adjacent to waterways. To decrease the nutrient discharge from agriculture lands, the County should support and make available manure management BMPs. Nutrient loads from septic tanks are also threats to our water quality and can be greatly reduced if the County promotes on-site greywater re-use to reduce the coliform bacteria and nitrate discharges from septic tanks that do not meet operational standards of the Regional Water Quality Control Board.



It is our responsibility to ensure we have drinkable, fishable and swimmable waters for generations to come, and we thank you again for your hard work and for allowing Humboldt Baykeeper to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Werner". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Beth Werner, Executive Director