

Humboldt Watershed Council
Water Resources Plan Alternatives Comparison Chart Recommendations
8-11-11

WR-G2. Water Resource Habitat. River and stream habitat supporting abundant coldwater fish populations.

We recommend recognizing the historic value of wild native salmon to our economy and culture, and it's uncontested value as an indicator species for the health and biodiversity of our watersheds. We'd like to see:

WR-G2. Water Resource Habitat. River and stream habitat supporting **stable populations of wild native salmonids which can sustain a thriving commercial and sport fishery**

WR-G5. Watershed Management. A system of water resource management that recognizes watersheds as natural systems producing multiple economic, social, and environmental benefits that can be optimized with sound data, cooperative public processes, adaptive management, and leadership.

This does not address the fact that management of our watersheds has not fully grasped or appreciated the vast scientific resources that have been brought to bear on the problems specific to Humboldt County. Watershed science and cumulative effects are extremely complex, and any hope of recovery from the current widespread impairment of our watersheds rests on the quality of scientific understanding possessed by our decision-makers. And it also depends heavily on our collective ability to give up short term gains for long term benefits. So how about:

WR-G5. Watershed Management. A system of water resource management that recognizes watersheds as natural systems producing multiple economic, social, and environmental benefits that can be **sustained in perpetuity** and optimized with sound data, cooperative public processes, adaptive management, and **science-based** leadership.

Two years ago, we recommended that a Watershed Advisory Committee be established to function similarly to the Forestry Review Committee. In reviewing the watershed science resources in this community, we would like to specify that this committee be composed of highly credentialed watershed professionals (of which we have many) with expertise in cumulative impacts (of which we have many), making it a technical advisory committee. We highly recommend that this be included in the Implementation section for G5. Attached is a sampling of the scientific work already done on our impaired watersheds, mostly by local professionals.

WR-P2. Protection for Existing Surface and Groundwater Uses. Impacts on existing beneficial water uses shall be considered and mitigated during discretionary review of land use permits that are not served by municipal water supplies. Compliance measures for un-permitted development not served by municipal water supplies shall include mitigations for surface or groundwater resource impacts.

"Existing" seems to imply that only the present, and most likely, impaired beneficial uses need consideration & mitigation. Past unimpaired and future restored beneficial uses should also be considered and mitigated for, thus we recommend striking the word "existing"

In order to reconcile wording in WR-P 5:

WR-P5. Critical Watershed Areas. The Board of Supervisors shall designate all or portions of watersheds as "Critical Watersheds" if cumulative impacts from land **and water resource** uses within the area have the potential to create significant environmental impacts to threatened

or endangered species; including Chinook salmon, Coho salmon or steelhead habitat. **Land and** water resources within Critical Watersheds shall be protected by the application of specific standards for such areas to avoid the take of threatened or endangered species.

Stndrd 2. Development within Critical Water Supply **and Watershed** Areas. Ministerial land use development proposed within Critical Water Supply areas shall comply with performance standards adopted by ordinance. Discretionary development shall comply with performance standards and supplemental permit conditions. Standards and permit conditions shall require: 1) demonstrating that no risk of contamination to the water supply would occur due to the development activity; and 2) avoiding degradation **of aquatic habitat and** municipal water supplies by reducing cumulative impacts to surface water quality and water quantity during low-flow periods to below levels of significance

WR-P31. Downstream Peak Flows. ~~Peak stormwater discharge shall not exceed the capacity limits of off-site drainage systems or cause downstream erosion, flooding, habitat destruction, or impacts to wetlands and riparian areas. Detention facilities shall be required to ensure that storm flows from the 100-year (Q₁₀₀) storm shall be detained so as to release water from the site at a rate no greater than the pre-development 2-year (Q₂) storm flows. New development shall demonstrate that post-development peak flows to watercourses shall not exceed pre-development peak flows.~~

Unless “pre-development” means prior to any development of the watershed, this version only perpetuates the existing level of impacts to our watersheds, most of which are sediment, silt and/or temperature impaired. Maybe we could go with:

WR-P31. Downstream Peak Flows. New development shall demonstrate that post-development peak flow discharges will **mimic natural flows to watercourses and avoid impacts to Beneficial Uses of Water**

(We have been assuming throughout this document that “beneficial uses of water” is used as defined by the Clean Water Act. We hope we’re right.)