

Northern California Association of Home Builders

December 16, 2013

Sent via E-Mail

Ryan Sundberg, Chairperson, and
Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
825 Fifth Street
Eureka, California 95501

Subject: Mineral Resources Element for the Proposed General Plan

Dear Chair Sundberg and Members of the Board,

The NCHB is concerned that the proposed policy language that dictates extraction and exporting quantities of sand, gravel and rock in and from Humboldt County will directly dictate the affordability of housing, commercial and other construction in Humboldt County. Sand, gravel and rock are base materials for road grading, fill and concrete used in construction. Any regulations put on this industry other than those that are already in effect through the North Coast Air Quality Management District, Northern California Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the California Department of Conservation’s State Mining and Geology Board would be duplicative and potentially crippling to this County’s economic viability. For example:

- Rock quarry owners, usually ranchers and timber land owners, regularly have to rely on using the proceeds from their rock quarries to supplement their incomes.
- The construction industry suffers higher prices due to lower product availability, thereby directly affecting housing affordability.
- The County Public Works Department relies on immediate access from quarry owners to aggregate when it needs sand, gravel and rock for road and highway repairs, slide repairs and slope stabilization. It too, would suffer higher costs due to lower availability.
- The County Economic Development Department is in support of renovating the local railroads to have future product transport potential for all goods leaving and entering the County. Adding regulatory costs would affect the availability of gravel, rock and sand, and would threaten the likelihood of railroad track beds, tunnels etc. ever being constructed or repaired in this County.

We feel Humboldt County should stay out of the mining business. Relevant mining issues are currently governed by agencies more equipped to deal with them. Each project applicant currently deals with all traffic, cultural resources, reclamation, water quality, and environmental issues during the CEQA process on a project-by-project basis. Leave the current policies in place; do not add more burdens to the mining community.

Aggregates are literally the building blocks of the construction industry. Adding costs and duplicating regulations ultimately raises the cost of every commercial, residential, and public project built. Some of the proposed policies may have severe, negative long-term economic impacts on the mining community and the construction industry at large. The NCHB does not support any additional regulations on the Mineral Resource industry in Humboldt County, and therefore supports the elimination of this element. No voting chart is submitted on this element by NCHB at this time, however we have reviewed and can support the comments submitted to your Board by Mercer- Fraser Company. We thank you for all of your work done thus far on the General Plan! We included our reasoning when recommending modification or deletions. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

For the NCHB,

Julie Williams, Advocate

cc: Supervisor Rex Bohn, District 1
Supervisor Mark Lovelace, District 3
Phillip Smith-Hanes, CAO
Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board

Supervisor Estelle Fennell, District 2
Supervisor Virginia Bass, District 4
Kevin Hamblin, Planning Department Director