
Chapter 10. Conservation and Open Space Elements

10.1 Combined Element Organization

This chapter combines the Plan's required Conservation Element and Open Space Elements. The Conservation Element guides the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources (water, forests, soils, rivers, mineral deposits, and others), while the Open Space Element guides the comprehensive and long-range preservation and conservation of open-space lands. Together, these elements present a framework of goals and policies for use and protection of all the natural resource and open space assets of the county.

Because these two elements naturally overlap, they have been combined into this single chapter, which has been organized into six related sections: Open Spaces, Biological Resources, Mineral Resources, Waste Management, Cultural Resources, and Scenic Resources. The relationship of these sections to the two elements of this chapter and other elements in this Plan is set forth in Table 10-A.

10.1.1 Relationship to Other Elements

State planning law provides a detailed description of open space lands and the topics that must be addressed in the Conservation and Open Space Elements. These topics include:

- **Open Space for the Preservation of Natural Resources**—areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life, such as habitat for fish and wildlife and areas required for ecological and other scientific study (for example: rivers, streams, bays and estuaries, coastal beaches, lakeshores, riverbanks, and watersheds).
- **Open Space for the Managed Production of Resources**—including forest lands, rangelands, agricultural lands, and areas of economic importance for the production of food or fiber; areas required for recharge of ground water basins; areas that are important for the management of commercial fisheries; and areas containing major mineral deposits.
- **Open Space for Outdoor Recreation**—areas of outstanding scenic, historical, and cultural values; areas suited for park and recreational purposes (for example: access to lake shores, beaches, rivers, and streams); and areas that serve as links between major recreation and open-space reservations such as highway corridors, trails, and utility easements.
- **Open Space for Public Health and Safety**—areas that require special management or regulation because of hazardous conditions such as earthquake fault zones, floodplains, high fire hazard areas, and areas required for the protection of air and water resources; areas designed for fuel breaks, fire access,

and fuel reduction zones; and historical natural hazard boundaries (for example: inundation areas, landslide paths, debris flows, and earthquake faults).

These open space areas and topics are covered throughout the General Plan as detailed below and in Table 10-A:

Open Space for the Preservation of Natural Resources

- Maintenance of natural resources and public lands managed for resource protection are addressed in the Land Use Element.
- Preservation of fish, plants, and wildlife, including protection of rivers and streams is a main topic of the Biological Resources section of this element.
- Protection of watersheds and their water resources is covered in the Water Resources Element.
- Bay, estuary, and coastal beach protections can be found in the coastal plans.

Open Space for the Managed Production of Resources:

- Timber and agricultural production topics are contained in the Forest and Agricultural Resources section of the Land Use Element.
- Production of mineral resources, including rock, sand, and gravel, are addressed in the Mineral Resources section of this element.

Open Space for Outdoor Recreation:

- Public lands managed for public recreation and open space are addressed in the Land Use Element and the Community Infrastructure and Services Element.
- Demands for trails and trails oriented recreational uses and bikeways are primarily covered in the Circulation Element.
- Protection of scenic, historic, and cultural assets, including Native American cultural heritage resources, is the primary topic of the Cultural and Scenic Resources section of this Element.
- Coastal access and recreational is a major topic of the Coastal Plans.

Open Space for Public Health and Safety:

- Policies to minimize risks and manage development in hazardous areas are included in the Land Use Element and the Safety Element.
- Community design and circulation for public health is a topic of the Circulation Element and the Land Use Element.
- Policies to retain publicly owned corridors for future trail use are found in the Circulation Element.

- Policies to integrate city and county trail routes with state trail systems are included in the Circulation Element. The Water Resources Element addresses water supply and water quality. The Air Quality Element addresses the protection and enhancement of air quality.

Table 10-A Conservation and Open Space Policy Summary	
Policy Summary	General Plan Elements/Sections
<p>Open Space for the Preservation of Natural Resources Maximize the long-term public and economic benefits from the biological resources within the county by maintaining and restoring fish and wildlife habitats.</p>	<p>Conservation and Open Space Element, Biological Resources Section</p> <p>Water Resources Element</p>
<p>Sustainable Development of Natural Resources / Open Space for Managed Production of Resources</p> <p><u>Forest Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actively protect and conserve timberlands for long-term economic utilization and to actively enhance and increase county timber production capabilities. <p><u>Agricultural Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote and increase Humboldt County's agricultural production and the economic viability of its agricultural operations. ▪ Conserve agricultural land for continued agricultural use. ▪ Protect working landscapes. <p><u>Mariculture</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support mariculture expansion with permit coordination and streamlining, improved dock and processing facilities, and public education. <p><u>Water Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain or enhance the quality of the county's water resources and the fish and wildlife habitat utilizing those resources. ▪ Maintain a dependable water supply, sufficient to meet existing and future domestic, agricultural, industrial needs and to assure that new development is consistent with the limitations of the local water supply. <p><u>Mineral Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assure the long-term availability of adequate supplies of mineral resources and construction materials, to protect mineral resource areas from incompatible land uses, and to minimize adverse environmental impacts. <p><u>Energy Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and implement countywide strategic energy planning. ▪ Increase energy efficiency and conservation. ▪ Increase the supply of energy from renewable sources, distributed generation, and cogeneration. ▪ Pursue opportunities for local management of energy supply. ▪ Move toward self-sufficiency in energy use, with maximum reliance on local renewable resources for local energy needs. 	<p>Land Use Element, Forest and Agricultural Resources and Land Use Maps</p> <p>Conservation and Open Space Element</p> <p>Economic Development Element</p> <p>Water Resources Element</p> <p>Conservation and Open Space Element, Mineral Resources</p> <p>Energy Element</p>

Table 10-A. Conservation and Open Space Policy Summary	
Policy Summary	General Plan Elements/Sections
<p>Sustainable Development of Natural Resources / Open Space for Managed Production of Resources <u>(continued)</u></p> <p><u>Fish and Wildlife</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maximize, where feasible, the long-term public and economic benefits from the biological resources within the county by maintaining and restoring fish and wildlife habitats. <p>Open Space for Outdoor Recreation & Cultural and Scenic Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide for compatible recreation opportunities on forestland. ▪ Encourage a safe, efficient, and enjoyable county transportation and trails system for the transportation and recreation needs of bicyclists, equestrians, hikers, and joggers. ▪ Increase participation in active recreational opportunities. ▪ Maximize public access to and along the coast. ▪ Provide for recreation needs of residents with public parks in the urban study areas. ▪ Provide for the protection and enhancement of cultural resources including Native American cultural heritage resources. ▪ Provide park and recreation opportunities in the county. ▪ Develop a program to coordinate acquisition of important open space property through conservation easements and other mechanisms. ▪ Promote the individual identities of communities by maintaining scenic open space areas between cities and communities. 	<p>Conservation and Open Space Element, Biological Resources, Water Resources Element</p> <p>Land Use Element – Forest Resources Circulation Element</p> <p>Community Infrastructure and Services Element</p> <p>Conservation and Open Space Element: Cultural and Scenic Resources</p> <p>Conservation and Open Space Element</p>
<p>Open Space for Public Health and Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Minimize the potential for loss of life and property resulting from natural and manmade hazards. 	<p>Safety Element</p>

Section 10.2 Open Space

10.2.1 Purpose

This subsection of the Conservation and Open Space elements addresses the conservation of open space lands, including issues related to working lands and park lands, the orderly development of residential land, and coordination with other agency programs related to conserving open space lands. Open spaces distinguish and showcase the county's natural environment and rural lands and provide attraction and enjoyment to residents and visitors.

10.2.2 Background

Conservation and Open Space Action Program

Humboldt County has vast and beautiful natural resources, areas of incomparable ecological value and a wealth of outdoor recreational opportunities. These are the defining characteristics of Humboldt County and represent its most significant environmental, social and economic assets. Approximately 1.4 million of the county's 2.3 million acres are used for agricultural and timber production. More than 550,000 acres are protected open space, forests, and recreation areas. Within county boundaries, there are 4 federal parks and beaches; 10 state parks; and 16 county parks and beaches, recreational areas, and reserves. There is also considerable National Forest land, as well as a number of city parks and open space areas owned by non-profit conservation groups.

Conserving and protecting these assets to benefit multiple generations is a key goal of the General Plan. Table 10-A outlines the policies of the County's Open Space Action Program. The County's strategy involves identifying and mapping significant natural resources and open spaces and implementing conservation and protection policies through zoning, project review, and proactive programs. Zoning designations will apply natural resource and open space development standards to individual properties. Discretionary projects will be evaluated for conformance with conservation and open space policies and standards of this Plan and the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Standards for the issuance of building permits and subdivision approvals are required by state law (Government Code Section 65567) to be consistent with Open Space Element policies.

The County will continue to implement state programs such as the Williamson Act and the Timberland Productivity Act, and work with the Coastal Commission for consistent implementation of the Coastal Act and other relevant state and federal resource agencies for implementation of other resource protection laws and programs.

Several regulatory agencies manage parks, recreation, and open space resources in the county, including the U. S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), California State Parks Department, California Department of Fish and Game, Native American tribes, local city governments, and the County itself. The County will coordinate with federal and state agencies involved with managing resource land, as

well as cities and tribes.

The County will seek to expand its ability to implement and sustain voluntary natural resource and open space protection programs such as the County's existing Conservation and Recreation Easement Program. The County will also participate in regional conservation efforts such as the Five County Salmon Conservation Plan and the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan.

The County will work to protect and develop outdoor recreation areas and opportunities necessary to maintain competitiveness as a tourist destination and as a desirable place to work and conduct business.

To maintain working landscapes, the County will refrain from measures that reduce the economic viability of continued timber and agricultural operations and lobby for more efficient application of state and federal regulatory standards. The County will also work to improve the infrastructure and workforce necessary for the forest products and agriculture industries and help promote innovative forest and agriculture products.

Conservation and Recreation Easement Program

Program Description

In July 2004, the Board of Supervisors initiated a county-level program to preserve Humboldt County working lands and improve access to public lands. This Conservation and Recreation Easement Program (the "Program") will be further developed to implement a full range of General Plan conservation and open space goals. Currently the Program provides support for conservation easements, including new Williamson Act contract fees and public access easements. The Program provides small grants to facilitate conservation and open space easements and pays processing fees for owners enrolling new lands in the Williamson Act program. The Program also helps secure non-motorized access to public lands to support hunting, fishing, and recreational use.

The goals of the Program are as follows:

- 1) Position the County as an active participant in local conservation and preservation activities.
- 2) Implement General Plan conservation and open space policies, including the conservation of working lands and access to public lands.
- 3) Create cooperative working relationships with local land trust and conservancy organizations.
- 4) Provide incentives for voluntary participation by producers and landowners in the conservation of working lands.
- 5) Provide non-motorized access to public lands for hunting, fishing, and recreational uses.

Program strategies will focus on incentive-based, voluntary, and cooperative approaches to implementing access and conservation easements in the county. The County GIS will be used to identify, inventory, and prioritize working lands that may be eligible and appropriate for the Program. With the input of Program partners, potential benefits of placing conservation easements on particular parcels can be examined in

light of specific threats or development pressures. Partners will include local land trusts, the Humboldt Farm Bureau, agricultural and timber interest groups, and agencies that fund easements or manage public lands. Access easement support will be explored with groups concerned with non-motorized access to public lands for hunting, fishing, and other recreational purposes, as well as with public lands agencies affected.

Legal Lots and Open Space Provisions

Parcels have legal status if at the time they were created applicable laws were followed.

For older lots the Subdivision Map Act sets out a process that a property owner can use to determine if a parcel was created legally and can be considered a separate legal parcel under the law. This "Determination of Status" process results in the issuance of a Certificate of Compliance or Conditional Certificate of Compliance depending upon the legal status of the property.

Patent Parcels

A land patent is the right of ownership to a parcel of land usually granted by the federal or state government to an individual or private company. Over 18,000 patent parcels have been issued in Humboldt County. Based on historical records, the County has been able to map over 17,000 of these parcels. A number of these have been altered by subdivision, lot line adjustments, and mergers and do not retain their original status. The mapped parcels range from a fraction of an acre to over 11,000 acres, with an average size of 153 acres. Within Timber Production Zones TPZ, 7,304 original patents were mapped, with sizes ranging from 5 to 2,227 acres, with an average size of 136.5 acres.

Owning a legal lot does not necessarily guarantee the right of development. Modern lots created through the subdivision process were required to undergo review for consistency with a General Plan and development standards such as access, sewage disposal, water supply, and resource protection. This process guaranteed their suitability for development. Lots that were created legally but without these considerations may not be suitable for development; for example, the entire parcel may be located in a floodway or wetland. Because Open Space Element protection policies must be considered before issuing a building permit (Government Code Section 65567) development potential on legal lots can be restricted.

Section 10.3 Biological Resources

10.3.1 Purpose

This section addresses biological resources including wildlife, fisheries, special status species and their habitats; it is a subsection of the Conservation and Open Space Element. Biological resource considerations are also reflected in the policies and development standards of the Land Use Element. For example, the list of primary and compatible uses in a given zone can be reflective of wildlife and fisheries considerations. Policies within the Growth Planning section of the Land Use Element (Chapter 4) have been developed to balance the need for growth with the need to protect biological resources. Finally, there are additional biological resource considerations reflected in the County's Local Coastal Program to achieve consistency with the California Coastal Act.

10.3.2 Background

Humboldt County is part of California's Klamath/North Coast bioregion. The major terrestrial habitat types in the county are coniferous forests (61%), oak woodlands (21%), and grasslands (10%). They represent a vast store of plant species and are home to numerous animals including deer, fox, elk, bears, and mountain lions. Nearly 400,000 acres of the county's mountains and coastline are within state and national park systems, leaving large tracts of existing terrestrial habitat in a natural condition.

A signature asset of the county is its aquatic habitats, including rivers, estuaries, and wetlands. Humboldt Bay, one of California's largest coastal estuaries, is second only to San Francisco Bay in size. The bay is home to many invertebrates, fish, birds, and mammals. Humboldt's rivers and the ocean off the coast have tremendous productive potential. In the seventies, over half of the fish produced and consumed in California were landed in the Humboldt Bay Area. Restoring this biological productivity to the region, especially the recovery of threatened Coho salmon and steelhead, is a high priority of this Plan.

In total, there are more than 20 species of plants and animals listed as Endangered or Threatened under federal and state classification systems in Humboldt County. Making land use decisions consistent with the special protections afforded these species is also a high priority of this Plan.

The County's biological resource conservation strategy relies on an understanding and mapping of the locations and extent of sensitive and critical biological habitat. Known habitats can then be protected for future generations by applying conservation policies and standards to development that has the potential for significant adverse effects. For example, new development in proximity to wetlands will trigger protective measures. Riparian corridors will be protected from encroachment with development restrictions. The protective measures will serve to minimize habitat loss and degradation with an emphasis on the protection and restoration of endangered or threatened species.

Sensitive, Critical, and Essential Habitats

When habitat requirements for a specific species of plant or wildlife are in short supply because either the habitat is limited to a small geographical area or is threatened by rapidly changing conditions, then the habitat is designated in this Plan as *sensitive*. A *critical* or *essential* habitat is a type of sensitive habitat that is presently threatened, and reduction or loss would cause the extinction of a federal or state listed threatened, rare, or endangered species.

Sensitive Habitats

The protection of sensitive habitats is an important part of planning and environmental assessment for land use development. Impacts to sensitive habitats must be assessed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and the Open Space and Conservation elements of the General Plan (Government Code, Sections 65302(d) and (e) and 65560-65567).

Section 10.4 Mineral Resources

10.4.1 Purpose

This chapter is a subsection of the Conservation and Open Space Element. The purpose of this chapter is to identify the county's known mineral resources and support the conservation, development, and utilization of these resources. Energy production and conservation are discussed in the Energy Element.

10.4.2 Background

Humboldt County has a wealth of mineral resources. Over ninety extraction sites produce sand and gravel, hard rock, and metals essential for the economic well being of the county (see Figure 10.1).

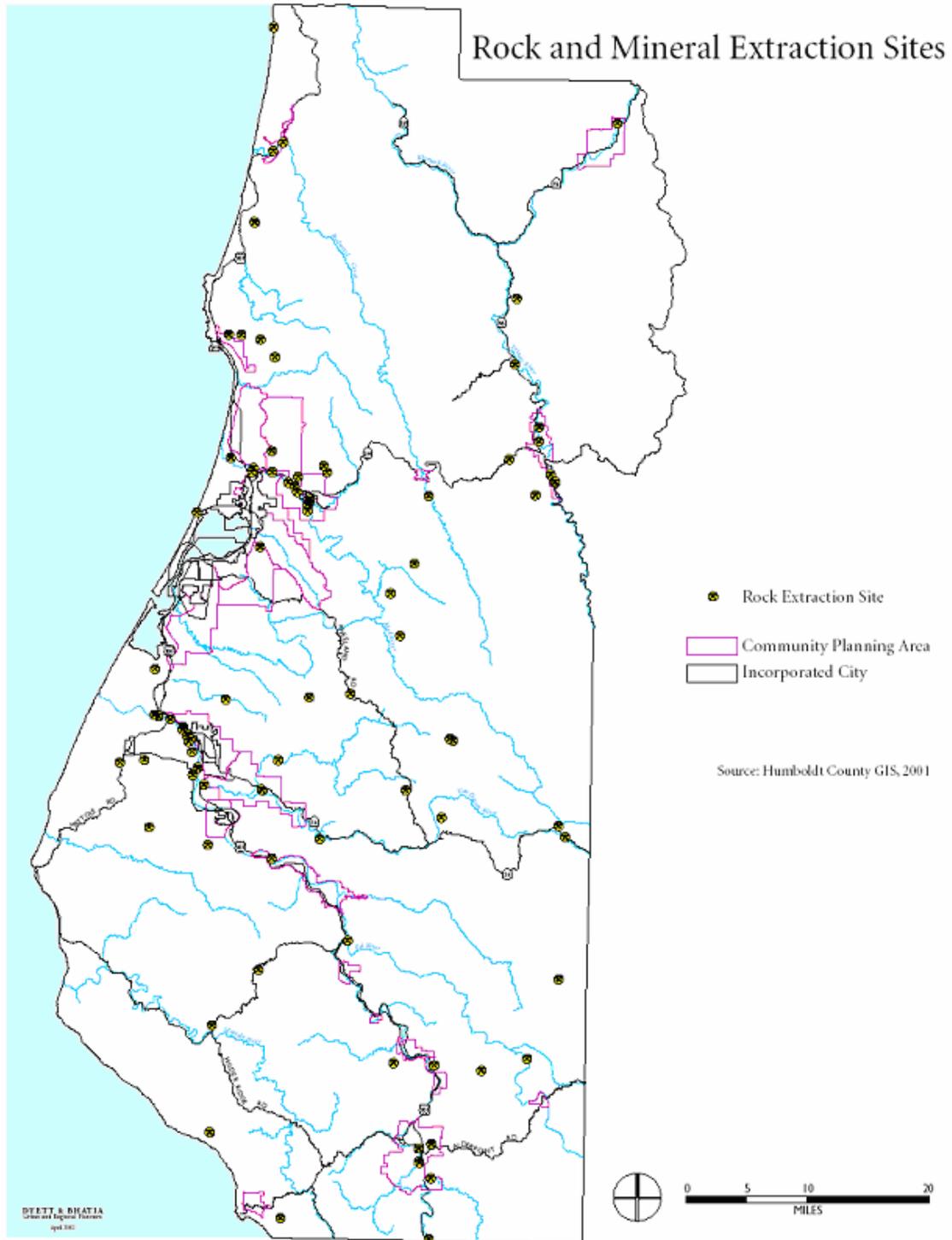
Mineral Resource Production

While gold was the first local mineral of interest, current mineral resource production is primarily limited to sand, gravel, and rock. In-stream mining of gravel bars above low flow water levels (but within the active riverbed) supplies most of the area's sand and gravel needs. Gravel and sand extraction in 2007 was 612,000 cubic yards from mining along the Eel and Van Duzen Rivers (70 percent), Mad River (25 percent), and Trinity River (5 percent).

Mines and quarries in Humboldt County primarily produce shale and quarry stone used for base rock and other structural applications. There are over 30 active rock quarries permitted in the county, with a permitted annual potential yield of approximately 660,000 cubic yards per year. Actual extraction amounts are significantly less than this and vary depending on local demand. Rock quarries are an important augmentation of the in-stream sand and gravel mining operations. These quarries provide rock products of various sizes that are not obtainable from in-stream operations or are closer to the demand. Of particular importance are the rock quarries that mine blue schist, a hard rock used in construction and the rock quarries that provide road base for rural roads and timber operations.

Sand, gravel, and rock mining are essential to road construction, road maintenance, concrete, streambank protection, erosion control, and engineered fill and drainage systems. Mine closures raise costs and negatively impact development and maintenance projects within the county.

Figure 10.1 Rock and Mineral Extraction Sites



In-Stream Gravel Mining Regulatory Coordination

To address state, federal, and County permitting requirements in a coordinated way and to implement mitigation required in program environmental impact reports for in-stream gravel mining, the County established the County of Humboldt Extraction Review Team (CHERT).

CHERT serves as a vehicle for interagency cooperation and annually reviews in-stream mining operations for compliance with CEQA mitigations and the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA). The CHERT review process involves extensive interagency coordination and on-site annual inspections. Through this process, the following agencies have input and can annually establish extraction quantities and permit restrictions for in-stream gravel mining operations:

- California Department of Fish and Game, through their Streambed Alteration Agreements.
- National Oceanographic Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, through the Endangered Species Act, Section 7 consultation.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, through the Endangered Species Act, Section 7 consultation.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, through Section 404 of the Clean Water Act authorization for gravel mining.
- California Coastal Commission, for operations requiring coastal development permits within Coastal Commission jurisdiction
- County of Humboldt, for oversight of conditional use permits, coastal development permits, reclamation plans, financial assurances, and monitoring of required CEQA mitigations.

Additionally, the California Department of Conservation is involved in the review and approval of reclamation plans and financial assurances.

Environmental Protection and Reclamation of Mined Lands

SMARA established state standards for mining activities and the reclamation of mined lands. These standards require that local governments obtain reclamation plans and set operational standards in granting permits for surface mining. Humboldt County is the local SMARA lead agency and administers the County's Surface Mining and Reclamation Act Ordinance (#1373 as amended) to comply with this state requirement.

It is a high priority of this Plan to protect fisheries habitat, riparian vegetation, and snowy plovers from in-stream mining impacts in order to maintain watershed health and the viability of in-stream mining. This goal will be accomplished primarily through the CHERT review process, interagency cooperation, and continued CEQA environmental review. The alternative to in-stream mining is mining off-river terrace deposits, which can be expensive and negatively impact agricultural lands or importation of sand and gravel, which is prohibitively expensive.

When naturally occurring asbestos is present at hard rock quarries, precautions are necessary to prevent exposure to employees and neighboring residents. This Plan relies on the site registration, sampling, and operational protocols of The North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District Airborne Toxic Control Measures (ATCM) to mitigate the affects of naturally occurring asbestos.

The surface mining standards adopted within the County's Surface Mining Ordinance set environmental protection standards and prevent new mining operations from becoming nuisances

to nearby communities or from creating problems of traffic, noise, water quality, or visual degradation.

Land Use Compatibility

In the 1980s and early 1990s, numerous surface mining conditional use permits were issued with a permit term of 15 years, subject to renewal. Furthermore, many vested mining operations in Humboldt County qualified and still qualify as legal non-conforming uses. A number of these permits have recently come up for renewal, and through the renewal notification and hearing process it has become apparent that there are currently a greater number of concerned neighboring property owners than there were when the permits were first being issued. In one instance, it was found that over 70% of parcels adjacent to an active extraction operation or haul route had changed ownership since the initial permit issuance. In order to ensure the continued production of essential mineral resources, all mining operations and haul routes need to be identified and recognized in land use decision making and disclosed during real estate transactions to promote land use compatibility.

Section 10.5. Waste Management

10.5.1 Purpose

This section describes the County's approach to solid waste management. The policies are designed to help implement the County's Integrated Waste Management Plan currently administered on a multi-jurisdictional basis by the Humboldt Waste Management Authority (HWMA).

10.5.2 Background

Integrated Waste Management

The County's Integrated Waste Management Plan (IWMP), which is jointly adopted by the cities, provides for an integrated approach to waste management and includes the following elements:

- Source Reduction and Recycling. Includes County and city program plans for source reduction, recycling, composting, special wastes management, education, funding, and organization.
- Household Hazardous Waste. Includes County and city program plans for the safe reduction, recycling, and disposal of household hazardous wastes.
- Countywide Siting. Quantifies landfill capacity needs, identifying general areas of the county potentially suited for landfill development or landfill expansion, and demonstrating a strategy for long-term disposal capacity.
- Non-Disposal Facility. Identifies long-term recycling, composting, transfer, and other facility needs for the County and cities.
- Integration Summary Plan. Summarizes countywide goals and objectives for integrated waste management, administration of the plan, current waste management practices, future diversion and disposal strategies, education needs, and programs financing.

The County's IWMP includes a process and schedule for future review and revision of each element. This approval and revision process may trigger amendments to the General Plan to ensure consistency between the documents. Revisions to the IWMP require approval from the California Integrated Waste Management Board.

Waste Diversion Goals

In 2004, the county as a whole disposed of 110,000 tons of solid waste in landfills but successfully diverted more than 170,000 tons. Of the eight reporting jurisdictions within Humboldt County, Blue Lake, Arcata and the unincorporated area of the county have exceeded the waste diversion mandate of 50% set by the Integrated Waste

Management Act of 1989. The County is continuing to work toward achieving the objectives set in the IWMP, including a near-term goal of 58% landfill diversion rate for the unincorporated area. The California Integrated Waste Management Board has set an overall statewide diversion rate target of 75% by 2020.

Solid Waste Facility Siting

California general plan law requires that the Land Use Element designate areas for solid and liquid waste disposal facilities. The location of these facilities must also be reflected in a Countywide Siting Element which is required to be consistent with the General Plan.

The County conducted an extensive municipal landfill siting study in the mid 1990's to locate a replacement site for the Cummings Road landfill, which was reaching initial design capacity. While the County identified some potentially feasible sites for further study and potential expansion opportunities at the Cummings Road site, it determined that it was more cost effective to export to a proven site. The County, through HWMA, has been trucking its solid waste to a site near Medford, Oregon under a long-term contract. It has a subsequent contract to utilize a landfill located in Anderson, California. Together, these two contracts will allow the County to meet its landfill disposal needs over the next 20 years. Consequently, no additional local municipal landfill capacity is expected to be required during the 20-year planning horizon of this General Plan.

Additional waste handling facilities that may be required over the life of this Plan include specialized waste handling facilities, such as green waste and composting sites, household hazardous waste transfer, and recycling. Such facilities can be accommodated in various general plan land use designations, depending on the nature, scale, and duration of the facility. While not expected, it may also be necessary to consider siting non-municipal solid waste facilities such as construction demolition debris disposal sites. Land use clearance standards are included to address that potential need.

Litter and Illegal Waste Disposal

Litter and illegal waste disposal remains a countywide problem, particularly in remote areas. To combat this problem, the Plan promotes public education, maintaining easily accessed affordable disposal and recycling opportunities and code enforcement.

Section 10.6 Cultural Resources

10.6.1 Purpose

This is the Cultural Resources subsection of the Conservation and Open Space Element. It includes policies to protect cultural heritage, including historic, prehistoric, and architectural resources.

10.6.2 Background

Cultural resources are elements of cultural heritage. From a land use perspective, important cultural resources include archaeological sites, historic architecture, industrial relics, artifacts, cultural landscapes, spiritual places, and historic districts. These elements provide traces of Humboldt County's rich history and add to the unique character and identity of the county.

The importance of history to local residents can be seen in the activities of the 3,700 member Humboldt County Historical Society, the architectural preservation efforts of numerous local homeowners, and the many celebrations and expressions of Native American cultural heritage. The educational, social, and economic benefits of historic preservation to the county are tremendous; protecting outstanding cultural resources and the legacy they represent is a priority of this Plan.

Resource Inventories

Over one thousand sites of cultural significance have been surveyed and officially designated as cultural resources in Humboldt County. The participation of state and federal historic registration programs include 13 sites as California Historical Landmarks, 16 sites included on the National Register of Historic Places, 58 sites as California Historical Resources, and nearly 700 sites as historical and prehistoric archeological sites. Many of these sites, as well as numerous unlisted sites, are of cultural and religious significance for Native American populations. Any scientific archeological interest in such sites must be respectful of the cultural and religious significance they may hold.

Site Preservation

Protection of cultural resources has become recognized as a vital part of planning and environmental assessment. The passage of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the California Public Resources Code (commencing with Section 5097.5), and the establishment of the Scenic Highways Element in 1971 (California Government Code Section 65302(h)) all speak to the importance of protecting and preserving these essential resources.

Both NEPA and CEQA provide environmental policy guidance to preserve important aspects of our cultural legacy. Section 101(b)(4) of NEPA stresses the preservation of important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage. Similarly,

Section 21001(b) of CEQA states that it is a California policy to "take all action necessary to provide the people of this state with... enjoyment of aesthetic, natural, scenic, and historic environmental qualities."

The protection of the cultural environment in general and heritage resources in particular is also given priority in the California Public Resources Code. Sections 5097.9 et seq. provide protection from damage to Native American historic, cultural, or sacred sites and features, artifacts, and objects. Moreover, California Government Code Sections 65351 et seq. provide for public involvement and required consultation with Native American tribes during the preparation of a general plan for purpose of preserving or mitigating impacts to California Native American cultural places.

The County's Board of Supervisors established a policy in 1971 to evaluate archeological sites not only for their scientific value, but also for their importance to the Native American community (Resolution No. 71-14.1). The County currently maintains an agreement with the North Coastal Information Center (a Yurok tribal facility in Klamath, California) to review development proposals to assess any potential impact to culturally sensitive areas. The County also refers development proposals to local tribes within their defined area of interest for review and recommendation.

In addition to the need to preserve important archeological finds, there is a need to protect paleontological resources from loss or destruction. Whereas archeological resources provide a link with the people of the past, paleontological resources tell us about prehistoric life from past geologic time periods. Protection of these resources is required by law and can lead to valuable scientific information.

In addition to numerous sites of archeological or paleontological significance in the county, there are many other sites of historic worth. For example, sites may be significant for their architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural value. Judgment of significance and the need for protection is straightforward if a site is eligible for, or listed in, state or federal historic registration programs. Determining significance and the need for protection of uncataloged sites must be assessed on a case-by-case basis to avoid adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Determination can require cultural resource studies prepared by historians with professional qualifications to inform the judgment of decision makers.

Section 10.7 Scenic Resources

10.7.1 Purpose

This is the Scenic Resources Section of the Conservation and Open Space Element. It includes policies to protect outstanding scenic resources that may be adversely affected by land use and development. Signs and billboards are addressed in this chapter as well as in the Land Use Element. Protection programs and the identification of high-value visual resources are also addressed in this section.

10.7.2 Background

Scenic beauty is perhaps the most notable characteristic of Humboldt County for visitors and one of the most appreciated attributes among residents. Forested hillsides, working agricultural land, river corridors, and the coast provide a range of stunning scenic areas. Certain of these are exemplary and warrant protections to maintain the county's characteristic scenic beauty and unique sense of place.

Forests

Forestland is a prominent component of the visual landscape of Humboldt County, covering more than 80% of the total land area. Redwood National Park, Six Rivers National Forest, Redwoods State Park, and King Range National Conservation Area are all significant, protected forests. However, these and other public forested lands total only 26% of the 1.9 million acres of forested land in the county. Forestland in private ownership constitutes the remainder. The scenic value of these natural resources is important to residents, and there is strong public support for protecting working forests and other productive resource lands from conversion to other uses.

Policies in this Plan for protecting scenic qualities of forestlands are limited to supporting the continued timber production uses of these lands, and discouraging their conversion to residential, commercial, or industrial use. State laws governing timber harvest regulations significantly narrow the scope of scenic protection measures the County may apply to forest lands. The Forest Resources Section of this Plan provides more comprehensive discussion of this and other forestry-related issues.

Open Space and Agricultural Lands

Agricultural land vistas are to many a quintessential characteristic of Humboldt County; agriculture and grazing land uses comprise 15% of unincorporated lands. Scenic protection of agricultural lands is, for the most part, accomplished by policies in the Land Use Element, by encouraging continued agricultural production and discouraging conversion to residential, commercial, or industrial uses. The State Coastal Act and Williamson Act also protect agricultural lands. This Plan provides recognition of "heritage landscapes," which are lands with combined historical, cultural, and scenic values, such as the Arcata and Ferndale Bottoms areas.

Scenic Roads

The following Scenic Highway Element goals outlined in the County's 1984 Framework Plan remain relevant for local scenic roadways:

- To establish a system of scenic routes.
- To conserve scenic views observable from the routes.
- To provide multiple recreational uses on publicly owned lands adjacent to the routes.
- To recognize the dual scenic and economic value of lands planned for the growing and harvesting of timber, and agricultural products.

Several highways in the county have unique scenic qualities owing to their natural setting. A scenic highway is defined as a highway that, in addition to its transportation function, provides opportunities for the enjoyment of natural and scenic resources. Scenic highways direct views to areas of exceptional beauty, natural resources or landmarks, or historic and cultural interest.

Although no highways in the county are "officially designated" as California State Scenic Highways, several state highways could be eligible for official designation:

- Route 36 from Route 101 near Fortuna to the Trinity County line
- Route 96 from Route 299 at Willow Creek north to Siskiyou County
- Route 101 for its entire length in Humboldt County
- Route 254 in the Avenue of the Giants Community Plan Area
- Route 299 from Arcata to Willow Creek

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Portions of several rivers in the county are designated as part of the National and/or California Wild and Scenic River Systems. Sections of the Eel, Klamath, Trinity, and Van Duzen rivers are designated "wild," "scenic," or "recreational." Policies relating to protection of water resources are found in the Water Resources Element.

Other Scenic Areas

Coastal Scenic and Coastal View Areas

Humboldt County's varied and extensive coastline allows for a wide range of scenic vistas from roads and highways, and from beaches, state parks, and coastal access points. Considerable work has been done to assess scenic resources in developing the County's Local Coastal Program (LCP). This program relies on a technical study and a detailed inventory of visual resources along the coastline. The scenic qualities of these areas are protected by land use designations that encourage open space, permit review under the LCP, and design review requirements that minimize visual impacts of new development.

Inland Scenic Areas

Many scenic natural features outside of the coastal zone are protected by virtue of being within public lands, provisions of various county timber production, agricultural land use designations, and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review. There are also areas in Shelter Cove and along the Avenue of the Giants that have design review requirements intended to protect natural features.

The policies and standards presented in this Plan (both in this section and elsewhere) will continue many scenic resource protections already in place, including timber production and agricultural land use designations, design review, and CEQA review.

Community Separators

Maintaining a visible separation between communities enhances a sense of community identity. Open space areas can serve as community separators, helping to avoid the look of continuous corridor-style urbanization. These areas are frequently subject to pressure for development because they are close to developed areas and major roads. A set of goals, policies, and programs to retain community separators is presented in this section.

Off Premise Billboards

Billboards along scenic roadways and other scenic areas impact the scenic quality by blocking views and introducing a source of outdoor lighting. Policies and standards in the Land Use Element minimize these impacts by limiting placement of new billboards to commercial and industrial areas. This section includes a standard which establishes a 15-year limit to the lifespan of new billboards.

There are numerous existing billboards in areas not zoned for commercial or industrial use. These billboards are considered “non-conforming.” State law prohibits local jurisdictions from requiring removal of existing non-conforming billboards without compensation. New policies support efforts of the North Coast Railroad Authority to remove billboards from the railroad right-of-way, and to prioritize enforcement of Humboldt County’s existing regulations requiring removal of illegal billboards. interest.