CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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Date Filed:

January 23, 1998

49th Day: 180th Day: March 13, 1998

Staff:

July 22, 1998 **CLK-SF**

Staff Report: April 24, 1998

Hearing Date: May 12, 1998

STAFF REPORT REGULAR CALENDAR

APPLICATION FILE NO.:

1-97-031

APPLICANT:

Mike and Carolyn Harmon

PROJECT LOCATION:

East of Highway 101, at the end of Kane Ridge Road, in

the Big Lagoon area of Humboldt County. APN 518-012-

22

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

(1) Construction of a single family residence, including a septic system, water well, and landscaping; and (2) timber harvesting comprised of the clearance of approximately 2.25 acres to create open space areas for the landscaping and to improve views from the proposed residence to the ocean and selective cutting of dead or dying trees on the

remaining portion of the 20-acre parcel.

Lot Area:

20 acres

Building Coverage:

4,000 square feet

Pavement Coverage: 4,800 square feet Landscape Coverage: 1.4 acres

Height:

28 feet

Zoning:

Rural Residential Agriculture with a 20-acre minimum

parcel size and mobile home and coastal elk habitat

combining zones (RA-20-M/E).

Plan Designation:

Area of Deferred Certification. Humboldt County North

Coast Area Plan maximum density one dwelling unit per 20

acres.

LOCAL APPROVALS:

RECEIVED:

Humboldt County Planning Commission Conditional Use

Permit; Division of Environmental Health well and septic

system approvals.

SUBSTANTIVE FILE

DOCUMENTS:

Humboldt County North Coast Area Land Use Plan and

Permits 1-86-204 (Croft), 1-88-73 (Bumble Bee/Hennings),

1-88-255 (BeauPre), 1-92-80 (Allen), and Permit

Application 1-92-81 (Pehrson).

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the proposed single family residence and timber harvesting operation with conditions. To protect the environmentally sensitive Western Azalea that is found on neighboring parcels but was not discovered on the subject property during surveys conducted for the development, staff is proposing conditions that would (1) require recordation of a deed restriction prohibiting landscaping of the parcel with other azalea species that could hybridize with the Western Azalea and (2) require that any individual azalea plants discovered during timber harveting operations to be flagged and protected. To protect timberland soils in accordance with Section 30243 of the Coastal Act, staff also proposes a condition that would require erosion control measures and reseeding of disturbed areas. As conditioned, staff believes that the proposed project is consistent with the Coastal Act and recommends approval.

STAFF NOTE:

1. Standard of Review

The proposed project is located in the Big Lagoon area of Humboldt County. Humboldt County has a certified LCP, but the subject property is within an area of deferred certification. Therefore, the standard of review that the Commission must apply to the project is the Coastal Act.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

1.0 Motion, Staff Recommendation, and Resolution

1.1 Motion:

I move that the Commission approve Coastal Development Permit No. 1-97-31 subject to conditions.

1.2 Staff Recommendation of Approval:

Staff recommends a YES vote and adoption of the following resolution and findings. The motion passes only by affirmative vote of a majority of the Commissioners present.

1.3 Resolution to Approve Permit:

The Commission hereby grants, subject to the condition below, a permit for the proposed development on the grounds that the development, as conditioned, will be in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act of 1976, will not prejudice the ability of the local government having jurisdiction over the area to prepare a Local Coastal Program conforming to the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, and will not have any significant adverse impacts on the environment within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act.

2.0 STANDARD CONDITIONS: See Attached

3.0 SPECIAL CONDITIONS

The Commission grants this permit subject to the following special conditions:

1. Western Azalea

- (a) PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT, the applicants shall execute and record a deed restriction in a form and content acceptable to the Executive Director, which states that no other rhododendron species shall be planted on the parcel, except for the existing native Western Azalea, Rhododendron occidentale. The document shall shall run with the land, binding all successors and assigns, and shall be recroded free of prior liens that the Executive Director determines may affect the enforceability of the restriction. This deed restriction shall not be removed or changed without a Coastal Commission-approved amendment to this coastal development permit unless the Executive Director determines that no amendmnet is required.
- (b) If any Western Azalea plants (*Rhododendron occidentale*) are found during timber harvesting operations, the plants shall be protected against damage and warning flags shall be installed to assure the area is avoided.
- (c) The professional forester responsible for the timber harvesting operation shall ensure that each worker involved in the operation has been instructed, prior to working at the site, about how

to identify Rhododendron occidentale and knows of the requirements to protect and flag any of the plants found during the course of the operation as required under section (b) above.

2. Protection of Forest Soils

To protect forest soils, all skid trails shall be water barred in accordance with Forest Practice Rules and upon completion of timber removal and clean-up operations, all disturbed areas shall be seeded with grass for erosion control.

3. Condition Compliance.

All requirements specified in the foregoing conditions that the applicant is required to satisfy as prerequisites to the issuance of this permit must be met within six months of Commission action on this permit application. Failure to comply with this requirement within the time period specified, or within such additional time as may be granted by the Executive Director for good cause, will result in the nullification of this permit approval.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DECLARATIONS

The Commission finds and declares as follows:

4.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

4.1.1 Project Location

The project site is located in Humboldt County in the Big Lagoon area on the east side of Kane Ridge Road, approximately one mile from the intersection of Kane Ridge Road and Kane Road. The parcel is across the street from 1300 Kane Ridge Road (APN 518-012-22). See Exhibits 1-3.

4.1.2 Timber Removal

STAFF NOTE: The harvesting or removal of major vegetation is considered development under the Coastal Act. However, in accordance with Coastal Act Section 30106, timber harvesting <u>undertaken in accordance with a timber harvest plan</u> submitted pursuant to the provisions of the Forest Practice Act is exempt from coastal development permit requirements. As further discussed below, the subject timber harvest is exempt from the requirement to prepare a timber harvest plan. Therefore, because a timber harvest plan is not required and will not be obtained, a coastal development permit is required for the proposed timber harvest.

The property was originally harvested in the 1940's. Second growth timber has been selectively harvested periodically since that time. The site is currently well stocked with second growth, primarily spruce, alder, and redwood, with the exception of an approximately 2-acre area cleared by the previous owner of the property pursuant to an approved Timber Harvest Plan. The proposed timber harvest includes the removal of all trees and brush down to bare mineral earth on approximately 2.25 acres and salvage harvest of dead and dying trees in the amount of 10 percent or less of average volume per acre on the remaining 15 timbered acres of the property

(see Exhibit 4). The applicants estimate that these volumes will result in the salvage harvest of approximately one tree per acre.

The primary purpose of the timber removal from the 2.25-acre area is to expand the open area of the site to provide for the construction of the proposed single family residence and landscaping. Site clearance will provide fire protection for the structure and views of Big Lagoon and the ocean. Several young growth conifers will be left on the site for landscaping purposes. The site includes approximately 11,200 square feet of existing gravel roads. No new logging roads are proposed.

Although the harvesting activity is exempt from the requirement to prepare a timber harvest plan, the timber harvest must still be conducted in compliance with the applicable Forest Practice Rules specified in other regulations of the Department of Forestry. The project as proposed would conform to these measures. All skid trails will be water barred and logging slash will be disposed of in compliance with Forest Practice Act requirements. Following timber removal and clean-up activities, all disturbed areas will be seeded with grass for erosion control.

Harvesting of the 10 percent dead and dying trees on the remaining 15 acres is proposed to be conducted in accordance with the following conditions in conformance with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Regulations (14 CCR 1038):

- No tractor or heavy equipment operations on slopes greater than 50 percent;
- No construction of new tractor roads on slopes greater than 40 percent;
- No tractor or heavy equipment operations on known landslides or unstable areas;
- No new road construction or reconstruction;
- No heavy equipment operations within a watercourse or Lake Protection Zone except for maintenance of existing roads or drainage facilities;
- No timber harvesting shall occur within a watercourse or Lake Protection Zone except sanitation-salvage harvesting;
- No known site of rare, threatened, or endangered plants or animals will be disturbed;
- No timber operations shall occur within the buffer zone of a species of special concern;
- Timber operations shall comply with any applicable Special Treatment Area rules; and
- No timber operations shall occur on any site that satisfies the criteria listed in 14 CCR 895.1 concerning significant archeological or historical sites.

Pursuant to California Department of Forestry regulations, only a California Licensed Timber Operator is permitted to remove timber. Even timber operations that are exempt from timber harvesting plan requirements are subject to inspection by a CDF forest practice inspector to ensure that the harvesting restrictions outlined above are being complied with.

4.1.3 Single-Family Residence

The applicants propose to construct an approximately 3,500-square-foot, four bedroom, single-family residence with a septic system, water well, 1.4 acres of landscaping, and pave 4,800

square feet of cleared area for a driveway (see Exhibit 5). Installation of the well has already been completed and the applicants are therefore seeking the Commission's approval for the well after-the-fact. The house will be 28 feet high above finished grade, and will have a 500-square-foot garage.

4.2 Other Agency Approvals

4.2.1 California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

The proposed timber harvest is exempt from the requirement to prepare a timber harvest plan in accordance with the Forest Practice Act. The applicants' forester indicates the havesting is exempt as a "Less Than 3 Acre Conversion Exemption," and as a "10 Percent Harvest of Dead and Diseased and Dying Exemption." The applicants will submit the appropriate exemption notices to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection for approval prior to conducting the proposed timber harvesting.

4.2.2 Humboldt County

The Humboldt County Planning Department granted Conditional Use Permit CUP-32-96 authorizing the timber harvest portion of the proposed development. The County Division of Environmental Health has approved the proposed well and septic system. No local discretionary approval are required for the construction of the proposed single-family residence.

4.3 Coastal Act Issues

4.3.1 New Development

Coastal Act Section 30250(a) states in applicable part:

(a) New residential, commercial, or industrial development...shall be located within, contiguous with, or in close proximity to, existing developed areas able to accommodate it or, where such areas are not able to accommodate it, in other areas with adequate public services and where it will not have significant adverse effects, either individually or cumulatively, on coastal resources.

The project site is within a rural area where one single-family home per parcel is a principally permitted use. The Humboldt County Health Department has determined that suitable areas exists on the property to accommodate a septic system and has approved a water well to serve the development. The project, as discussed in Finding 4.3.2 below, has been conditioned to protect the Western Azalea from the proposed and any future development. In addition, as discussed in Finding 4.3.3 below, the harvesting operation has been conditioned to protect forest soils from erosion. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed project, as conditioned, is consistent with Coastal Act Section 30250(a), as the roject is located within an area with adequate services to accommodate it and will not cause significant adverse effects, either individually or cumulatively, to coastal resources.

4.3.2 Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas

Coastal Act Section 30240 states:

- (a) Environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on such resources shall be allowed within such areas.
- (b) Development in areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade such areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of such habitat areas.

Coastal Act Section 30107.5 states:

"Environmentally sensitive area" means any area in which plant or animial life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments.

The project site is within an area designated under the Humboldt County General Plan as Elk Range Habitat. This designation is intended to ensure that development within the range of the Roosevelt Elk is sited and designed to prevent impacts that would significantly disrupt elk use. Although the range of the species is limited, the Roosevelt Elk is not protected under State and Federal endangered species laws as a rare and endangered species. The Roosevelt Elk is a harvested animal and according to the staff of the Department of Fish and Game, the Roosevelt Elk population in the area is expanding and doing well. Therefore, the Commission finds that use of the subject property by Elk does not make the subject property an environmentally sensitive habitat area for Roosevelt Elk, as no evidence has been presented that the Roosevelt Elk or its potential habitat on the site is either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in the ecosystem, as is necessary for an area to qualify as an environmentally sensitive area under Section 30107.5 of the Coastal Act. Nonetheless, the proposed development will not adversely affect the elk habitat. In fact, the proposed timber harvest is expected to improve elk habitat on the site as the tree removal will increase grassy areas favored by the elk for forage.

The subject property is in the habitat range of the Western Azalea (*Rhododendron occidentale*), a native American azalea whose indigenous habitat is limited only to areas along the Pacific coastline in Northern California and Oregon. The azalea is found on the western or ocean facing slopes because of a special combination of factors which are necessary for its survival. These factors include, but are not limited to: (a) the presence of mild winters and cool summers; (b) adequate rainfall distribution; (c) good ground moisture; (d) acidic soils and (e) sufficient elevation to avoid the damaging effects of salt spray. In addition, past land use practices by man have fostered the plant's establishment. The land in the area was once selectively logged and cleared for agricultural grazing lands. Subsequent periodic burning of the leaf and grass litter enabled the tiny rhododendron seeds to come in contact with mineral soils, germinate, and perpetuate the species. However, the long term viability of this species is contingent not only on its immediate protection from harm, but also by active management practices that eliminate the more competitive and dominant successional plant species (such as the Sitka Spruce) from shading out these unique plants.

The Western Azalea has scientific and educational value. Its value for breeding stock is well documented. The azalea has been used as the genetic stock for some of the Knap Hill and Exbury Hybrids that were developed in both England and New Zealand which are now available worldwide in about 150 separately named commercial varieties. See Pacific Horticulture, Spring 1977 and Shrubs and Vines for American Gardens (Donald Wyman, MacMillan Co. 1969, pages 362 and 382).

The habitat of the Western Azalea is recognized as environmentally sensitive in the Humboldt County North Coast Area Land Use Plan in Chapter 3, page 22 of the Plan. The Commission has also recognized areas where the Western Azalea is found as environmentally sensitive and has required both deed restrictions and other special conditions to protect the plant's habitat area. See permits No. 1-86-204 (Croft), 1-88-73 (Bumble Bee/Hennings), and 1-88-255 (BeauPre).

At the direction of Commission staff, the applicants conducted a botanical survey of the property to determine whether the Western Azalea is present on the property. No Western Azaleas were found anywhere on the parcel. Thus, there will be an adequate buffer between the developed area and azalea habitat. In addition, tree removal will increase the area available for colonization by the Azalea. However, it is possible that individual Western Azales plants may exist on the 20-acre parcel that were not discovered by the survey and that individual plants might propagate into areas of the parcel by the time all of the harvesting activities are conducted. To assure that timber harvest activities do not harm the plant, any plants that might later be discovered on the property, Special Condition 1(b) requires the timber operator to flag and avoid any azaleas found during timber harvest operations and Special Condition 1(c) requires the professional forestor to ensure that the timber harvesting workers on the site are instructed on how to identify the Western Azalea and know the requirements to flag and avoid any of the plants that are found.

The applicants also propose to landscape an approximately 1.4-acre area of the property in the house site area. Since rhododendrons will cross pollinate with one another, successive generations of their progeny are likely to result in a mixture or hybrid variety of the two parent plants. This tendency to hybridize is well documented. The rhododendron family has but one genus, about a dozen native species, over 200 popular named hybrid varieties that are readily available in the commercial trade in the United States, over 2,000 named hybrid varieties worldwide, and an even greater number of unnamed hybrid varieties. (See Wyman, op. cit. pg. 7 and Sunset Western Garden Book, Lane Publishing, Menlo Park, CA. 1988 pgs. 500-505). Thus, the planting of rhododendrons, other than additional Western Azaleas, on the property has the potential to adversely impact the long-term genetic integrity and biodiversity of the Western Azalea. To protect the genetic integrity of the Western Azalea, Special Condition 1(a) requires recordation of a deed restriction prohibiting the applicants and any successors to the property from planting any species of azalea on the site other than Rhododendron occidentale. In accordance with the requirements imposed by Special Conditions 1(a) and 1(b) the Commission finds that the proposed project is sited and designed to prevent any significant degradation or disruption of Western Azalea habitat in conformance with Coastal Act Section 30240.

4.3.3 Conversion of Timberlands

Coastal Act Section 30243 states:

The long-term productivity of soils and timberlands shall be protected, and conversion of coastal commercial timberlands in units of commercial size to other uses or their division into units of non-commercial size shall be limited to providing for necessary timber processing and related facilities.

The property is zoned by the County as rural residential agriculture with a 20-acre minimum parcel size, and the proposed development is consistent with the principally permitted use for this designation. Although the site is not a designated timber production zone, the property has supported commercial timber production in the past and timber harvesting is a Conditionally Permitted Use for the land use designation.

The proposed project includes landscaping and erosion control measures that will protect the long-term productivity of soils. The Commission attaches **Special Condition No. 2** to ensure that the proposed water barring of skid trails and the seeding of disturbed areas upon completion of timber harvesting and clean-up operations are carried out.

The acreage of timber land that would be permanently converted to residential use as part of the proposed development does not constitute a sizable enough area to be a unit of commercial size. However, according to the applicants' forester, given the volume of trees growing on the parcel, the approximately 15 acres of timberland that will remain on the parcel after completion of the proposed harvesting activities is of sufficient size to ensure commercially viable lumber production in the future. The forester indicates the parcel is well stocked with second growth timber and will continue to grow trees for lumber production indefinitely. He notes that roads, landings and skid trails will remain in place as part of the infrastructure for future harvesting. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed development will result in neither the conversion of coastal commercial timberlands in units of commercial size to other uses nor divide coastal commercial timberlands in units of commercial size into units of non-commercial size. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed project is consistent with Coastal Act Section 30243.

4.3.4 Visual Resources

Coastal Act Section 30251 states:

The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. New development in highly scenic areas such as those designated in the California Coastline Preservation and Recreation Plan prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation and by local government shall be subordinate to the character of its setting.

The proposed single-family residence and its related improvements will not be visible from Highway 101, or from any other public road or public lands, because the surrounding forests and natural land forms on the 20-acre property screen the house site from public view. The project minimizes the alteration of natural land forms as only a minimal amount of grading is needed to prepare the gentle slope of the house site and as no grading is needed for the proposed driveway improvements. The project is also visually compatible with the large lot, rural residential character of the surrounding area. The Commission therefore finds that the project is consistent with Section 30251 as the scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas will be protected.

4.3.5 Alleged Violation.

Although development (i.e. installation of a water well) has allegedly taken place prior to submission of this permit application, consideration of this application by the Commission has been based solely upon the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act. Approval of the permit does not constitute a waiver of any legal action with regard to the alleged violation nor does it constitute an admission as to the legality of any development undertaken on the subject property without a coastal development permit.

4.3.6 Humboldt County LUP/Prejudice to LCP.

The subject property is located within an uncertified area of Humboldt County's Local Coastal Program. In 1982, the Kane Road area was not certified by the Coastal Commission as part of the North Coast Area Land Use Plan because of substantial issues relating to: (a) litigation over alleged illegal subdivisions in the area, (b) the presence of the Western Azalea and the absence of any protection or management plans for this species; (c) the minimum parcel size necessary to ensure agricultural productivity and to avoid adverse impacts to potential timber production on surrounding lands and; (d) general water quality and scenic view concerns, including the protection of Roosevelt Elk habitat areas.

Section 30604 of the Coastal Act allows permit issuance of a project if it is consistent with Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. Pursuant to the above analysis, the proposed project, as conditioned, is consistent with all relevant Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act and thus will not prejudice local government's ability to implement a certifiable LCP for this uncertified area.

5.0 California Environmental Quality Act.

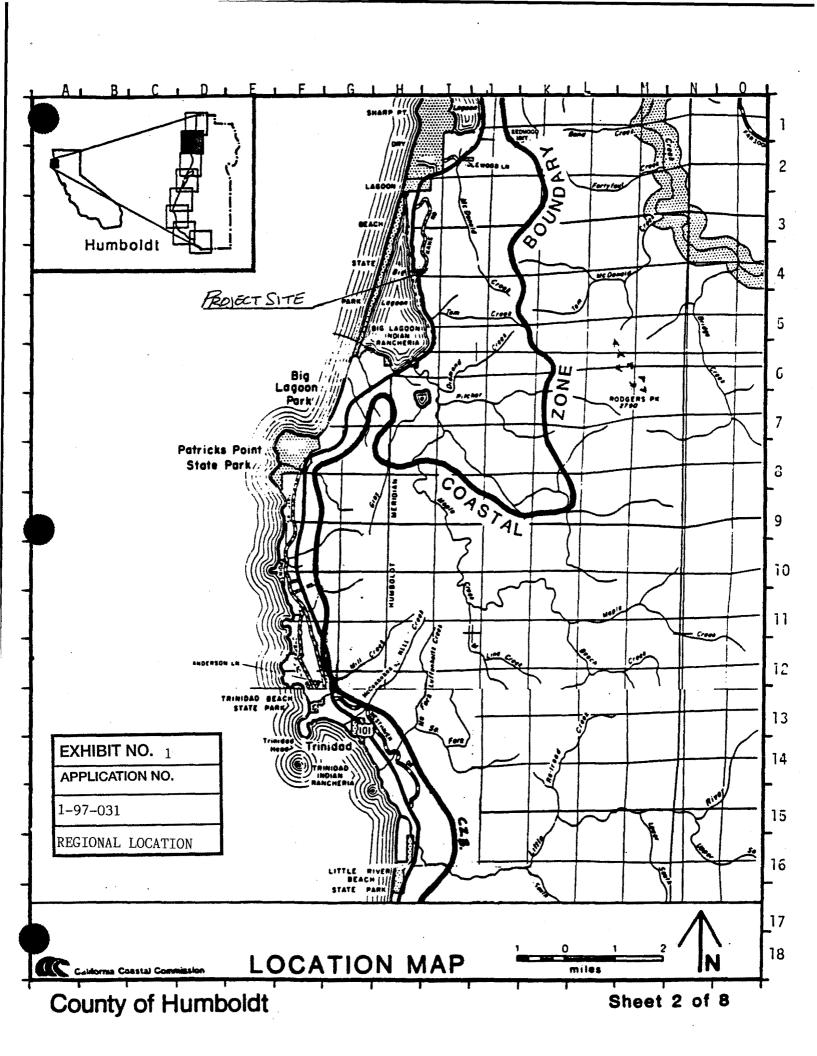
Section 13096 of the Commission's administrative regulations requires Commission approval of CDP applications to be supported by a finding showing the application, as modified by any conditions of approval, to be consistent with any applicable requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 21080.5(d)(2)(A) of the CEQA prohibits approval of a proposed development if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available that would substantially lessen any significant impacts that the activity may have on the environment.

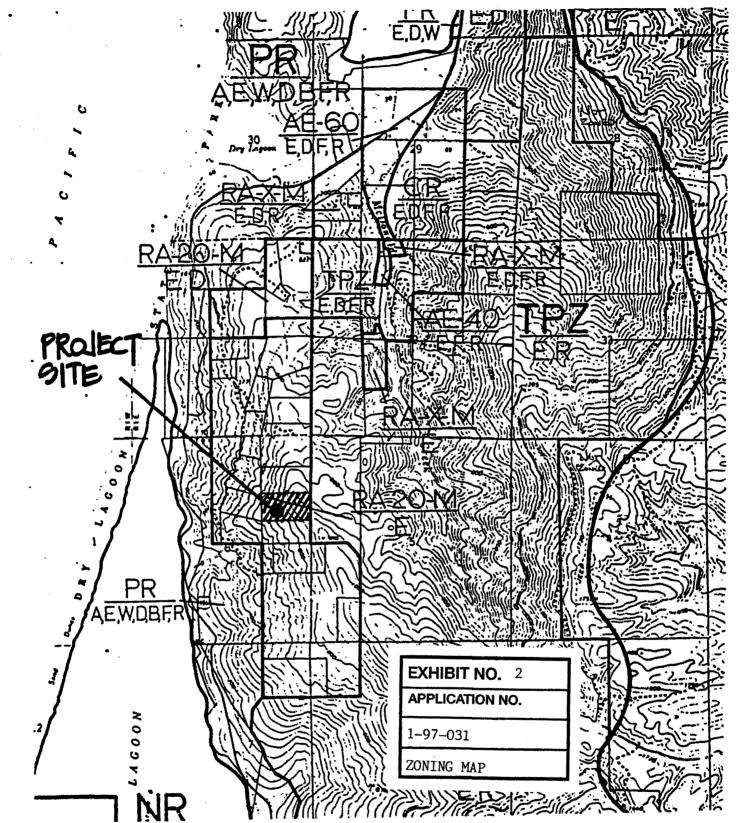
The project as conditioned herein will not result in any significant impacts to coastal resources and includes mitigation measures to avoid or lessen adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent feasible. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed project, as

conditioned, is consistent with the resource protection policies of the Coastal Act and with the CEQA.

APPENDIX A STANDARD CONDITIONS

- 1. Notice of Receipt and Acknowledgment. The permit is not valid and development shall not commence until a copy of the permit, signed by the permittee or authorized agent, acknowledging receipt of the permit and acceptance of the terms and conditions, is returned to the Commission office.
- 2. Expiration. If development has not commenced, the permit will expire two years from the date on which the Commission voted on the application. Development shall be pursued in a diligent manner and completed in a reasonable period of time. Application for extension of the permit must be made prior to the expiration date.
- 3. <u>Compliance</u>. All development must occur in strict compliance with the proposal as set forth in the application for permit, subject to any special conditions set forth below. Any deviation from the approved plans must be reviewed and approved by the staff and may require Commission approval.
- 4. <u>Interpretation</u>. Any questions of intent of interpretation of any condition will be resolved by the executive director or the Commission.
- 5. <u>Inspections</u>. The Commission staff shall be allowed to inspect the site and the development during construction, subject to 24-hour advance notice.
- 6. <u>Assignment</u>. The permit may be assigned to any qualified person, provided assignee files with the Commission an affidavit accepting all terms and conditions of the permit.
- 7. <u>Terms and Conditions Run with the Land</u>. These terms and conditions shall be perpetual, and it is the intention of the Commission and the permittee to bind all future owners and possessors of the subject property to the terms and conditions.

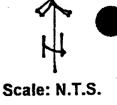


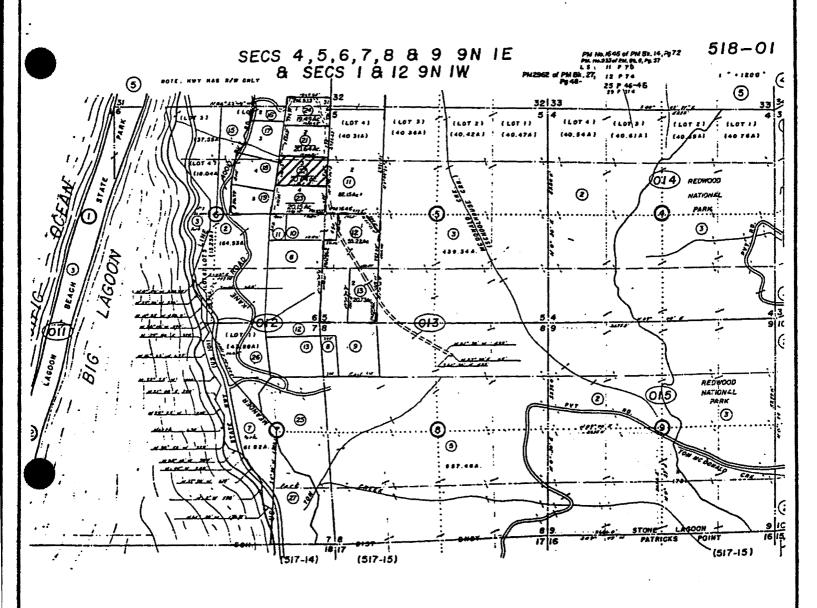


Proposed Harmon Conditional Use Permit Big Lagoon Area CUP-32-96

APN: 518-012-22 Section 6 T9N R1E H.B.&M.

Zoning Map





Proposed Harmon Conditional Use Permit Big Lagoon Area CUP-32-96

APN: 518-012-22 Section 6 T9N R1E H.B.&M.

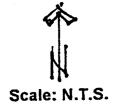
EXHIBIT NO. 3

APPLICATION NO.

1-97-031

ASSESSOR'S PARCEL MAP

Assessor's Parcel Map



RECEIVED

APR 0 4 1997

Applicant: Mike and Carolyn Harmon 288 McDonald Creek

Trinidad, CA 95570

HUMBOLD? COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Agent: Robert MacMullin

MacMullin Forestry and Logging

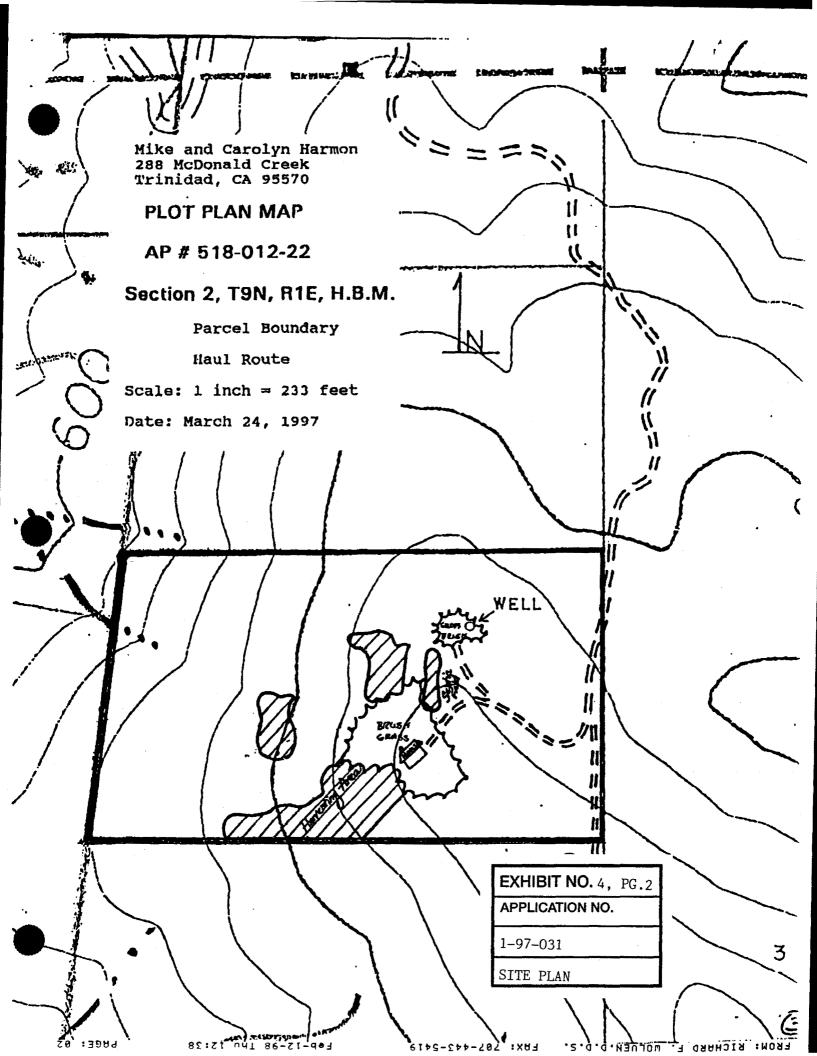
1289 B Street Arcata, CA 95521

AP # 518-012-22

Section 2, Township 9 North, Range 1 East, H.B.M.

LEGEND FOR PLOT PLAN MAP

Paved Road	
Gravel Road =========	
Parcel Boundary	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
Well	
Timbered Land 10 Percent Dead	d and Dying Exemption
Harvesting Area Conversion	Aréa
Grass And Open Area	
Log Landing	
Map Scale: 1 inch = 233 Feet	
Date: March 24, 1997	EXHIBIT NO.4, PG. 1
	APPLICATION NO.
Contair Interval = 40'	1-97-031
	SITE PLAN



Mike + Carolyn Harmon 288 McDonald Creek Pd. Trinidad, CA 95570

2-12-98

Elevations N-33' S-30

