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Subject: Friday, Oct. 15, 2021, Agenda Item 14.a; Appeal No. A-1-EUR-21-0055 (City of Eureka, Humboldt Co.)
Date: Saturday, October 9, 2021 3:43:21 PM

Dear Coastal Commissioners:

I am writing to ask you to please uphold the appeal filed by Ann White, Janelle Egger and Jack Kinnear regarding the placement of trailers for transitional housing by the Betty Kwan Chinn Homeless Foundation on the Crowley site that is situated along Humboldt Bay, the Eel River and Hikshari Trail in Eureka, California.

I do not oppose housing for the homeless in Eureka, as I know this is a dire social problem that must be addressed in communities all over coastal California. What I object to is the fact that this trailer project will be built on a vacant piece of land right next to a functioning wetland that is part of the Eel River and Humboldt Bay. In looking at the exhibits for this project, you can see that there is very little wetland habitat that has not been degraded by industrial and commercial development along Humboldt Bay. In fact, many of the projects that were approved along Humboldt Bay decades ago would probably not be approved today due to the sensitive nature of their location. As you know, the problem with development is that once something is built, it is next to impossible to reverse the damage and reclaim the land for open space or restoration purposes.

In this case, the Crowley site was, many years ago, a fuel tank farm. But, now, the property has enjoyed the benefit of sitting idle for many years, and the wetland habitat, birds and other wildlife have returned to the area and are accustomed to a relatively undisturbed environment. Just because there are a lot of invasive, non-native plant species growing on this parcel of land does not mean it could not be fully restored, with a little bit of effort and dedication, to enhance the environment for the wildlife that depends on the coastal wetlands for survival.

Over and over again, I hear government agencies or companies that want to develop land next to sensitive coastal resources make claims that because an area is compromised by non-native, invasive species it is no longer viable or worthy of protection and restoration. The reason that our planet is suffering and dying is that we, as humans, continue to cling to the idea that our needs are always more important than the needs of wildlife and the natural environment. The continued degradation and destruction of our wetlands, even when there is only a tiny percentage of them left along our coast, is causing enormous stress on the critters, because they have fewer and fewer places to live, rest, nest and thrive, due to our enormous footprint on this Earth.

Adding 40+ people to this wetland site is only going to cause further degradation to a vital and sensitive environment that could otherwise, with a little effort and dedication, be restored to its natural state. That is such a worthy goal!

Under CEQA, alternative sites must be considered to reduce the impacts of a project on the environment, even if it is more costly, less convenient and more cumbersome. The City of Eureka chose the Crowley site for the trailer project because the trailers were already there and it was easier than finding a new site for the trailers and moving them to that location. There

are alternative locations for the trailer project that would be less damaging to this wetland habitat environment, but those alternatives were not properly or vigorously evaluated.

I have always looked up to the Coastal Commission, because I feel the agency takes its mission of protecting our coastal resources seriously. However, in this case, I feel that societal pressures to deal with homelessness in coastal California are being prioritized over the protection of our coastal resources; in this case important coastal wetland habitat that has already suffered heavy losses along our coastline.

Please uphold the appeals regarding this project and require the City of Eureka to evaluate alternative locations for this project that are less damaging to the environment. If this project is constructed, it will do permanent damage to vital wetland habitat, as the 30-foot setbacks are wholly inadequate to protect birds and other critters from everyday human activities, including noise and light pollution and impervious surfaces that will lead to more run-off and pollution of the nearby waterways. The birds and critters (especially nocturnal species) need a place of refuge from the intense impacts of humankind.

Please help us save this last bit of our coastal wetlands from inappropriate development and deny staff's recommendation of approval with conditions for this project.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Tays
Arcata, CA
(Coastal Advocate since 2005)