

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

NORTH COAST DISTRICT OFFICE
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W11b

LCP-1-HUM-25-0060-1

(Humboldt County Outdoor Lighting)

February 4, 2026

CORRESPONDENCE



January 23, 2026

California Coastal Commission
455 MARKET STREET, SUITE 300
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2421
Submitted via email to: ExecutiveStaff@coastal.ca.gov, NorthCoast@coastal.ca.gov

Re: Humboldt County Coastal Outdoor Lighting Ordinance – Request for Amendments Prior to Approval

Dear Commissioners:

I submit these comments on behalf of Humboldt Waterkeeper, which works to safeguard coastal resources for the health, enjoyment, and economic strength of the Humboldt Bay community through education, scientific research, and enforcement of laws to fight pollution. We respectfully request the California Coastal Commission require specific amendments to Humboldt County's proposed Coastal Outdoor Lighting Ordinance before approval. We commend the County's planning staff for their thoughtful integration of Dark Sky International's Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting into this ordinance, which demonstrates a meaningful commitment to addressing light pollution impacts. To further strengthen these protections for coastal resources and sensitive wildlife, we recommend the following amendments.

Universal Correlated Color Temperature Limit of 2,700 K

We urge the Commission to require a correlated color temperature (CCT) limit of 2,700 K for all outdoor lighting in the coastal zone. This standard is particularly essential for commercial and industrial properties, which typically operate more lights for longer durations than residential areas and are frequently located near sensitive coastal habitats.

The scientific basis for this requirement is well-established for human health impacts. Blue light is known to suppress melatonin production in humans and animals, disrupting circadian rhythms essential to healthy sleep cycles (Forschungsverbund Berlin, 2019). Blue light wavelengths have been shown to alter the timing of plant flowering cycles, disrupting the phenology of



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coastal vegetation (Brelsford & Robson, 2018). Additionally, shorter wavelengths on the blue spectrum contribute disproportionately to sky glow, reflecting off surfaces and degrading night sky quality even from full-cutoff fixtures (Gallaway, 2010).

The Humboldt County Planning Commission explicitly directed staff to include a universal CCT limit in this ordinance. At the March 30, 2025 Planning Commission meeting, Commissioner Jerome Qiriazzi requested that a 2,700 K color temperature limit be "put into the general regulations section that applies to everything". This recommendation received support from Commissioner Lorna McFarlane, a Senior Environmental Scientist with CalTrans and former State Water Board scientist.

However, at the May 15, 2024 reading, color temperature limits appeared only within two narrow contexts: an exemption for transparent shielding materials and string light provisions. We recognize that complex ordinances involve numerous technical details and stakeholder comments, and respectfully bring this gap to the Coastal Commission's attention. The 2,700 K standard is not arbitrary—it reflects best practices in Dark Sky International's Municipal Ordinance Template, developed collaboratively by engineers, scientists, and legal experts specifically to balance human needs with ecological protection.

Additional Concerns

Section 105.1.4.5 - Motion Detector Lighting Exemption

The current exemption for motion-activated lighting contains no requirements for maximum lumens, shielding, or downward direction. This creates a significant loophole allowing intense, unshielded lighting that defeats the ordinance's protective intent.

Section 105.1.6 - Lighting for Ag/Commercial/Industrial Use

Agricultural properties in the coastal zone tend to contain or adjoin sensitive habitats and wildlife corridors. Subjecting these areas to commercial lighting standards without ecological consideration could inadvertently authorize lighting incompatible with habitat protection.

Conclusion

The coastal zone's ecological resources warrant robust protection from lighting impacts. The Humboldt County Planning Commission recognized this and provided clear direction for a universal 2,700 K color temperature standard. We respectfully request that the Coastal Commission require these amendments—particularly the universal CCT limit—prior to certifying this ordinance as part of Humboldt County's Local Coastal Program.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and your continued protection of California's coastal resources.

Sincerely,

Sylvia van Royen
GIS & Policy Analyst
Humboldt Waterkeeper

References

Brelsford, C.C. and Robson, T.M. Blue light advances bud burst in branches of three deciduous tree species under short-day conditions. **Trees**, 32(4):1157–1164, March 2018. doi: 10.1007/s00468-018-1684-1.

Galloway, T. On Light Pollution, Passive Pleasures, and the Instrumental Value of Beauty. **Journal of Economic Issues**, Vol. XLIV No. 1, March 2010. DOI 10.2753/JEI0021-3624440104.

Forschungsverbund Berlin. (2019, December 20). Light pollution can suppress melatonin production in humans and animals. ScienceDaily. Retrieved January 22, 2026 from www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/12/191219111431.htm

Humboldt County Planning Commission Meeting, March 30 2025. Commissioner Qiriazhi. (video timestamp 2h:30m) <https://humboldt.granicus.com/player/clip/2062>

From: [Bobbi Bartscht](#)
To: [NorthCoast@Coastal](#)
Subject: Agenda item W11bO
Date: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 2:03:59 PM

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Ladies and gentlemen:

On August 19, 2025, we appeared before the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors regarding LCP-1-HUM-25-0060-1 (Outdoor Lighting Regulations).

We were there to bring attention to an outdoor lighting situation on Myrtle Avenue at Park Street created by Wright Automotive.

At twilight and after dark, if you are driving east on Myrtle Avenue and are turning left onto Park Street, there is an extremely bright security light that blinds the driver to any foot traffic crossing Park Street or bicyclists travelling westbound on Myrtle Avenue.

We are very much concerned that someone will be hit by a vehicle whose driver cannot see them because of the

serious glare caused by this extremely bright security light.

Per the sheriff's department, my sister contacted the owner of Wright Automotive, who cited the light was there for theft prevention, which is a major concern for his business.

As the days continue to get shorter, this extremely bright security light becomes more of an issue for families attending events at Lafayette School and/or residents or visitors going to the Coast Guard housing.

When you are turning right onto Park Street, there is no problem because of where the light is mounted.

Thank you for listening to this major concern of ours.

Respectfully,

Phyllis Coy

Elaine Bartscht

[end of original presentation]

Since the original presentation, two

additional security lights have been added to the office building. One light faces directly onto Myrtle Avenue, the second light faces diagonally onto Park Street.

On September 24, 2025, we also filed a "complaint of possible code violation form" with Humboldt County Planning and Building Department.

We look forward to your response.
Sincerely,

Phyllis Coy
Bartscht

Elaine

humsqueez44@yahoo.com