



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 3/19/2026

File #: 26-195

To: Planning Commission

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Consent

SUBJECT:

Monument Quarry CUP/SMP Mining Reapproval
Assessor Parcel Numbers (APN) 205-031-049
Record No.: PLN-2025-19450
Rio Del area

A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a surface mining operation known as the Monument Quarry for the extraction of gravel from the quarry for use on County roads, for emergency and maintenance activities in the region. The proposed extraction is a total of 35,000 cubic yards over the life of the permit. Mining may consist of a single 25,000 cubic yard extraction, or smaller extractions, as frequently as annually, totaling 35,000 cubic yards over 15 years. This is a request for re-approval of the permit that has recently expired. If re-approved, the Conditional Use Surface Mining Permit, Reclamation Plan and a review of financial assurances for an existing surface mining operation known as the Monument Quarry would amount to a permit term of 15-years.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt the resolution, (Attachment 1) which does the following:
 - a. Finds the Planning Commission has considered the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) previously adopted for the Monument Quarry reapproval pursuant to Section 15164 of the CEQA guidelines and that no further environmental review is required; and
 - b. Makes all of the required findings for approving the Conditional Use/Surface Mining Permits and Reclamation Plan PLN-2025-19450, based on the substantial evidence submitted; and
 - c. Approves the Conditional Use/Surface Mining Permit and Reclamation Plan.

DISCUSSION:

Project Location: The project site is located in the Rio Dell area, on both sides of Monument Road, approximately two miles southwest of the town of Rio Dell, on the property known to be in Section 13, Township 1 North, Range 1 West, Humboldt Meridian.

Present General Plan Land Use Designation: Agriculture General (AG) and Timber (T). Slope Stability: Moderate Instability (2)

Present Zoning: Agriculture Exclusive (AE), Special Building Site (B) and Timber Production Zone (TPZ). (AE-B-5(160); TPZ)

Environmental Review: A Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted with the reapproval and modification of the quarry on January 6th, 2011. No further environmental review is required as no changes to the mining operation are proposed as part of this reapproval.

State Appeal: Project is NOT appealable to the California Coastal Commission

Major Concerns: None

Monitoring Required: Annual Compliance Monitoring

Executive Summary: The project is for consideration of the re-approval of a Conditional Use Surface Mining Permit, the re-approval of the Reclamation Plan and a review of financial assurances for an existing surface mining operation known as the Monument Quarry with a 15-year permit term. The material extracted from the quarry would be utilized on County roads, for emergency and maintenance activities in the region. The proposed extraction is a total of 35,000 cubic yards over the life of the permit. Mining may consist of a single 25,000 cubic yard extraction, or smaller extractions, as frequently as annually, totaling 35,000 cubic yards over 15 years. This is a re-approval of CUP-10-11/SMP-10-04 that has expired. This mine has been infrequently used, and re-approval would authorize the original entitlement of up to 35,000 cubic yards as contemplated in the 2011 permit modification. No additional mining beyond that considered in 2011 is proposed.

The quarry has been utilized since 1955 by the Humboldt County Department of Public Works for road maintenance projects in the area. Mining operations were permitted in 1995 for the annual extraction of 60,000 cubic yards of aggregate rock. The site contains mostly mudstone, siltstone and sandstone. Mining activities include extraction, crushing, sorting, stockpiling, re-vegetation and annual and final reclamation. Extraction of rock from the quarry face is accomplished by ripping and breaking up the rock with a bulldozer and/or excavator. Small-scale separation charges may be performed. Equipment also includes crawler tractor, a portable crusher unit, front-end loader and dump truck.

Once crushing activities are completed, the crusher assembly will be dismantled and removed from the area. Crushed, sorted rock will then be stockpiled onsite and will later be utilized for road maintenance and winter storm damage repair projects. No permanent or semi-permanent facilities have been constructed at the quarry, and none are planned or required. Activity in the quarry will continue to be intermittent. Project frequency of operation is expected to be several times a year for periods ranging from a few days to a few weeks; duration and intensity of activities depend on demand. Final reclamation includes final grading, drainage improvements, restoration of surface soils and revegetation to reclaim the land consistent with agriculture and timber harvesting.

Biological Resources: The quarry site lies in an area comprised of a mix of open prairie and second-growth redwood forest. The dominant tree species are Coast Redwood, Douglas fir and red alder. The quarry site contains no wetlands or riparian vegetation listed as threatened or endangered. The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) contains records for eight (8) sensitive species and one (1) lichen species as ranked by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The working site is unvegetated; the site only contains habitat for one (1) of the sensitive species, although habitat for all eight and the lichen can be found in the vicinity of the project. A botanical survey of the quarry and the surrounding area were performed, and the results were submitted as an attachment to the reclamation plan. There was no special status species found during the survey.

The proposed activity will include the retreat of the working face to the south approximately sixty (60) feet and may disturb the top of the quarry during excavation of the face. This area includes habitat for the Siskiyou Checkerbloom. Siskiyou Checkerbloom has not been documented within the project area; however, Siskiyou checkerbloom has been documented 3.45 miles southwest of the project area. There is minimal topsoil on this hilltop, as was the case when the original permit was issued. Activities also do not include major vegetation removal. Habitat disturbance will be temporary and final reclamation will restore the area to prior conditions.

The project vicinity contains habitat for owls and murrelets. There is no marbled murrelet habitat in the project area. The California Department of Fish & Game Biogeographic Information Systems (BIOS) contains one recorded marbled murrelet occurrence 1.0-mile radius of the site. BIOS contains four (4) records of northern spotted owl occurrences within a 1.0-mile radius of the project area. The impact on the northern spotted owls within the project vicinity will be less than significant because they are further than one-half mile away and the pit will be operated after their breeding season ends. No occurrences have been reported in the immediate vicinity of the project. The project does not involve removal of large trees and will not affect owl or murrelet habitat. It is unlikely that owls and/or murrelets would be present at the quarry site as the site is located along Monument Road which is subject to intermittent disturbance from vehicular traffic. The project area is comparatively minor in scale. This area will continue to support wildlife and vegetation. A referral was sent to California Department of Fish and Wildlife, but no response was received regarding this project.

Noise: Ambient noise levels in the quarry vicinity range from 30 to 65 dBA, and result from wind, birds, livestock, and vehicular traffic (Jake Brakes) on Monument Road. Noise contribution from quarry activities is in the low-80s dBA range, which is typical for this type of activity, with the loudest noise coming from equipment backup horns, dump truck tailgates, and the crusher.

Access: The access road leading into the quarry is approximately 150 ft in length and 20 ft wide. The road surface is at a $\pm 8\%$ grade for most of its length and is surfaced with hard-packed shale. The road will be wetted during the hours of operation to enhance surface armoring and to minimize the accumulation of dust since fine particulate on gravel roads contributes to wind erosion and offsite sediment discharge during first of the season storm events. The road is gated and locked when the site is not in use. Line of sight exists along the short roadway when traveling in either direction.

General Plan/Zoning: The property is designated as Timber (T) in the Humboldt County General Plan. Primary uses include the growing and harvesting of timber and timber production facilities, including portable processing equipment. Surface mining is not specifically identified as a primary and compatible use. However, in previous project reviews, the County has found surface mining to be a compatible temporary use. The site was originally permitted in 1995, when the County of Humboldt permitted the site, however, the quarry has been used for road maintenance activities in the area prior to 1995. The acreage to be utilized will eventually be reclaimed and reverted to land use consistent with the land designation.

Geologic Suitability: The project site is in an area rated "moderate instability". The mining operation is required to comply with guidelines and requirements established by the California Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) and the Office of Mine Reclamation (OMR).

Security and Safety:

Traffic control will consist of placing warning signs along Monument Road in both directions from the quarry access road. It will not be necessary to detour or otherwise restrict traffic. Minor traffic delays may occur when vehicles encounter trucks leaving or entering the quarry. Incidental delays will be temporary, ending when extraction and processing activities are completed and trucks/equipment are removed from the site.

All fueling, lubing, and equipment maintenance will be performed in a responsible manner. The designated staging/storage area for equipment, fuels, lubricants, and solvents related to quarrying activities will be restricted to a single location within the quarry site. If leaks or spills occur in the area of operation during any extraction, processing, or stockpiling activities, they will be controlled immediately. All contaminated soil will be recovered from the site and stored in DOT approved containment vessels. All stored contaminated/hazardous material will be removed in a timely manner and disposed of at an approved disposal facility.

Potential impacts off-site include increased truck traffic, wildfire hazard, noise, and dust. Traffic

generated by this project, as discussed within this report, will occur intermittently, and will not significantly change the current level of traffic. This project is located in a high wildfire hazard area. Though operations require fuel for equipment and explosives, standards of operation will minimize any potential impacts from this project. Most activities will be occurring more than 50 feet from retained mature vegetation. Minimal fuel will be stored on-site; fuel will generally be transported and dispensed from pick-up trucks equipped for such a purpose. Material will be adequately wetted during active periods.

Tribal Consultation: Archaeological site maps included in the Environmental Data Bank located at the Natural Resource Division of HCPW indicate that there are no known or recorded archaeological resources or historical sites at the quarry or in the vicinity. Referral requests were sent to the Northwest Information Center, the Wiyot Tribe, and the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria. A response was received from the NWIC and Bear River Band requesting that the standard inadvertent archaeological discovery protocols be in place for any ground disturbing activities of the proposed project. An informational note has been included with the Conditions of Approval indicating the steps to be taken should cultural resources and/or human remains be discovered during ground disturbing activities.

Environmental Review: A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was adopted on March 15, 2011. No changes to the operation from that considered under this MND are proposed.

Reclamation Plan: A reclamation plan was previously approved for the end of use would remain in effect. There are no changes to the mining operation, permit boundary, extraction volumes, nor to the adopted end use. Annual Winterization will occur after each mining season. The quarry would be subject to the original conditions of approval, and those that were added during the last permit reapproval in 2011 and any additional conditions added for the current reapproval.

Mining Permit Reapproval Standards: Because this permit had expired, the findings for approval are those required for approval of new surface mining operations. In addition to the required findings for all permits (Section 312-17.1), the County mining ordinance provides that mining permits may be approved for a period up to 15 years. Under §391-4(3) of the Code, the permit may be reapproved by the Planning Commission on the following bases:

1. The application and supporting documents adequately describe the proposed surface mining operation, and adequate measures are incorporated to mitigate the probable or known significant environmental effects which have been or may be caused by the proposed operation. The project has been reviewed by County Staff and outside agencies which have confirmed the operation has been designed to mitigate any environmental or health and safety concerns. The operation is inspected annually by County Planning staff for compliance with the Reclamation Plan and permit conditions. The last inspection report from November 2024 shows no violations or other issues.

2. The proposed use and location of the surface mining operation is properly located in accordance with the General Plan and any relevant element thereof to the community as a whole, and to other land uses in the vicinity. The location of the mining operation occurs in Agriculture General and Timber zone which is allowable with a Conditional Use Permit under the Current General Plan. Affected agencies have reviewed the proposal and only one new condition of approval is proposed. There are no other known changes in the law or circumstances that warrant additions or changes to conditions that staff are aware of.
3. If the Planning Commission determines that the above findings cannot be made, it shall state and deny the application. The project has been in operation for several decades with no noted issues and the Staff does not recommend denial at this time.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The project was referred to responsible agencies and all responding agencies have either responded with no comment or recommended approval or conditional approval.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Planning Commission could elect not to approve the reapproval. This alternative is not recommended as the mining operation has been operated and maintained in good standing and no changes from the original approval are proposed.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
 - A. Conditions of Approval
 - B. Monument Quarry Reclamation Plan (2025)
 - C. Site Plan
2. Monument Quarry Mitigated Negative Declaration (2011)
3. Monument Quarry Plan of Operations (2025)
4. Referrals
 - A. Public Works Land Use Response

Applicant:

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Owner:

File #: 26-195

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Agent:

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Please contact Michael Kein, Planner, at MKein2@co.humboldt.ca.us or 707-268-3739 if you have questions about this item.