

**RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**

Resolution Number 26-

Record Number PLN-2025-19187

Assessor Parcel Numbers (APNs): 311-041-034 and 311-041-036

Making the required findings for certifying compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and recommends that the Planning Commission approve the Westfall General Plan Amendment and Zone Reclassification

WHEREAS, on December 31, 2008, the Board of Supervisors recorded a Resolution (AGP #08-109) establishing the approximately 77-acre Westfall Agricultural Preserve; and

WHEREAS, Save the Redwoods League purchased the Westfall Agricultural Preserve (8224 Elk River Road, Eureka) in 2016, in collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), with the goal of transferring the property to the adjacent 7,472-acre Headwaters Forest Reserve to enhance public access opportunities and habitat conservation; and

WHEREAS, the Westfall property contains an approximately 1,200 square foot house and small barn, both of which have been maintained and cared for during Save the Redwoods League's ownership through the employment of live-in caretakers. The BLM has an agency-wide policy of not accepting property that contains improvements. Due to this fact, removing the house from the Save the Redwoods League and BLM transaction is a requirement. Respecting the County's desire to preserve its housing stock, Save the Redwoods League and BLM have searched for alternatives to demolishing the house and barn; and

WHEREAS, the parties have engaged with the Humboldt County Planning and Building Department, County Counsel and State Department of Conservation to arrive at the solution of creating a separate parcel for the house, nearby barn, and its surrounding land. BLM would then be able to acquire the remaining vacant approximately 73-acre property, and the remaining 4.36-acre parcel with house and barn would subsequently be sold to a private buyer; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors reviewed a petition on March 24, 2026, and accepted a General Plan Amendment (GPA) and Zone Reclassification (ZR) on a 4.36-acre portion of the larger approximately 77-acre parcel. The remaining approximately 73-acres will be dedicated to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to be added to public lands adjacent to the Headwaters Forest Reserve for conservation.

WHEREAS, the County Planning Division, as the lead agency, found the project exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15305(a) of the CEQA Guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the Humboldt County Planning Commission held a duly-noticed public hearing on **April 16, 2026**; reviewed, considered, and discussed the application for a General Plan Amendment and Zone Reclassification on a 4.36-acre portion of the Westfall property.

Now, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Planning Commission makes all the following findings:

- 1. FINDING:** **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** A General Plan Amendment (GPA) and Zone Reclassification (ZR) on a 4.36-acre portion of the approximately 77-acre Westfall Agricultural Preserve property, to change the General Plan Land Use Designation from Residential Agriculture (RA10) to Residential Agriculture (RA4) and to change the zoning from Agriculture Exclusive (AE) to Agriculture General (AG-B-5(4)). The 4.36-acre proposed parcel is developed with an existing 1,200 square foot single-family residence and barn, which would be retained as housing stock and subsequently sold to a private buyer. The remaining approximately 73-acres would be dedicated to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to be added to public lands adjacent to the Headwaters Forest Reserve for conservation and public access purposes. If approved, immediate cancellation of the existing Williamson Act Contract on the 4.36-acre parcel would occur as part of the GPA and ZR.

EVIDENCE: a) Project File: PLN-2025-19187

- 2. FINDING:** **CEQA.** The requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act have been complied with. The project is exempt from environmental review per Section 15305- Minor alterations in land use limitations of the California Government Code.

EVIDENCE: a) Section 15305 of the CEQA Guidelines allows minor alterations in land use limitations in areas with an average slope of less than 20%. Slopes within this area are mapped on the County’s GIS as under 15% slopes.

GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT (GPA)

- 3. FINDING:** The proposed revision is in the public interest.

EVIDENCE: a) Protecting contiguous open space for public access and habitat

conservation and retaining existing housing is in the public interest. By changing the land use designation from RA10 to RA4, the proposed 4.36-acre parcel would be consistent with the 4-acre minimum parcel size, which would maintain the existing character of the area. Should the 4.36-acre developed parcel not be separated from the 77-acre Agricultural Preserve, the structures would need to be destroyed. This would result in the loss of a residential unit which would be detrimental to a housing supply shortage and property tax revenue. It is in the public interest to preserve existing housing stock when feasible. This action will enable Save the Redwoods to retain the residence as a separate parcel and convey the remainder of the property to BLM to support habitat conservation and public access.

4. FINDING: The proposed revision is consistent with the Guiding Principles in Section 1.4 of the Humboldt County General Plan.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) The proposed General Plan Amendment and Zone Reclassification is consistent with the Guiding Principles of the County General Plan. The existing land use designation on the proposed 4.36-acre parcel is Residential Agriculture with a minimum parcel size of 10-acres (RA10) and is proposed to change to Residential Agriculture with 4-acre minimum parcel size (RA4). The change in land use designation would allow a smaller parcel to be retained and held privately after a conveyance of all other land to the BLM. This will maintain the existing character of the area and preserve a housing unit. The Guiding Principles of the General Plan focus on preserving the County's unique character and quality of life, specifically focusing on preserving and enhancing the diverse character of Humboldt County (Guiding Principle 2).
 - b) By accepting the amendment on a 4.36-acre portion of the larger 77-acre Westfall Agricultural Preserve, the house will be retained, and the remaining 73-acre portion will be dedicated to the BLM. The existing 1,200 square foot residence, which was built in 1923, contributes to the unique and diverse character of the area and adds value to existing housing stock. Promoting and facilitating the creation of affordable housing opportunities for current and future demands for all income levels is also one of

the Guiding Principles (Guiding Principle 3). This will preserve and enhance the diverse character of Humboldt County.

- c) Encouraging, incentivizing and supporting compatible uses on resource lands is further supporting the Guiding Principles (Guiding Principle 6). As identified within the Public Lands Section of the General Plan, the Headwaters Forest is one of the four most significant publicly owned areas within Humboldt County. The BLM owns multiple properties along the Elk River, adjacent and contiguous to the subject property, and by acquiring the property, conservation and public access will expand along this water way. Maximizing the long-term public and economic benefits from biological resources within the county by facilitating the protection of resource lands is consistent with the Guiding Principles. Approving the amendment to change the Land Use Designation and zoning of the 4.36-acre property will retain the residence as a separate legal parcel and allow the remainder of the property to be conveyed to BLM. The conveyance will be consistent with the comprehensive view of the General Plan.

5. FINDING: The proposed revision is applicable to the goals of the Plan.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) The goal of the Humboldt County General Plan is to establish the kinds, locations, and intensities of land uses as well as applicable resource protection and development policies. By changing the General Plan Land Use Designation from Residential Agriculture (RA10) to Residential Agriculture (RA4), the proposed 4.36-acre parcel will retain existing housing and facilitate the transfer of the remaining land to the BLM for habitat preservation and public access, which is consistent with the comprehensive view of the General Plan.
 - b) The Housing Element identifies existing and projected housing needs and establishes goals, policies and standards to implement the preservation, improvement and development of housing. Goal number 2 of the General Plan Housing Element focuses on providing an adequate supply of all types of housing, affordable for all income levels in all areas of the County. Approving the amendment to change the Land Use Designation and zoning of the 4.36-acre property will retain the residence as

a separate legal parcel and allow the remainder of the property to be conveyed to BLM.

- c) Within the Conservation and Open Space Element Biological Resources section of the General Plan, policy number BR-G3, fish and wildlife habitats should also be protected on a sustainable basis to generate long-term public, economic, and environmental benefits. As identified within the Public Lands Section of the General Plan, the Headwaters Forest is one of the four most significant publicly owned areas within Humboldt County. Maximizing the long-term public and economic benefits from biological resources within the county by maintaining and restoring fish and wildlife habitats is a core focus of the General Plan.

ZONE RECLASSIFICATION (ZR)

6. FINDING: The proposed project is in the public interest.

EVIDENCE: a) The proposed approximately 73-acres of land being transferred to BLM for public access and habitat conservation purposes as well as the 4.36-acre portion to be retained for a residence and barn, is in the public's interest. Existing zoning is Agriculture Exclusive (AE) and proposed zoning is Agriculture General (AG-B-5(4)). Minimum parcel size in the AE zoning district is 60-acres. By changing the zoning to AG-B-5(4), minimum parcel size would change to 4-acres. The proposed Zone Reclassification on the 4.36-acre portion of the 77-acre Westfall Agricultural Preserve will help facilitate the transfer of the remaining approximately 73-acres of land to BLM to be added to the Headwaters Forest Reserve for public access and habitat conservation purposes. Should the 4.36-acre developed parcel not be separated from the 77-acre Agricultural Preserve, the structures would need to be destroyed. This would result in the loss of a residential unit which would be detrimental to a housing supply shortage and property tax revenue. It is in the public interest to preserve existing housing stock when feasible. This action will enable Save the Redwoods to retain the residence as a separate legal parcel and convey the remainder of the property to BLM to support habitat conservation and public access.

7. FINDING: The proposed change is consistent with the General Plan.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) The main objective of the proposed Zone Reclassification (ZR) is to change the existing zoning of Agriculture Exclusive (AE) which has a minimum parcel size of 60-acres, to Agriculture General (AG-B-5(4)) which has a minimum parcel size of 4-acres. The Guiding Principles of the General Plan focus on preserving the County's unique character and quality of life, specifically focusing on preserving and enhancing the diverse character of Humboldt County.
 - b) The Housing Element identifies existing and projected housing needs and establishes goals, policies and standards to implement the preservation, improvement and development of housing. Goal number 2 of the General Plan Housing Element focuses on providing an adequate supply of all types of housing, affordable for all income levels in all areas of the County. Destroying the residence would not support this Goal.
 - c) Within the Conservation and Open Space Element Biological Resources section of the General Plan, policy number BR-G3, fish and wildlife habitats should also be protected on a sustainable basis to generate long-term public, economic, and environmental benefits. As identified within the Public Lands Section of the General Plan, the Headwaters Forest is one of the four most significant publicly owned areas within Humboldt County. Maximizing the long-term public and economic benefits from biological resources within the county by maintaining and restoring fish and wildlife habitats is a core focus of the General Plan. The BLM owns multiple properties along the Elk River, adjacent and contiguous to the subject property, and by acquiring the property, conservation and public access will expand along this water way. By approving the ZR, the zoning on the proposed 4.36-acre parcel will be consistent with the size and use to maintain the existing character of the area.

8. FINDING: There is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) The proposed amendment to the zoning on the developed 4.36-acre portion of the 77-acre Westfall Agricultural Preserve, will

help facilitate the transfer of the remaining approximately 73-acres of land to BLM to be added to the Headwaters Forest Reserve for public access and habitat conservation purposes. Should the 4.36-acre parcel not be separated from the 77-acre Agricultural Preserve, the existing residence and barn would need to be destroyed, as the BLM does not acquire land with structures. Allowing the existing residence to remain on the 4.36-acre parcel, and dedicating the remaining 73-acres to the BLM is in the public interest and there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.

9. FINDING:

The proposed development does not reduce the residential density for any parcel below that utilized by the Department of Housing and Community Development in determining compliance with housing element law unless the following written findings are made supported by substantial evidence: 1) the reduction is consistent with the adopted general plan including the housing element; and 2) the remaining sites identified in the housing element are adequate to accommodate the County share of the regional housing need; and 3) the property contains insurmountable physical or environmental limitations and clustering of residential units on the developable portions of the site has been maximized.

EVIDENCE:

- a) The proposed General Plan Amendment and Zone Reclassification on a 4.36-acre portion of the approximately 77-acre Westfall Agricultural Preserve is intended to protect one unit of housing (with the potential of one additional unit of housing), while promoting habitat conservation and public access on the remaining approximately 73-acres. Should the 4.36-acre developed parcel not be separated from the 77-acre Agricultural Preserve, the structures would need to be destroyed. This would result in the loss of a residential unit which would be detrimental to the housing supply shortage. It is in the public interest to preserve existing housing stock when feasible. This action will enable Save the Redwoods to retain the residence as a separate legal parcel and convey the remainder of the property to BLM.

DECISION

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the above findings and evidence, the Humboldt County Planning Commission does hereby

- Adopt the findings set forth in this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Humboldt:

1. Approve the General Plan Amendment and Zone Reclassification.
2. Adopt Ordinance No. _____ amending Section 311-7 of the Humboldt County Code by reclassifying property in the Elk River area [PLN-2025-19187] so that the Zone Reclassification changes from Agriculture Exclusive (AE) to Agriculture General (AG-B-5(4)).
3. Approve the partial cancellation of the Westfall Agricultural Preserve Williamson Act Contract.
4. Direct the Planning Staff to prepare and file a Notice of Exemption with the County Clerk and Office of Planning and Research.

Adopted after review and consideration of all the evidence on **April 16, 2026.**

The motion was made by COMMISSIONER _____ and seconded by COMMISSIONER _____ and the following vote:

AYES: Commissioners:
 NOES: Commissioners:
 ABSTAIN: Commissioners:
 ABSENT: Commissioners:
 DECISION:

I, John H. Ford, Secretary to the Planning Commission of the County of Humboldt, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct record of the action taken on the above-entitled matter by said Commission at a meeting held on the date noted above.

 John H. Ford, Director
 Planning and Building Department