



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 12/16/2025

File #: 25-1368

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Public Hearing

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Satterlee General Plan Amendment, Zone Reclassification and Agricultural Preserve Addition

Assessor Parcel Numbers: 214-113-003, 214-254-004, 214-254-002, 214-253-002, 214-116-003, 214-116-004, 214-111-003, 214-221-001, 214-221-008, 214-153-003, 214-155-001, 214-245-005, 214-245-004, 214-245-003, 214-246-002, 216-301-006, 216-301-005, 216-301-011 and 216-186-002

A General Plan Amendment (GPA), Zone Reclassification (ZR) and Addition to an Existing Agricultural Preserve and Williamson Act Contract. The GPA is Requested on Four APNs to Change the Land Use Designation from Residential Agriculture (RA) and Commercial Recreation (CR) to Timberlands (T) and Agriculture Grazing (AG). The ZR is Requested on 16 APNs that will Result in Approximately 1,241-acres Rezoned to Timberland Production (TPZ) from Agriculture Exclusive (AE), Unclassified (U) and Agriculture General (AG). One APN, 216-186-002, is a 52-Acre Parcel that is Proposed to be Added to the Existing Fort Seward Ranch Agricultural Preserve Class B Williamson Act Contract. The General Plan Amendment, Zone Reclassification and Addition to the Agricultural Preserve Williamson Act Contract are Requested to Afford the Landowner the Reduced Tax Benefit of TPZ-Zoned Property and to Maintain Large-Scale Vacant Land for Commercial Timber Production and Open Space

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the resolution (Attachment 1) which does the following:
 - a. Make all of the required findings for approval based on evidence in the staff report; and
 - b. Approve the General Plan Amendment.
 - c. Approve the addition of APN 216-186-002 into the Fort Seward Class B Williamson Act Agricultural Preserve.
2. Adopt the ordinance (Attachment 2) to reclassify the zoning of the subject properties.
3. Adopt the resolution to Amend the Fort Seward Ranch Agricultural Preserve Boundaries (Attachment 4).
4. Direct the Chair to execute the Amended Land Conservation Contract (Attachment 4A).
5. Direct the Clerk of the Board to give notice of the decision to Peggy Satterlee, the Planning Department, and any other interested party.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Sustainable Natural Resources & Infrastructure Stewardship

Strategic Plan Category: 5005 - Implement landscape stewardship through the General Plan

DISCUSSION:

Executive Summary: A General Plan Amendment (GPA), Zone Reclassification (ZR) and Agricultural Preserve Class B Williamson Act Contract addition involving 17 legal parcels, which include 19 APNs, owned by the Satterlee family. The General Plan Amendment is requested for four APNs to change the parcels from Residential Agriculture (RA) and Commercial Recreation (CR) to Timberlands (T) and Agriculture Grazing (AG). The proposed rezone is requested on 16 of the APNs that will have approximately 1,241 acres rezoned to Timberland Production (TPZ) from Agriculture Exclusive (AE), Unclassified (U) and Agriculture General (AG). One APN, 216-186-002, is a 52-acre parcel that is proposed to be added to the existing Fort Seward Ranch Agricultural Preserve Class B Williamson Act Contract. The proposed addition was brought before the Williamson Act Advisory Committee on July 31, 2025, and the addition was recommended. The Forestry Review Committee reviewed the proposed zone reclassification and the supporting materials on Feb. 28, 2025, and recommended approval by a vote of 7-0 (Attachment 10). The General Plan Amendment, Zone Reclassification and Agricultural Preserve parcel addition are all requested to afford the landowner the Agricultural Preserve reduced tax benefit and to maintain large-scale vacant land for commercial timber production, cattle management and open space for preserving forest ecosystems. A petition to change the General Plan designation and Zone Reclassification was accepted by the Board of Supervisors on July 8, 2025 (PLN-2025-19234). The Planning Commission reviewed and recommended the Board of Supervisors approve the project at the hearing of Oct. 2, 2025.

A review of creation documents to determine the legal status of the subject parcels found that all involved parcels have been created in compliance with the Subdivision Map Act.

Location: The 17 legal parcels are located in Southern Humboldt between the area east of Highway 101 and west and northwest of Alderpoint in the Fort Seward area. (Attachment 5).

General Plan Amendment Required Findings and Criteria: Section G-P8 of the Humboldt County General Plan, states amendments may be approved only if the following findings are made:

1. Proposed revision is in the public interest.
2. Proposed revision is consistent with the Guiding Principles in Section 1.4.
3. Proposed revision is applicable with the goals of the Plan.

The General Plan Amendment is requested for four APNs to change the parcels from Residential Agriculture (RA) and Commercial Recreation (CR) to Timberlands (T) and Agriculture Grazing (AG). The General Plan Amendment aligns with the goals, policies and standards of the Guiding Principles (Section 1.4 in the General Plan) and Forest Resources (Section 4.6 in the General Plan). The Guiding Principles provide a framework to encourage, incentivize and support agriculture, timber ecosystem services and compatible uses on resource lands. The Forest Resource section supports the conservation, development and utilization of forest resources and its policies are consistent with the California Timberland Productivity Act. Protecting forest and agricultural lands for continued timber, agricultural production and open space is in the public interest.

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. The proposed General Plan Amendment will change the land use designations of 4 APNs from Residential Agriculture and Commercial Recreation to Timberland and Agriculture Grazing. Since the parcels are adjacent and contiguous to the existing over 24,000-acre Fort Seward Ranch, the addition of these lands to agricultural activities supports resource protection and the development policies. No additional changes are proposed, and no development is associated with the proposal, therefore the proposed project is consistent with the applicable goals of the Plan.

Zone Reclassification Required Findings for all Amendments: Section 312-50 of the Humboldt County Code Zoning Regulations states amendments may be approved only if the following findings are made:

1. The amendment is in the public interest;
2. The amendment is consistent with the County General Plan; and
3. The amendment 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.

The proposed Zone Reclassification is in the public interest and is consistent with the County General Plan. The proposed rezone is requested on 16 of the APNs that will have approximately 1,241 acres rezoned to Timberland Production (TPZ) from Agriculture Exclusive (AE), Unclassified (U) and Agriculture General (AG). The parcels are all adjacent to existing Timberland (T) and Agricultural

Grazing (AG) parcels under the same ownership and within the existing over 24,000-acre Fort Seward Ranch.

All the subject parcels are primarily timbered with Douglas Fir, Black Oak, White Oak and grassland for cattle management. The General Plan provides a framework for the overall objectives and intended protection of community values to preserve the county's unique character and quality of life. Protecting forest and agricultural lands for continued timber and agricultural production by way of appropriately balancing regulations and incentives is consistent with the project. The Zone Reclassification aligns with the goals, policies and standards of the Guiding Principles (Section 1.4 in the General Plan) and Forest Resources (Section 4.6 in the General Plan). The Guiding Principles encourage, incentivize and support agriculture, timber ecosystem services and compatible uses on resource lands. The Forest Resource section supports the conservation, development and utilization of forest resources and its policies are consistent with the California Timberland Productivity Act. Protecting forest and agricultural lands for continued timber, agricultural production and open space is in the public interest.

Although two of the parcels were identified in the 2019 Housing Inventory, the location of the two parcels is more appropriately sited for agriculture. The two parcels that were identified in the 2019 Housing Inventory were part of the Above Moderate-Income inventory in the Rural Residential Zoning Group and have the potential to support one housing unit each. APN 216-301-005 is 11.59-acres and APN 216-301-006 is 25.06-acres. Both parcels are undeveloped and vacant and not proximate to public facilities. According to the General Plan, Chapter 8 table 8-5 in the updated 2019 Housing Element, projected fair share housing needs in the Above Moderate-income category are 583 units. In table 8-6, residential land inventory identified within the Above Median-income category (RR, RA and RE Zoning Groups) is 1,116 parcels, with 1,214 potential housing units. This indicates the capacity of the Above Moderate-Income housing inventory is over double the projected need. Should the two parcels be removed from the Above Moderate-Income housing inventory and converted to Agricultural lands, the remaining identified parcels are more than sufficient to meet the target need.

Agricultural Preserve Establishment and Class B Grazing Land Preserve Required Findings: The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, provides the legislative authority and specifies the findings that must be made to establish Agricultural Preserves in section 51200 of the Government Code. Specific requirements for Class B Preserves are outlined within revised guidelines for establishment of Agricultural Preserves in the County of Humboldt. Generally, the following findings must be made to establish Class B Agricultural Preserves:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the Humboldt County General Plan.
2. The land to be included in the agricultural preserve contract is, and will continue to be, used for the purpose of producing agricultural commodities for commercial purposes, and uses compatible with agriculture.
3. The preserve area shall contain not less than 600 acres of land, and no individual lot or parcel of land shall be less than 160 contiguous acres.
4. All land placed into a Class B Grazing Land Preserve and Contract must be zoned Timberland Production Zone (TPZ) or Agriculture Exclusive with a combining zone establishing a 160-acre minimum parcel size (AE-B-5(160)).
5. Land within the preserve shall be non-prime agricultural land of statewide or local significance.

Humboldt County General Plan Agricultural Resources, Chapter 4.5, recognizes the significance of agriculture in Humboldt County. The two goals listed under 4.5.3 include Agricultural Production - economically viable agricultural operations contributing to the growth and stability of the economy and a strong market demand for agricultural lands dedicated to agricultural production. Also, Preservation of Agricultural Lands - agricultural land preserved to the maximum extent possible for continued agricultural use in parcel sizes that support economically feasible agricultural operations. A specific policy, AG-P3, is to "Support the Williamson Act Property Tax Incentive Program" by continuing, enhancing, and growing the County Williamson Act program.

The subject 52-acre parcel that is proposed to be added to the existing Fort Seward Ranch Agricultural Preserve Williamson Act Contract has historically been used for agriculture and timber and was inadvertently left out of the preserve when the preserve was established in 1973. The 52-acre parcel is legally part of a 160-acre parcel as established under the patent parcel Homestead Certificate Number 1854, dated July 13, 1908, and is zoned AE-B-5 (160). The Fort Seward Ranch is approximately 24,000-acres, which is significantly larger than the required 600-acre minimum. All land within the proposed 52-acre parcel to be added into the existing Fort Seward Ranch Agricultural Preserve Class B Williamson Act Contract is non-prime agricultural land.

Public Comment

A letter from a member of the public (Attachment 9) was received opposing the reclassification due to the loss in county tax revenue

that would occur as a result of rezoning AE lands to TPZ. The commentor states that there is no public benefit to rezoning these lands to TPZ. As discussed above, the General Plan supports conservation of forest resources, which this reclassification will help to accomplish. As discussed below, the Assessor estimates an approximately \$9,200 decrease in property tax revenue as a result of the rezone of these lands to TPZ.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Applicant fees.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The administrative cost of the General Plan Amendment and Zone Reclassification does not impact the General Fund. The applicant is responsible for paying all actual costs involved. If the Zone Reclassification is approved, there will be an impact on property tax revenue. The Humboldt County Assessor estimated that the property tax revenue after the rezone would be approximately \$9,200 less per year after the property is rezoned. However, some of that tax revenue would be recouped through the timber yield tax when timber is harvested and sold.

STAFFING IMPACT:

The General Plan Amendment, Zone Reclassification and Agricultural Preserve addition will not have any impact on staffing. Processing these applications has been accomplished with existing staff resources.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The project was referred to responsible agencies and all responding agencies have either recommended approval or conditioned approval.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board of Supervisors could elect not to approve the project. This alternative should be implemented if your Board is unable to make all of the required findings. Planning Division staff is confident that the required findings can be made. Consequently, planning staff does not recommend further consideration of this alternative.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
 - A. General Plan Amendment Site Map
 - B. Zone Reclassification and Williamson Act Contract Parcel Site Map
2. Draft Ordinance for Adoption by the Board of Supervisors
 - Exhibit 2A: Legal Parcel Descriptions
 - Exhibit 2B: Map
3. Post Adoption Summary of Ordinance
4. Resolution to Amend Fort Seward Ranch Preserve Boundaries
 - A. Draft Amended Land Conservation Contract
 - i. Exhibit A- Legal Description
5. Location Map
6. PC Approval Packet October 2, 2025, Staff Report and Attachments
7. Timber Management Guide
8. Draft Certification of Rezoning
9. Public Comment
10. Forestry Review Committee Minutes, February 28, 2025

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: October 2, 2025, Planning Commission
File No.: 25-1176