



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 4/17/2025

File #: 25-540

To: Planning Commission

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Public Hearing

SUBJECT:

Take 3 Presents Conditional Use Permit

Assessor Parcel Numbers (APN's) (Humboldt County) 033-271-007
(Mendocino County) 053-020-011

Record No.: PLN-2024-19010

Cooks Valley area

A Conditional Use Permit is requested to allow annual operation of a special event at the property known as County Line Ranch (formerly Dimmick Ranch). The proposed event involves a private campout with theater, immersive art, amplified and non-amplified music, and other similar activities occurring over a 4-day period. Attendance is expected not to exceed 3000 persons (including staff, volunteers, contractors, vendors, and artists) and it is anticipated that the event will occur each year in June. Conditional Use Permits previously approved by the Planning Commission already allow use of the County Line Ranch property between May and October for parking, camping, and live music from four (4) annual events held by the Northern Nights Music Group and Mateel Community Center, with no two events occurring concurrently. Events in recent years have included the Northern Nights Music Festival, Reggae on the River, and the Summer Arts and Music Festival. If approved, the newest CUP would allow annual operation of a fifth event at the property for a 5-year period (2026-2030).

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt the resolution, (Attachment 1) which does the following:
 - a. Finds that the Planning Commission has considered the previous environmental documents prepared during past permitting, particularly the Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration adopted by the Planning Commission on May 18, 2023; and
 - b. Finds that the Planning Commission has considered the draft Addendum prepared for the project; and

- c. Finds that the proposed project complies with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance; and
- d. Approves the Conditional Use Permit subject to the recommended conditions of approval (Attachment 3A)

DISCUSSION:

Project Location: The project parcel spans the Humboldt/Mendocino county line in the Cooks Valley area, and is located on the east side of State Highway 101 at its intersection with State Highway 271 and Cooks Valley Road, on the property known as 240 Cooks Valley Road.

Present General Plan Land Use Designation: Timberland (T) and Industrial, Resource Related (IR). Density: (T) 40 to 160 acres per unit. (IR) none-specified; Slope Stability: Low and Moderate Instability.

Present Zoning: Timberland Production Zone (TPZ) and Agriculture Exclusive (AE) and - min parcel size 40-160 acres.

State Appeal: The project NOT is not located within the Coastal Zone.

Major Issues: Fire Safety, Water Storage Carrying Capacity

Monitoring Required:

Annual Compliance Monitoring.

Executive Summary:

A Conditional Use Permit is requested to authorize operation of a 4-day camping event known as “501T3 Theater Camp” featuring theater, immersive art, amplified and non-amplified music, and other similar activities. The event is proposed to take place annually from the County Line Ranch (formerly Dimmick Ranch). Located in the Cooks Valley area, the CLR property is approximately 160 acres in size and straddles the Humboldt-Mendocino county line.

Since 2014 the event has been operated from the Saratoga Springs Retreat Center near Upper Lake, CA, and has featured approximately 1400 persons and 636 vehicles in recent years. All attendees camp at the site during the event. The annual event is conducted by the nonprofit organization “Take 3 Presents” who are seeking to shift its operation to the County Line Ranch beginning in 2026. The event is proposed to be operated in a similar fashion to prior years with the principal difference being increasing event attendance to a maximum of 3000 persons (including staff, volunteers, contractors, vendors, and artists). The event is expected to occur each year in June.

Site already authorized for Special Events

The County Line Ranch (CLR) property and nearby properties held by Arthur (French’s Camp) and Bowman (Cooks Valley Campground) have a history of hosting outdoor concerts and similar events with large numbers of attendees, vehicles, and camping. Since 2013 the CLR property has been used

for auxiliary parking and camping during operation of the Northern Nights Music Festival. In recent years the Mateel Community Center have resumed holding events at the site, beginning with the Summer Arts and Music Festival in 2021 and Reggae on the River in 2024. Events operated annually from the site by the Mateel and Northern Nights groups are authorized under separate Conditional Use Permits last approved by the Planning Commission on May 18, 2023. Collectively, they allow up to four large events to be held annually in the Cooks Valley area, which are summarized in the table below. If approved, the Use Permit sought by 501T3 would allow annual operation of a fifth event at the property for a 5-year period (2026-2030).

#	PERMIT	*EVENT	PERMITTEE / OPERATOR	TOTAL # (MAX)			
				DAYS	CAMPING	ATTENDANCE	VEHICLES
1	PLN-2023-18107	Northern Nights	NNMG	4	9000	10,000	4500
2			NNMG	2	4000	5000	2500
3	PLN-2023-18108	Summer Arts & Music Fest.	MCC	2	4500	5000	2500
4		Reggae on the River	MCC	3	4500 ₁ 7000	5000 ₁ 8000	2500 ₁ 4000
MCC – Mateel Community Center NNMG – Northern Nights Music Group, LLC							
* <u>event</u> name omitted where uncertain							
₁ camping, attendance, and parking may be increased where authorized to use Cooks Valley Campground (Bowman) property in Mendocino County							

PLN-2023-18107

The Use Permit held by the Northern Nights Music Group (NNMG) allows operation of a 4-day event and a separate two-day event. The four-day event is known as Northern Nights Music Festival, which has been operating from the site since 2013 and typically occurs during the third week in July. The last time a second NNMG event occurred was in 2016, during the Lumberstruck Music Festival.

PLN-2023-18108

The Use Permit held by the Mateel Community Center (MCC) allows two events to be held annually from the property. Events held in recent years by the Mateel include the 2022 and 2023 Summer Arts & Music Festival and the 2024 Reggae on the River event.

Environmental Review: A Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted by the Commission on May 18, 2023. A project specific Addendum to the previously adopted MND has been prepared for consideration per section 15164 of the State CEQA Guidelines. It can be found under Attachment 3.

The proposal incorporates many of the same pertinent operational commitments and protocols made by similar event uses already conducted from the site. Additionally, the project is designed to comply with the mitigation measures established under the most recent Subsequent MND (SCH #2023040570). For these reasons, subsequent or separate environmental review is not necessary.

Analysis in the Addendum primarily focuses on three areas in the Appendix G CEQA Checklist (Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG), Hydrology & Water Quality, and Transportation) where project-specific impacts could result. In these cases, the Addendum documents how the conditions of

approval and commitments made by the applicant serve to implementation of the programmatic mitigation measures of the MND for current event proposal.

GHG

Implementing measures to reduce project-related GHG is included under Mitigation Measure GHG-1 (GHG Reduction). To comply with this requirement of the MND, the applicant is committing to incorporate a suite of measures designed to lower event-related GHG, including: providing shuttle service for bay area attendees, offering incentives to encourage carpooling and electric vehicles, and use of solar/battery-based generators in place of gas generators. Additionally measures include offering centralized transportation of art projects at no cost to artists, sourcing building materials locally, and several other measures tied to reducing GHG linked to things other than transportation. The greatest reduction in event-related GHG will likely come from increasing use of electric vehicles by attendees.

Hydrology & Water Quality

Carrying Capacity is a principal concern when considering the permitting of large events at a site. The MND includes a number of mitigation measures designed to offset impacts from event-related water use, which primarily occurs during the summer months. A Condition of Approval is included requiring the applicant to install between 20,000 and 40,000 gallons of tanks to increase the sites capacity for potable water storage. This will help ensure that the proposed additional event will not result in additional water withdrawal from the South Fork Eel River during the summer months, and serves to implement Mitigation Measure WQ-2 (offsetting water use). A water storage plan developed by the property owner has been provided and shows the potential for up to 210,000 gallons of water storage.

Transportation - Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)

The Use Permit proposes moving an existing 1400-person event (currently operated at a property in Lake County) to the County Line Ranch and increasing the size of the event to 3,000 attendees.

Using demographic data to calculate vehicle miles traveled by attendees, a total of approximately 207,116 miles of travel occur annually from the 1,400-person event held in Lake County, which represents the environmental baseline for these events. Shifting the event to the County Line Ranch and increasing the attendance to 3,000 persons would result in a total of 374,312 vehicle miles traveled by all attendees. This would be an increase of 167,196 vehicle miles above the environmental baseline for this event.

The applicant is committing to implement a suite of measures designed to lower event-related VMT. They include: providing shuttle service from the bay area (where 90% of attendees live), offering carpooling incentives, providing centralized transportation of art projects at no cost to artists, and sourcing building materials locally. The greatest reduction in event-related VMT is expected to come from centralizing & consolidating transport of art projects to and from the site, followed by introducing carpooling incentives and shuttle service. These commitments by the applicant help to implement Mitigation Measure TRANS-1 (VMT Reduction), which focuses on reducing event-related

VMT below baseline levels. They are further detailed in the Operations Plan and VMT & GHG Analysis. Implementing the suite of measures would reduce VMT by approximately 77,000 miles, resulting in a total of 506,587 miles of VMT for the event. Although approximately 376,594 more miles of travel than what currently occurs at the Lake County site, VMT is reduced by 13.3% by incorporating the mitigation measures.

Site	#	total VMT	add'l VMT	VMT / Attendee	NOTES
Saratoga Springs (env. baseline)	1400	207,116 miles	0	148	current event venue
County Line Ranch (unmitigated)	1400	272,398 miles	65,282 miles	195	CLR +90 miles round trip
County Line Ranch (unmitigated)	3000	583,710 miles	376,594 miles	195	at CLR, unmitigated
County Line Ranch (w/ mitigation)	3000	506,587 miles	299,471 miles	169	13.3% reduction

Permit Conditions and Monitoring:

Many of the recommended Conditions of Approval are similar to ones applied under the permits held by the Mateel and Northern Nights Group, including that the permittee hold a post event community meeting and submit an annual monitoring report for review and consideration by the Planning Commission. During review, the Commission may amend conditions or operational requirements to better address impacts or control public nuisance. Authorized attendance levels may also be adjusted based on annual performance.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Agency Input: The Planning Department has circulated requests for input relative to the request for approval of the tentative map and has received responses recommending approval or conditional approval from the Division of Public Works, Building Division, the Environmental Health Division, Caltrans, and Cal-FIRE. The project was referred to responsible agencies and all responding agencies have either responded with no comment or recommended approval or conditional approval. (Attachment 5)

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Planning Commission could choose to deny the Use Permit request or continue the item further into the future to provide the applicant and staff time to address potential questions or concerns. This alternative should be implemented if your Commission is unable to make one or more of the required findings. Planning Division staff is confident that the required findings can be made. Consequently, staff does not recommend further consideration of this alternative.
2. The Planning Commission could elect to require the applicant to submit further evidence or modify the project. If project revisions could result in potentially significant impacts, additional CEQA analysis and findings may be required. These alternatives could be implemented if the Commission is unable to make all of the required findings. Planning staff believe that the required findings in support of the proposal have been made. Consequently, Planning staff does not recommend further consideration of any alternative.

3. The Planning Commission could also decide the project may have environmental impacts that would require further environmental review pursuant to CEQA. Staff did not identify any potential impacts. Department staff have determined that as designed, the project would not have any potentially significant adverse environmental impacts. However, the Commission may reach a different conclusion. In that case, the Commission should continue the item to a future date at least two months later to give staff the time to conduct further environmental review.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution
 - A. Conditions of Approval
 - B. Operations Plan
 - C. Parking Plan
2. Location Maps
3. CEQA Addendum
4. Applicant's Evidence in Support of the Required Findings
 - A. Portable Toilet Plan
 - B. Engineered Traffic Control Plan
 - C. Water Storage Plan
 - D. VMT & GHG Analysis
5. Referral Agency Comments and Recommendations

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