



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 5/1/2025

File #: 25-582

To: Zoning Administrator
From: Planning and Building Department
Agenda Section: Consent

SUBJECT:

McKnight Gravel Bar Conditional Use Permit, Surface Mining Permit and Reclamation plan renewal.
Assessor Parcel Numbers: (APN) 524-052-002
Record No.: PLN-2025-19156
Willow Creek area

15-year renewal of McKnight Bar SMARA permit, CA Mine ID #91-12-0040, 10,000 cy/yr,
CUP-10-12/SMP-09-03/RP09-03.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt the resolution (Resolution 25-___), (Attachment 1) which does the following:
 - a. Finds that a Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted for the original project and no further environmental review is required; and
 - b. Finds the proposed project complies with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance; and
 - c. Approves the Conditional Use Permit as recommended by staff, subject to the conditions of approval (Attachment 1A).

DISCUSSION:

Project Location:

Located along the Trinity River, River Mile 29.5, on the Salyer 7.5' Quadrangle, within the NE 1/4 of Section 95 T6N, R5E, H.B.&M, the site is accessed for the east side of Highway 299, approximately 1.6 miles southeast of the town of Willow Creek, in Humboldt County (APNs 524-052-02,04). The portion of gravel bar on this property is approximately 2.5 acres, as depicted on the site maps. This site is adjacent to an existing construction/storage yard located uphill from the river on the same parcels.

Present General Plan Land Use Designation:

Agriculture Grazing (AG)

Present Zoning:

RS-T;AG

State Appeal:

Project is NOT appealable to the California Coastal Commission.

Major Concerns:

None identified by referral agencies.

Monitoring Required:

Annual Compliance Monitoring.

Executive Summary:

A renewal of Conditional Use and Surface Mining Permits, approval of Reclamation Plan and review of financial assurance cost estimates for continued in-stream mining operations at the McKnight Bar near Willow Creek. The applicant is proposing continued annual extraction of up to 10,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from the Trinity River. There are no changes to the original approval. The permit term is fifteen years and expires August 21, 2038.

Gravel extraction at the McKnight Bar has been conducted since the 1960s. Permits were issued in 1992 for the extraction of up to 10,000 cubic yards annually from the Trinity River (CUP-31-91/SMR-10-91). The site, as it exists today, was developed in 1992 by Mercer Fraser Company to supplement the growing need for aggregate materials to supply ongoing highway projects on State Highways 299 and 96. The disturbed area is approximately 1.8 acres. Operations include extraction from the exposed bar surface, installation of seasonal bridge crossings and temporary storage of equipment. No stockpiling of materials or processing will occur on site. Site access is via a privately maintained road from Highway 299 down to the river bar.

Extraction may last for as little as a few weeks or for as long as a few months, and the length of extraction is generally dependent upon the area and volume of the extraction, method of extraction, environmental considerations and regulatory process. Extraction of aggregate will be conducted with front-end loaders and scrapers. River run material is loaded directly to dump trucks and transported to the Mercer Fraser Company's stockpile and processing facility located approximately 2 miles from the McKnight Bar, adjacent to Highway 96, just north of the town of Willow Creek. The permitted annual extraction season for this Trinity River site extends from June 1st to October 15th. Operations can be extended beyond October 15th as authorized by regulating agencies. Hours of operations are restricted to daylight hours Monday through Friday, generally 7:30 am to 4:30 pm. Annual extraction volume, location and methods are based on the recommendations by CHERT and other regulatory

agencies.

Water Resources:

No water use is required for extraction activities. Watering for dust control along the haul road may occur in conjunction with trucking of raw materials.

Biological Resources:

The extraction area is located outside of established riparian areas. The flood-washed portion of the bar contains primarily annual vegetation that is similar to vegetation on the adjacent un-mined bars. No established vegetation is proposed to be removed from the stream channel.

Portions of the project area are considered to be environmentally sensitive habitat. Adjacent wildlife habitat outside of the extraction area will be protected from adverse activities, and reclamation activities in the extraction area will provide an end use that provides a compatible habitat for wildlife as surrounding lands. Wildlife and habitat shall be protected in accordance with standards set for rare, threatened or endangered species and species of special concern.

The Department of Fish and Game monitors extraction operations through their Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (LSAA) program and has annual input to the extraction development and site reclamation process. The operator has obtained a multi-year LSAA for extraction operations that addresses species and habitat concerns. Habitat mapping shall be conducted based upon the protocol developed for the Trinity River. A biological survey report shall be submitted to ACE, CHERT, NMFS and DFG by January 15th of each year.

Access:

From Eureka travel northbound along Highway 101 towards Arcata and exit east on Highway 299. Travel east along Highway 299 and proceed through the town of Willow Creek. Approximately 1.3 miles south of the town of Willow Creek the entrance to the site resides behind a locked gate on the east side of Highway 299.

Geologic Suitability:

The project site gravel bars are a depositional feature maintaining a bank-to-bank channel at flows exceeding 40,000+ cfs and have existed somewhat similarly since prior to 1960s. The surrounding upland area consists of bedrock formations with relatively shallow soils. Moderately steep forested hillslopes surround the project site on all sides of the river valley deposits. The meandering stream channel exhibits the characteristics of a mature stream and graded with an accumulation of gravels deposited from annual flooding events.

Environmental Review:

No waste is produced from this type of project. All materials will be trucked off-site. Due to the nature of the activity and the proposed methods of extraction, no waste will be either retained on-site or

disposed of off-site. No discharge from industrial activities into state waters occurs.

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. (Attachment 5)

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Zoning Administrator could elect to add or delete conditions of approval. The Zoning Administrator could deny approval if unable to make all the required findings. Staff has concluded the required findings in support of the proposal can be made. Consequently, staff does not recommend further consideration of these alternatives.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
 - A. Recommended Conditions of Approval
 - B. CUP-10-12/RP-09-03/SMP-09-03 Conditions of Approval
 - C. Reclamation Plan (revised)
 - D. Site Plan
2. Location Maps

Applicant:

Mercer Fraser Company
c/o Mark Benzinger
77 W 2nd street
Eureka CA, 95501

Owner:

Thomas McKnight Trust
PO Box 38
Salyer, CA 95563

Agent:

Please contact Elliott Bowen, Planner, at ebowen@co.humboldt.ca.us or 707-268-3718 if you have questions about this item.