

**RESOLUTION OF THE ZONING ADMINISTRATOR
OF THE COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**

Resolution Number: 26-

Record Number: PLN-2026-19507

Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 308-041-005-000 and 308-061-001-000

Resolution by the Zoning Administrator of the County of Humboldt certifying compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and conditionally approving the Coastal Development Permit, Conditional Use Permit, and Special Permit Modification.

WHEREAS, The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) submitted an application and evidence in support of approving a Modification to a previously issued Coastal Development Permit, Conditional Use Permit, and Special Permit for Design Review; and

WHEREAS, the County Planning Division has reviewed the submitted application and evidence and has referred the application and evidence to involved reviewing agencies for site inspections, comments, and recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Division as the Responsible Agency has considered the Lead Agency's determination that the project qualifies for exemptions found in Section 15301, class 4 (Minor Alterations to Land) of the CEQA Guidelines; and

WHEREAS, Attachment 3 in the Planning Division staff report includes evidence in support of making all of the required findings for approving the proposed Coastal Development Permit, Conditional Use Permit, and Special Permit (Record Number PLN-2026-19507); and

WHEREAS, the Humboldt County Zoning Administrator held a duly-noticed public hearing on March 19, 2026, and reviewed, considered, and discussed the application for the Coastal Development Permit, Conditional Use Permit, and Special Permit Modification, and reviewed and considered all evidence and testimony presented at the hearing.

Now, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Zoning Administrator makes all the following findings:

- 1. FINDING:** **Project Description:** A Modification to a previously approved Coastal Development Permit, Special Permit and Conditional Use Permit for the Table Bluff Ecological Preserve managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The approved permits allowed for major vegetation removal and habitat restoration including the removal of a barbed wire fence and the installation of a

deer-proof fence around an experimental restoration plot. The modification would allow for the construction of a public access trail, informational signage, a picnic bench and table area and perimeter fencing. The proposed nature trail and seating will be made accessible where feasible. Continued restoration activities associated with this permit may include prescribed burns, grazing, tilling and planting, along with construction and replacement of fencing and gates as needed. A Special Permit is required for design review of the proposed improvements.

EVIDENCE: a) Project File: PLN-2026-19507

2. FINDING: **CEQA:** The project complies with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The project is exempt from environmental review per Section 15301, class 4 (Minor Alterations to Land) California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

EVIDENCE: a) The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is the lead agency under CEQA. CDFW adopted a Notice of Exemption (SCH #2023060030) pursuant to §15062 of the State CEQA Guidelines, and found exemption under CEQA §15301, class 4 (Minor Alterations to Land). The County of Humboldt is a responsible agency under CEQA §15381. The County of Humboldt considered the environmental effects of the NOE and agrees with the findings of the NOE.

3. FINDING: The project is consistent with the Humboldt Bay Area Plan and the Humboldt County General Plan.

EVIDENCE: a) The property is designated Agriculture Exclusive / Grazing Lands (AEG) in the Humboldt Bay Area Plan.

Principal Uses in the AEG designation include the production of fiber or plants, and Conditional Uses include watershed, fish and wildlife habitat management and enhancement. The project conforms with the HBAP by enhancing the productivity of the native coastal prairie ecosystem and the western lily population, an endangered plant species. The modification will allow for a public access trail, bench and table and for ecological and cultural informational signage which is consistent with the wildlife habitat management use of the property. Allowing the public to have limited access to the property for wildlife viewing and educational purposes is consistent with the management goals of CDFW for the property.

- b) 3.24 Agriculture (B) Development Policies (3) Grazing Lands - Table Bluff (a) Grazing lands on Table Bluff shall be designated for agricultural use to ensure availability of upland grazing sites and minimize conflicts with agriculture from conversion of these lands to other uses. This project enhances the native habitat of Table Bluff and does not convert the native coastal prairie rangeland to other uses. Although the site is going to be protected for management of western lily habitat and a public access trail will run through a small portion of the property, it would still be physically possible for the land to be cultivated following approval of this project consistent with protection of the endangered Western Lily population.

- c) 3.30 Natural Resources. The project is consistent with the Natural Resources Policies of the HBAP. These policies require the identification of environmentally sensitive habitats, which include critical habitats for rare and endangered species listed on state or federal lists. The biological assessment prepared for the project identifies sensitive habitats and species and enhances the ecosystems through best management practices and restoration practices informed by the best available science. The western lily is a listed endangered species and coastal prairies are environmentally sensitive habitats.

The development policies of Section 3.30 include the following requirement, "The review of these sensitive habitat areas and the identification of appropriate land uses and/or mitigation measures shall be in cooperation with the Department of Fish and Game." As this project is being conducted by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, formerly known as the Department of Fish and Game, it can be found that the project is an appropriate land use and mitigation measures / restoration plans are supported.

- d) 3.40 Visual Resources. The project takes place within a coastal scenic view. The project is consistent with the visual resource policies because:
 - i. The development does not block any part of the view to the coast or coastal waterways as viewed from public roads in a vehicle.
 - ii. All development is overall compatible with the natural setting as seen from the road.

- iii. Only vegetation removal is located within 50 feet of the public road.
 - iv. All feasible steps have been taken to minimize the visibility of parking areas from the public road.
 - v. There is no exterior lighting
 - vi. The modification will enhance the public's ability to enjoy the scenic qualities of the area.
 - vii. All signs will be of a limited height so as not to block any views towards the coast.
- e) The subject parcels are located within an area of low and moderate geologic instability, and outside of any Alquist-Priolo fault hazard area or area of potential liquefaction. The parcels are outside of the tsunami hazard area and the tsunami evacuation area. The parcels are outside of any flood zone or area of coastal vulnerability. The parcels are located within a State Responsibility Area for fire protection and within a moderate fire hazard severity zone. The parcels are also within the Loleta Fire Protection District jurisdiction, who provide structural fire protection as well as medical emergency response. Major vegetation removal and habitat restoration is not projected to increase hazard risk. Limited public access to the site is not expected to increase any hazard risks.
- f) The original project was referred to the Northwest Information Center (NWIC), Blue Lake Rancheria, the Wiyot Tribe, and the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria. NWIC responded recommending consultation with local tribes and surveying for cultural resources. Because Table Bluff may host a significant number of archeological resources, a Native American Monitor shall be present for any ground disturbing activities associated to advise the applicant of best practices if archaeological resources are discovered. Coordination with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers of the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria and the Wiyot Tribe conforms with the policies of the HBAP and General Plan.
- g) According to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), the site is an environmentally sensitive habitat area. The goal of the project is to enhance the habitat area. The project was referred to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and as they are the lead agency, the project is supported by them.

- h) The proposed project does not interfere with the right of access to the sea and instead increase public access opportunities.

4. FINDING:

Zoning: The project is consistent with the purposes of the Agriculture Exclusive (160 acre), Archaeological Resource Area Outside Shelter Cove, Coastal Wetlands, Design Review, and Streams and Riparian Corridors Protection (AE-160/A,W,D,R) zones.

EVIDENCE:

- a) Proposed development conforms with the allowable uses in the AE zone, as major vegetation removal is permissible in all zones with a Special Permit (§313-64.1) and habitat restoration and public access is allowed as a Conditionally Permitted Use (Natural Resource Use Types (HCC §313-7.1)). The project will not inhibit future principally permissible uses of the parcels because it will enhance the native grasslands and sustain the quality of prime agricultural soils on the property. The purpose of the project is to restore native coastal prairie to benefit western lily, which occurs onsite, and the overall ecological and cultural value of the Reserve. The modification allows limited public access which will enhance the cultural value of the property.
- b) The project meets minimum parcel size, lot width, yard setbacks, and maximum lot depth requirements.
- c) Archaeological Resource Area Outside Shelter Cove: The County consulted with necessary archaeological and tribal organizations and coordinated with the applicant to make sure that disturbances to archaeological resources were reduced. Because Table Bluff may host a significant number of archeological resources, a Native American Monitor will be required to be present for any ground disturbing activities associated to advise the applicant of best practices if archaeological resources are discovered.
- d) Coastal Wetlands: No development in coastal wetlands will degrade the wetland but will maintain optimum populations of marine or freshwater organisms and will enhance wetland resources. The Reserve is a complex mosaic of uplands and seasonal wetlands, and the project seeks to enhance these habitats while minimizing soil disturbance.

- e) Design Review is required because the construction of the deer fence around the borders of the experimental plot must be consistent with the County Code's Design Review Standards (313-19.1.5). The bulk and shape of the deer fence will be subordinate to the character of the surrounding setting because it is located beyond the public's view from Table Bluff Road and is set back and amongst tall cascara bushes. The proposed signage will be minimal and of a height that will not impact views towards the coast. These design considerations satisfy the requirements of the Design Review in Coastal Scenic Areas.
- f) Streams and Riparian Corridors Protection: the watercourses on the parcels are seasonally wet swales that lack a defined bed, bank, channel, and above-ground flow. It's possible that these swales were carved out by flowing above-ground streams in the past.

There are some small ephemeral drainages to the roadside ditch on the south side of the property. There is no in-stream work planned at the Reserve, and no heavy equipment will operate in saturated soil conditions. The Reserve is a complex mosaic of uplands and seasonal wetlands, and the project seeks to enhance these habitats while minimizing soil disturbance.

5. FINDING:

The proposed development and conditions under which it may be operated or maintained will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare; or materially injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity.

EVIDENCE:

- a) The project is supported by neighboring property owners, and public agencies, who have a vested interest in supporting and maintaining public health, safety, and welfare.
- b) All reviewing referral agencies that responded to the County have approved or conditionally approved the proposed project. The application is complete. Parcels to be developed are found to be in compliance with the Subdivision Map Act. The proposal neither causes non-conformance nor increases the severity of preexisting nonconformities with zoning and building ordinances.
- c) Improving habitat for sensitive plant species and allowing limited public access helps to maintain and improve the public welfare.

- d) Smoke from controlled burns may be detrimental to health if inhaled, but to reduce effects on the public, the applicant shall notify all neighbors who may be affected by the smoke prior to beginning the burn and advise them of best practices to avoid exposure to harmful particulates.

6. FINDING:

Residential Density: The proposed project 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:

- a. The reduction is consistent with the adopted General Plan including the housing element; and
- b. The remaining sites identified in the housing element are adequate to accommodate the County share of the regional housing need; and
- c. 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 parcels included in this project are not included in the 2009 Adopted Housing Element Inventory, and the potential reduction in residential density is consistent with the General Plan and the County can continue to accommodate its share of the regional housing need.

7. FINDING:

Coastal Natural Landforms:

- a) Alterations to natural landforms will be minimized.

EVIDENCE:

- a) No significant grading is proposed as a part of the project, and all coastal natural landforms on Table Bluff will be preserved. The public access trail will follow the natural contours of the land.

8. FINDING:

Coastal Vegetation Removal, Major

- a. Within Riparian Corridors:
 - i. There is no less environmentally damaging feasible alternative;
 - ii. The plan includes the best mitigation measures feasible; and
 - iii. The vegetation removal will result in no

significant adverse impacts to habitat values.

b. Within Coastal Scenic Areas:

- i. The visual effects of the vegetation removal will be subordinate to the character of its setting. (Former Section CZ#A315-16(l)(12)(b)(i))

EVIDENCE:

- a)
 - i. There is no in-stream work planned at the Reserve, and no heavy equipment will operate in saturated soil conditions.
 - ii. The Reserve is a complex mosaic of uplands and seasonal wetlands, and the project seeks to enhance these habitats while minimizing soil disturbance.
 - iii. The vegetation removal will enhance and improve habitat values. Natural clearings in the existing spruce forest host a more diverse range of species and can be characterized as a more robust plant community than the community in the shaded understory. Thinning the spruce forest will create more pockets of valuable, biodiverse plant communities. Additionally, the removal of invasive species will improve the value and the health of native plant species, specifically the endangered Western lily.
- b) The vegetation to be removed includes native Sitka spruce and invasive eucalyptus, Monterey pine, and Monterey cypress. These tree species have been naturally encroaching on coastal prairies, a rare and scenic ecosystem which makes Table Bluff unique (coastal grasslands are classified as a critically endangered ecosystem). Thinning the spruce and removing the invasive species is subordinate to the visual quality and character of the project's setting.
- c) The removal of these trees includes felling the trees and transporting them to the nearby Wiyot Tribal Reservation for use as firewood, used as large wood in restoration, mulched and stored onsite for use in restoration, or allocated for some other beneficial use. Felled trees shall be removed before the beginning of the year's nesting bird season.

9. FINDING:

Coastal View Areas:

- a. To the maximum extent feasible, the project is sited so

as not to interfere with public views to and along the ocean from public roads and recreation areas.

- b. Specific protected Table Bluff Scenic Resources are Designated Public Recreation, Agriculture Exclusive, and Coastal View Areas.

EVIDENCE:

- a) The public access trail and proposed signage will enhance the public's ability to enjoy the scenic qualities of the property and surrounding area. Proposed education and cultural informational signage is minimal and will be designed not to obstruct coastal views.
- b) Invasive trees will be removed within the coastal view areas. The removal of these trees includes felling the trees and transporting them to the nearby Wiyot Tribal Reservation for use as firewood, used as large wood in restoration, mulched and stored onsite for use in restoration, or allocated for some other beneficial use. Although there may be a temporary disturbance in the coastal view, felled trees shall be removed before the beginning of the 2024 nesting bird season. Removal of invasive tree species will enhance the public view of the native grasslands, the coast, and the ocean, and will not impact public recreation opportunities.

10. FINDING:

Coastal Wetlands: Any development in coastal wetlands will not degrade the wetland but will maintain optimum populations of marine or freshwater organisms and, where feasible, will enhance wetland resources.

- a. All wetlands, with the exception of Pocket Marshes
 - i. There is no less environmentally damaging feasible alternative;
 - ii. The best mitigation measures feasible have been provided to minimize adverse environmental effects; and
 - iii. The required mitigation will maintain or enhance the functional capacity of the wetland or estuary.

EVIDENCE:

- a)
 - i. Although the parcel is zoned for protection of Coastal Wetlands, the development does not impact any wetlands on site.
 - ii. The Ocean Ranch Wetland Restoration Project and the Cock Robin Island Restoration Project will be the

destination for felled Sitka spruce. These restoration projects have been approved by the California Coastal Commission and placement of large woody debris associated with wetland restoration is a researched, scientifically supported restoration method.

- iii. The watercourses on the parcel are seasonally wet swales that lack a defined bed, bank, channel, and above-ground flow. It's possible that these swales were carved out by flowing above-ground streams in the past.

There are some small ephemeral drainages to the roadside ditch on the south side of the property. There is no in-stream work planned at the Reserve, and no heavy equipment will operate in saturated soil conditions. The Reserve is a complex mosaic of uplands and seasonal wetlands, and the project seeks to enhance these habitats while minimizing soil disturbance

DECISION

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the above findings and evidence, the Humboldt County Zoning Administrator does hereby:

- Adopt the findings set forth in this resolution; and
- Conditionally approves the Table Bluff Restoration Project Coastal Development Permit, Conditional Use Permit, and Design Review Special Permit Modification. (Record No. PLN-2026-19507) subject to the Conditions of Approval attached hereto as Attachment 1A.

Adopted after review and consideration of all the evidence on **March 19, 2026**.

I, John H. Ford, Zoning Administrator 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 Zoning Administrator at a meeting held on the date noted above.

John H. Ford, Zoning Administrator
Planning and Building Department