



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 4/17/2025

File #: 25-523

To: Zoning Administrator

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Consent

SUBJECT:

Ferndale Coastal Development Permit
Record No.: PLN-2025-19147
APN: 100-181-003
Ferndale area

A Coastal Development Permit (CDP) for drainage improvements for the City of Ferndale, located just north of the City limits. The overall project is located both within the City of Ferndale and just outside, within County jurisdiction, and includes the replacement of existing storm drain inlets and piping along Arlington Avenue, new piping and swales along 5th Street, enlargement of the drainage swale in the pasture north of Van Ness Avenue, and creation of a stormwater detention pond in the northern extent of the pasture. Work within the Coastal Zone (and subject to this CDP) includes areas north of Van Ness Avenue. The existing culvert crossing at Van Ness Avenue (which flows into the pasture) would remain in place, and a second, parallel culvert installed. Five to eight trees and energy dissipating rock would be added to the culvert outlets to reduce potential scouring and erosion. The existing drainage swale through the pasture and proposed stormwater detention basin would be graded and revegetated with native grasses. The swale within the pasture north of Van Ness Avenue would contain a minimum bottom width of three feet and side slopes of 3:1 and daylight to existing grade. The new swale would have an approximate 0.3 to 0.5% slope and maximum excavation depth of three feet. The swale would then transition to a 0.5-acre stormwater detention basin on the County-owned parcel. The detention basin would have 3:1 slide slopes and daylight to existing grade and contain a maximum excavation depth of two feet. Following Project implementation, the pasture would remain seasonally grazeable which is consistent with current management.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Zoning Administrator:

1. Describe the application as part of the Consent Agenda.
2. Survey the audience for any person who would like to discuss the application.

3. If no one requests discussions, adopt the resolution, (Attachment 1) which does the following:
- a. Finds the project pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction), 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land), and as a Responsible Agency, agrees with the lead agency's findings; and
 - b. Makes all of the required findings for approval of the Ferndale Coastal Development Permit; and
 - c. Approves the Ferndale Coastal Development Permit as recommended by staff, and subject to the recommended conditions of approval (Attachment 1A).

DISCUSSION:

Project Location: The project site is located in the Ferndale area, on the north side of Van Ness Avenue, approximately 1,000 feet west of the intersection of California Street and Van Ness Avenue, on the property known as 245 Van Ness Avenue.

Present General Plan Land Use Designation: AE - Agricultural Exclusive, Eel River Area Plan (ERAP);
Density: 20-60 acres per unit; **Slope Stability:** Relatively Stable (0).

Present Zoning: AE-60/F,R - Agriculture Exclusive, minimum lot size of 60 acres, with Flood Hazard Area (F) and Streams and Riparian Corridors Protection (R) combining zone overlays.

Environmental Review: Project is exempt from environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction), 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land).

State Appeal: The project is appealable to the California Coastal Commission.

Major Issues: None.

Monitoring Required: None.

Executive Summary

A Coastal Development Permit (CDP) for drainage improvements for the City of Ferndale, located just north of the City limits. The overall project is located both within the City of Ferndale and just outside, within County jurisdiction, and includes the replacement of existing storm drain inlets and piping along Arlington Avenue, new piping and swales along 5th Street, enlargement of the drainage swale in the pasture north of Van Ness Avenue, and creation of a stormwater detention pond in the northern extent of the pasture. Work within the Coastal Zone (and subject to this CDP) includes areas

north of Van Ness Avenue. The existing culvert crossing at Van Ness Avenue (which flows into the pasture) would remain in place, and a second, parallel culvert installed. Five to eight trees and energy dissipating rock would be added to the culvert outlets to reduce potential scouring and erosion. The existing drainage swale through the pasture and proposed stormwater detention basin would be graded and revegetated with native grasses. The swale within the pasture north of Van Ness Avenue would contain a minimum bottom width of three feet and side slopes of 3:1 and daylight to existing grade. The new swale would have an approximate 0.3 to 0.5% slope and maximum excavation depth of three feet. The swale would then transition to a 0.5-acre stormwater detention basin on the County-owned parcel. The detention basin would have 3:1 slide slopes and daylight to existing grade and contain a maximum excavation depth of two feet. Following Project implementation, the pasture would remain seasonally grazeable which is consistent with current management.

Zoning and Land Use

Agricultural Exclusive (AE) principally permitted uses include the following: Single-Family Residential, Accessory Dwelling Unit (on lots sixty (60) acres or larger in size, two (2) single detached dwellings, or one (1) single detached and one (1) accessory dwelling are permitted), General Agriculture, Timber Production, Cottage Industry and Minor Utilities to serve these uses. By reducing runoff and flooding, the proposed drainage and stormwater retention project would improve conditions related to agricultural operations and is thus consistent with the principally permitted uses of this parcel.

Drainage Improvements

The City of Ferndale experiences frequent flooding during rain events near the Humboldt County Fairgrounds. Upgrades to the stormwater drainage system are needed to mitigate these flooding issues. The Agriculture Exclusive (AE) designation exists to protect agricultural lands for long-term productive agricultural use. The proposed enlargement of the drainage swale in the pasture and creation of a stormwater detention basin in the northern extent of the pasture is intended to provide a positive impact on the surrounding pasture lands, causing fewer disruptions in agricultural operations, in turn protecting these resources. After construction, the drainage swale and detention basin would be seeded with a CA native pasture grass seed mix and will remain agriculture wetlands after project completion. County Public Works reviewed the proposed project and provided conditional approval, with the conditions provided as Attachment 5A.

Construction Schedule and Staging

Construction within the County-owned parcel (APN 100-181-003) would occur between May 1st and October 31st, with no work occurring during the County Fair. Access into the construction area on the County parcel is located at an existing opening in the fence along Van Ness Avenue immediately across from 5th Street. Rock would be added to the access location into the parcel during mobilization to enable heavy equipment to enter and exit the site during construction and reduce tracking onto the roadway. Rock would be removed during demobilization after project construction has been completed and the area graded and seeded with pasture mix to restore the area to pre-project conditions.

Staging would occur within the County Fairgrounds parking lot and would consist of parking of equipment when not in use for project construction. No ground disturbance is proposed in the staging area. Fuels would be stored within the staging area in sealed containers. Contractor will develop and submit a spill prevention and response plan in addition to a water pollution control plan or SWPPP. The following equipment would be stored in the staging area: excavator, skid steer, backhoe, dump truck, up to 2 pick-up trucks, storm drain-pipe, precast concrete manholes and hydrodynamic separator. This area of the fairgrounds is not part of the CDP, but the description is included for clarity of the overall schedule and process.

SWPPP and Erosion Control

All staging and construction activities would be guided by a Storm Water Pollution and Prevention Plan (SWPPP), developed and submitted by the applicant to minimize any wind or water-related erosion and to prevent runoff and contamination into the surrounding wetlands and drainage ditches. Excavated materials will be stockpiled away from sensitive habitat, in areas that are relatively level, and runoff control measures will be used to prevent delivery of sediment to wetlands and watercourses.

Grading and Fill

The existing drainage swale through the pasture and proposed stormwater detention basin on the County-owned parcel would be graded and revegetated with native grasses. The swale within the pasture would contain a minimum bottom width of three feet and side slopes of 3:1 and daylight to existing grade. The new swale would have an approximate 0.3 to 0.5% slope and maximum excavation depth of three feet. The swale would then transition to a 0.5-acre stormwater detention basin. The detention basin would have 3:1 slide slopes and daylight to existing grade and contain a maximum excavation depth of two feet. Following project implementation, the pasture would remain seasonally grazable, which is consistent with current management. There will be no negative impacts to agricultural wetlands or sensitive resources as a result of the grading and fill activities.

Traffic and Access Control

Temporary lane closures and/or traffic control on Van Ness Avenue will likely be required, and will follow County requirements for temporary roadway closures, including signage, public noticing, and compliance with the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD) requirements, as conditioned in Attachment 1A. Applicant will apply for an encroachment permit for development-related activities on County property and right-of-way, and access to the County-owned pasture, site of the drainage swale and detention basin, will be appropriately secured to prevent unauthorized entry, and is conditioned in Attachment 1A.

Environmentally Sensitive Habitats

The area is designated as an agricultural wetland and is seasonally grazed. There are no other sensitive areas that would incur impacts resulting from the project. Precipitation within the proposed

detention basin will infiltrate into the relatively shallow groundwater aquifer that contributes to the wetland conditions within the vicinity (including the agricultural pastures to the north of the project site). The location of infiltration within this area is not anticipated to result in changes to the overall groundwater depth elevation or change wetland characteristics within this area. California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) conducted a site visit and determined that there were no concerns for creation of bullfrog habitat, nor other concerns regarding plant or avian impacts.

Cultural Resources

The project was referred to NWIC, the Wiyot Tribe and the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria. There were no initial concerns with the project details, however, inadvertent archaeological discovery protocols were requested to be in place for any ground-disturbing activities, and are conditioned in Attachment 1A.

Environmental Review

Analysis has determined that further environmental review is not required pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction), 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land). A project can be disqualified from using a Categorical Exemption if any of the exceptions listed in 15300.2 apply, however, none of these exceptions apply to the proposed project. The project involves both replacement and installation of new of utility and drainage infrastructure, including replacement of storm drain inlets, creation of new tree planting wells, subsurface water quality treatment units, new 18-inch storm drainpipes, a manhole, a new swale with culvert crossings, grading to modify the existing swale and creation of a .5 -acre stormwater retention basin. No mature or scenic trees will be removed, no historic or cultural resources will be affected, grading would not occur on slopes greater than 10%, and the project would accommodate existing stormwater conditions and not expand capacity.

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 3)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on a review of Planning Division reference sources and comments from all involved referral agencies, Planning staff concludes that the applicant has submitted evidence in support of making all of the required findings for approval of the Ferndale Coastal Development Permit. Staff recommends that the Zoning Administrator agrees with the lead agency's findings that the project is exempt from further environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction), 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land).

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Zoning Administrator could elect to add or delete conditions of approval. The Zoning

Administrator could elect not to approve the project, or to require the applicant to submit further evidence, or modify the project. Modifications may cause potentially significant impacts, additional CEQA analysis and findings may be required. These alternatives could be implemented if the Zoning Administrator is unable to make all of the required findings. Planning Division staff has stated that the required findings in support of the proposal have been made. Consequently, Planning staff does not recommend further consideration of either alternative.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
 - A. Conditions of Approval
 - B. Project Description
 - C. Project Figures
 - D. Project 65% Plans
2. Location Map
3. CEQA - Notice of Exemption
4. Applicant's Evidence in Support of the Required Findings
 - A. Aquatic Resources Delineation Report
 - B. Botanical Report Final w/Appendices
 - C. Avoidance and Minimization Measures
 - D. Wildlife Habitat Assessment Memorandum
 - E. Basin Capacity, Runoff, and Effects on Wetlands
5. Referral Agency Comments and Recommendations
 - A. County Public Works Conditions of Approval

Applicant

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Ferndale, CA 95536

Owner

County of Humboldt
825 Fifth Street
Eureka, CA 95501

APN 100-181-003

County of Humboldt

File #: 25-523

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Agent

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Please contact Chris Lohofener, Associate Planner, at clohofener@co.humboldt.ca.us or (707)267-9390 if you have questions about this item.