



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 3/19/2026

File #: 26-203

To: Zoning Administrator

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Consent

SUBJECT:

MCSD Sewer Crossing Retrofit Special Permit and Coastal Development Permit
Record Number: PLN-2025-19446
Assessor Parcel Numbers (APN): Listed in **Attachment 1C**

A Coastal Development Permit (CDP) and Special Permit (SP) for McKinleyville Community Services District to retrofit the three U.S. 101 sewer crossings that drain wastewater from the east side of U.S. 101 to the west side where the District's treatment facility is located. A Special Permit is required for major vegetation removal to facilitate the retrofit. The proposed replacement method for each highway crossing is Horizontal Auger Boring (HAB). A previous CDP (PLN-2025-19282) authorized geotechnical drilling to determine appropriate design parameters. The retrofitted sewer crossings would increase earthquake resiliency of the utility above current conditions.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Zoning Administrator:

Adopt the resolution, (Attachment 1) which does the following:

- a. Finds the project complies with the McKinleyville Area Local Coastal Plan, the McKinleyville Community Plan, and the Zoning Ordinance; and
- b. Finds the McKinleyville Community Services District, as the lead agency under CEQA, has prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the proposed project; and
- c. Approves the Coastal Development Permit and Special Permit subject to the conditions of approval (Attachment 1A).

DISCUSSION:

Project Location:

The project site is located in the McKinleyville area, at three existing underground sewer highway crossing locations along U.S. 101.

Present General Plan Land Use Designation, Present Zoning, and Coastal Zone Jurisdiction:

See table in **Attachment 1E**.

Density: Various.

Environmental Review:

McKinleyville Community Services District, as the lead agency under CEQA, has prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the proposed project.

State Appeal:

Project is appealable to the California Coastal Commission.

Major concerns: None.

Monitoring Required: None Required.

Executive Summary: The McKinleyville Community Services District (MCSD) seeks a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) and Special Permit (SP) to retrofit the three U.S. 101 sewer crossings that drain wastewater from the east side of U.S. 101 to the west side where MCSD's treatment facility is located. A Special Permit is required for major vegetation removal to facilitate the retrofit. The proposed replacement method for each highway crossing is Horizontal Auger Boring (HAB). A previous CDP (PLN-2025-19282) authorized geotechnical drilling to determine appropriate design parameters. The retrofitted sewer crossings would increase earthquake resiliency of the utility above current conditions. As indicated in **Attachment 1C** and **Attachment 1D**, the work would be performed on or directly adjacent to 15 individual Assessor's parcels. Work sites are both within the Coastal Zone and the Inland Zone. The project does not qualify as minor development due to the need for a discretionary permit in addition to the Coastal Development Permit (Special Permit for major vegetation removal). For this reason, the project is appealable to the Coastal Commission, and a hearing is required. Construction is anticipated for summer of 2026 and extending through summer 2027 and requires approximately one year. Development activities include clearing access roads and work areas, grading throughout the project area, excavation to create entrance and exit pits for HAB, hauling materials on and off site, and HAB to install new sewer crossings under U.S. 101.

Biological Resources: MCSD will use existing roads to bring vehicles and equipment to staging areas. Work is proposed in proximity to and adjacent to wetlands. Per the submitted Wetland Delineation Report (**Attachment 2A, Appendix C**) there are two three-parameter wetlands in and along the sewer line access road to the northern crossing in the Widow White Creek/Norton Creek riparian east of Highway 101. The report also indicates there is a three-parameter wetland in the Norton Creek riparian area west of Highway 101 at the northern crossing. Additional one-parameter wetlands were documented overlapping the project area, including access roads, staging areas, and work areas. One

parameter wetlands include Sitka spruce forest, coastal willow thickets, and red alder forest. Impacts to one-parameter wetlands will be avoided where possible by utilizing current access roads and clearings. Some trees within the mapped Red Alder Alliance are proposed for removal, including several hazard trees that are severely leaning located within the northern crossing site. Additional trees within mapped Red Alder Alliance would be removed to accommodate the Horizontal Auger Boring (HAB) pit. Replanting at a minimum 1:1 ratio will be required for any native trees removed over six inches in diameter at breast height. No impacts to Sitka spruce forest or coastal willow stands are anticipated as part of the proposed project.

The applicants submitted a Biological Resources Evaluation prepared by GHD (**Attachment 2A, Appendix B**), which concluded that the project as proposed would have no significant impacts to migration routes or habitat connectivity, or significant impacts to any sensitive species or critical habitat with proposed mitigation measures. Mitigation measures have been included as recommended conditions of approval.

The identified wetland areas are classified as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA) and are required to be protected with a buffer that is adequate to protect the habitat. State guidelines prescribe criteria for establishing buffer areas, including biological significance of adjacent lands, sensitivity of species to disturbance, susceptibility of the parcel to erosion, use of natural topographic features to locate development, use of existing cultural features to locate buffer zones, lot configuration and location of existing development, and type and scale of development proposed. Section 30233 of the Coastal Act allows for the diking, filling, or dredging of wetlands for specific purposes regardless of whether the wetland also meets the definition of ESHA. One of the allowed development types includes incidental public service purposes, including but not limited to burying cables or pipes, where there is no feasible less environmentally damaging alternative, and where feasible mitigation measures have been provided to minimize adverse environmental effects. The proposed work in the wetland areas include trimming for access utilizing existing access roads and retrofit work will be limited to areas of existing development. Creation and utilization of new access roads would result in adverse impacts to existing wetlands. The applicant proposes to replace any trees over 6 inches in diameter at breast height at a 1:1 ratio that are removed for access to the work site. Mitigation measures included in the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration indicate erosion control measures and BMPs would be utilized wherever ground disturbing work occurs in proximity to wetlands.

The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared by McKinleyville Community Services District indicates two seasonally appropriate floristic surveys were conducted, and no special status plants were detected in the project area. Special status bird species, mammals, and fish are known to be present in the Biological Study Area (BSA). Mitigation measures include avoidance and minimization (**Mitigation Measures BIO-1-BIO-6**). The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared by the McKinleyville Community Services District indicates impacts to any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species, riparian habitat or other sensitive natural

communities, protected wetlands, or movement of migratory wildlife corridors will be less than significant with mitigation incorporated or will have no impact.

Cultural Resources: A Cultural Resource Inventory Report was prepared for the project and concluded cultural resources are located within the Area of Potential Effects (APE) associated with the project. The report included management recommendations that have been included as recommended conditions of approval. The project was referred to Blue Lake Rancheria, Wiyot Tribe, Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, and the Northwest Information Center. Tribal referral responses recommended inadvertent discovery protocol and, given presence of prehistoric sites of cultural significance, that a cultural monitor be located on site during any ground disturbance. Inadvertent discovery protocol and an on-site cultural monitor have been included as recommended conditions of approval.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The project was referred to responsible agencies and all responding agencies have recommended approval or conditional approval. (Attachment 3)

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Zoning Administrator could elect to add, modify or delete conditions of approval. Staff have concluded the required findings in support of the proposal can be made.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
 - A. Conditions of Approval
 - B. Site Plan
 - C. List of Project Parcels and Landowners
 - D. Present General Plan Land Use Designation, Community Plan, and Present Zoning
2. Applicant's Evidence in Support of the Required Findings
 - A. Initial Study/Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration
 - B. NOD
3. Referral Agency Comments and Recommendations

APPLICANT, OWNER, AGENT AND PLANNER INFORMATION:

Applicant

McKinleyville Community Services District
Pat Kaspari
PO Box 2037

File #: 26-203

McKinleyville CA, 95519

Owners

See Attachment 1C

Agent

GHD, Inc.

Andrea Hilton

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Please contact Michael Holtermann, Associate Planner, at 707-268-3737 or by email at mholtermann@co.humboldt.ca.us <<mailto:mholtermann@co.humboldt.ca.us>>, if you have any questions about the scheduled item.