



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 1/15/2026

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File #: 26-35

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**To:** Planning Commission

**From:** Planning and Building Department

**Agenda Section:** Consent

SUBJECT:

**Conklin Creek Farms Inc Special Permit and Zoning Clearance Certificates Modification**

Application Number: PLN-2025-19211

Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 105-111-001; 105-042-002; 105-101-006; 105-071-004

Petrolia area

A Modification to an approved Special Permit and approved Zoning Clearance Certificates (PLN-2021-17034). The applicant proposes to change the irrigation water source from 2.6-million-gallon rainwater catchment to an existing permitted groundwater well and 50,000 gallons of hard tank storage. No changes are proposed to cultivation square footage or locations, staffing needs or traffic, power source or use, water use, or project operations.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt the resolution, (Attachment 1) which does the following:
  - a. Finds the Planning Commission has considered the has considered the Addendum to the Mitigated Negative Declaration that was prepared for the Conklin Creek Farms Inc Special Permit; and
  - b. Finds the proposed project complies with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance; and
  - c. Approves the Conklin Creek Farms Inc Special Permit and Zoning Clearance Certificates Modification as recommended by staff, subject to the conditions of approval (Attachment 1A).

DISCUSSION:

**Project Location:** This project is in Humboldt County, in the Petrolia area, on the north side of Conklin Creek Road, approximately 2,200 feet east from the intersection of Conklin Creek Road and Mattole

Road, on the property known as 795 Conklin Creek Road and on the property known to be in the northwest and southwest quarters of the northwest quarter of Section 11 of Township 02 South, Range 02 West, Humboldt Base & Meridian.

**Present General Plan Land Use Designation:** Agricultural Grazing (AG), Density: Range is 20 to 160 acres per unit, 2017 General Plan, Slope Stability: Low Instability (1) and Moderate Instability (2)

**Present Zoning:** Unclassified (U)

**Environmental Review:** An Addendum to a previously adopted Final Environmental Impact Report has been prepared for consideration per §15164 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

**State Appeal:** Project is NOT appealable to the California Coastal Commission.

**Major Concerns:** None

**Monitoring Required:**

Annual Compliance Monitoring

**Executive Summary:**

The originally approved project included a Special Permit for 43,560 square feet (one acre) of new mixed light cannabis cultivation, as well as four Zoning Clearance Certificates for: 5,000 square feet of indoor cannabis cultivation; 23,500 square feet of enclosed wholesale nursery; offsite processing; and distribution. Approved power sources include PGE and solar. Annual water usage is estimated at 655,000 gallons. A maximum of 24 employees will be required during peak operations. The applicant proposes to change the irrigation water source from 2.6-million-gallon rainwater catchment to an existing permitted groundwater well and 50,000 gallons of hard tank storage. No changes are proposed to cultivation square footage or locations, staffing needs or traffic, power source or use, water use, or project operations.

The legal parcel consists of four APNs: 105-111-001; 105-042-002; 105-101-006; and 105-071-004 totaling approximately 210.5 acres. Cultivation activities are approved on APNs 105-111-001 and 105-042-002, and the groundwater well proposed for irrigation use is located on the northeast section of APN 105-101-006.

**Water Resources:**

The applicant proposes to change to the irrigation water source from 2.6-million-gallon rainwater catchment to an existing permitted groundwater well and 50,000 gallons of hard tank storage. The applicant indicates there is also a rain catchment (up to 50,000 gallons) option that could be utilized to supplement water from the existing well. The Building Department provided comment on the project April 10, 2025, which specified that the applicant is to permit any water storage structure

exceeding 5,000 gallons and must have an engineered foundation (**Condition of Approval A4**). The existing, permitted groundwater well is non-diversionary and will not impact surrounding wells according to the Groundwater Well Evaluation technical memo prepared by NorthPoint Consulting Group, Inc (December 2024). The permittee shall install a water meter on the well to track irrigation water separately from domestic water use. The water use for cultivation is limited to the use of the irrigation infrastructure described in the approved Operations Plan. The applicant will maintain logs of water usage and make the logs available upon request.

Per the project operations plan, drip emitters and hand watering are used for young plants. The mixed light cultivation will utilize humidity-sensing drip irrigation. The indoor cultivation will utilize drip irrigation and top-feed hand watering methods. Irrigation overall will be conducted using a combination of automated and manual systems.

The project was referred to the Division of Environmental (EDH) Health and they provided comment March 28, 2025. DEH confirmed that the groundwater well was permitted (20/21-0670) and recommended that previously recommended Conditions of Approval to remain in effect. Applicant must obtain a permit for and install an approved onsite wastewater treatment system associated with the offsite processing activities. Seasonal cultivation sites may be supported by portable toilets. (**Conditions of Approval A3**).

The project was referred to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, who responded with concerns regarding a single well supporting one acre of cultivation, as well as questions regarding the pump tests conducted. CDFW noted the drawdown shown on the well completion report measured in July of 2021 was approximately 125 feet, while the pump test conducted in July of 2024 indicated a maximum drawdown of only 0.5 feet over a 4-hour pump test. Follow up with Fisch Drilling indicated the well completion report did not report drawdown of groundwater during pumping at a certain rate, but rather the completion reports are indicating the total evacuation of the boring from the air lift. The number on the well completion report is essentially the depth at which they forced the water and mud out of the bore hole when drilling to clean it, which is why there appears to be such a drastically different drawdown rate for the same well. Based on this information the well completion report is not useful for drawdown, and the results from the follow up pump test are pertinent for determining well productivity and recharge. This information was relayed to CDFW staff who stated that they had no further concerns.

#### **Public Trust Analysis:**

Per the Well Completion Report (WCR2021-008803) the approximate coordinates of the well are 40.31953, -124.26939. According to Google Earth, the well is approximately 200 feet above sea level. The proposed well has a total depth of 180 feet with a screen from 140 feet to 180 below surface level.

According to Humboldt County WebGIS there are several surface water features in the vicinity. The

closest is classified as an unnamed ephemeral creek, approximately 195 feet to the north and the next nearest surface water feature, Mill Creek, is approximately 1,200 feet to the west and approximately 145 feet above sea level. Both creeks flow to the Mattole River which is 2,930 feet south and approximately 70 feet above sea level. The Mattole River and Mill Creek provide public trust resources. The ephemeral nature of the nearest creek indicates the flow is influenced by rainfall and not groundwater.

While the bottom of the well slot is 40 feet below the surface of the Mattole River channel and 5 feet below the Mill Creek channel, the Mattole River is nearly 3,000 feet away and Mill Creek is approximately 1,200 feet away. The Well Completion Report indicates the well screen is in a layer of blue sandstone indicating no hydrologic connection. In the unlikely event of a hydrologic connection, more rainwater is infiltrating the aquifer than is proposed to be removed for the proposed project. A research study published by the USGS (Flint, 2013) indicates that approximately 34% of precipitation in Northern California percolates into groundwater recharge. According to the Prism Climate group, the lowest rainfall year on record for this area was 2013 when 29.33 inches of rain fell for the year. That translates to approximately 57 million gallons of potential groundwater for the 210.5-acre property. The use of 2.6 million gallons of water from the well is therefore unlikely to affect the groundwater supply or public trust resources even in a drought year.

There are no known current uses of the unnamed ephemeral creek for commerce and the proposed well will therefore have no impact on commerce. The ephemeral creek is not mapped as providing fish habitat that helps support recreational fishing activities and the well will not impact flow rates within the watercourses based on the ephemeral classification. Based on the facts outlined above, the use of groundwater for irrigation will not interfere with the Public Trust or substantially impair the public rights to navigation, fisheries, or water related activities or access.

**Energy:**

Approved power sources include PGE and solar. All power sourced from PGE will be sourced from renewable energy, such as the RCEA PowerPlus plan in conformance with Conditions of Approval imposed on the originally approved project. No changes to power source or use are proposed as part of this modification.

**Environmental Review:**

Environmental review for this project was conducted and based on the results of that analysis, staff concludes that all aspects of the project have been considered in a previously adopted Environmental Impact Report adopted for the Commercial Cannabis Land Use Ordinance. An addendum to the Environmental Impact Report has been prepared for consideration by the Planning Commission (Attachment 2).

All original Conditions of Approval, specified in Attachment 1A, from the parent project remain in full force and effect.

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission make all the required findings based on the evidence in the record and approve the application subject to the recommend conditions.

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 4)

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Planning Commission could elect to add or delete conditions of approval. The Planning Commission could deny approval if unable to make all the required findings. Staff have concluded the required findings can be made based on the information available on file. Consequently, Staff does not recommend further consideration of these alternatives.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
  - A. Conditions of Approval
  - B. Cultivation Operations Plan & Addendum
  - C. Site Plan
2. CEQA Addendum
3. Applicant's Evidence in Support of the Required Findings
  - A. Well Evaluation Technical Memo
4. Referral Agency Comments and Recommendations
  - A. Building
  - B. Division of Environmental Health
  - C. CDFW Referral Response

**Applicant:**

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C/O Karl Benemann  
PO Box 1083  
Trinidad, CA 95570

**Owner:**

Conklin Creek, LLC  
C/O Karl Benemann  
PO Box 1083

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**File #:** 26-35

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Trinidad, CA 95570

**Agent:**

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Please contact Michael Holtermann, Associate Planner, at [mholtermann@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:mholtermann@co.humboldt.ca.us) or 707-268-3737 if you have questions about this item.