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Subject: PLN-11291-CUP, APN: 522-021-009-000
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Good Morning,

Please see the comments below regarding the above referenced project.

Project Number: PLN-11291-CUP

Project Name: Emerald Mountain Coast LLC - CUP for 18050 Sq Ft of Existing Mixed Light

APN(s): 522-021-009-000

Emerald Mountain Coast, LLC seeks a Conditional Use Permit (CUP-16-216) for an existing 18,050-square-foot (SF) mixed light cannabis cultivation operation with an additional 3,000 SF appurtenant nursery facility. Irrigation water is sourced from an existing permitted groundwater well. Existing available water storage includes 51,400-gallons of existing hard plastic tank storage consisting of 3 1,300-gallon, 1 3,500-gallon, 3 2,500-gallon, 1 1,500-gallon, and 7 5,000-gallon tanks. The project proposes adding rain catchment off the barns, additional tank storage and a 500,000-gallon rain catchment pond to support the cultivation operation and for use as an emergency fire suppression water source. Estimated annual water usage is 180,500 gallons (10 gal/SF). On-site trimming is proposed, with drying/curing activities to take place in an existing 30'x46' shop building, along with additional drying and processing in 2 proposed 30'x50' barns. Project will add 4 proposed buildings, the 2 30'x50' buildings for processing and 2 proposed detached sleeping units. There is a septic system proposed near the proposed 2-story barn and processing building. Power will be provided by a WhisperWatt 25 (Model DCA25USI4CAN), 4 Honda 3000 and 2 Honda 6000 generators on site.

CDFW COMMENTS:

Thank you for referring this application to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for review and comment.

On August 1, 2023, CDFW staff conducted a site inspection at the subject property on Assessor' Parcel Numbers (APNs) 522-021-009-000. During the site visit staff walked the property to observe current and historic cultivation activities. The following comments are intended to assist the Lead Agency in making informed decisions in the planning process. The following comments shall supersede prior comments submitted by CDFW regarding PLN-11291-CUP. CDFW requests that all comments are incorporated in the final Humboldt County

Staff Report.

- The site plan for PLN-11291-CUP proposes the relocation of cannabis cultivation to an environmentally superior location from a lower cultivation site to an existing cultivation site. The plan also proposes to restore approximately 0.5 acres of the existing flat and reduce 0.17 acres of road access to the cultivation site. During the site visit on August 1, 2023, CDFW observed the applicant actively cultivating in the area proposed as a restoration site. It is unclear if the applicant still proposes to relocate and restore the cannabis cultivation area or continue to cultivate in the existing site. If the applicant chooses to continue to cultivate at the lower site, it is also unclear if the applicant will be over the allocated 18050 sq ft cannabis cultivation on the parcel. CDFW requests that applicant clarifies if the lower cultivation site will be relocated and restored. Additionally, CDFW request that the site plan and map, if necessary, are updated to accurately describe the proposed project and that it is confirmed that the applicant will not exceed the allocated 18050 sq ft of cannabis cultivation.
- CDFW issued a Final Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (1600-2019-0109-R1) for the restoration of wetlands and a stream that were impacted by unpermitted cannabis cultivation. During the site visit on August 1, 2023, CDFW observed that the required work was completed, however, a large slash pile was placed in the SMA during timber operations. As a result, the applicant is out of compliance with the LSAA. CDFW requests, as a condition of project approval, that the applicant remove the slash pile from the SMA and becomes compliant with the LSAA.
- The proposed project includes a proposed rain catchment pond to supply water for the project. During the site visit, the applicant commented that they may not build the pond and will rely on wells (one existing and one that is proposed) as a water source. In drought years, CDFW has observed wells going dry in the area and failing to yield water for the entire cultivation season. Additionally, the estimated annual water usage of 180,500 gallons appears to underestimate the total amount of water needed and does not include domestic use or other uses associated with the proposed working quarters or other industrial uses. If the rainwater catchment pond is not constructed, CDFW recommends, as a condition of project approval, that applicant stores no less than 200,000 gallons of water on site to be used if the well(s) does not produce for a full cultivation season.
- During the site visit CDFW observed uncontained monofilament netting that was used during cannabis cultivation operations. To minimize the risk of wildlife entrapment, CDFW requests, as a condition of project approval, the prohibition of synthetic netting (e.g., plastic or nylon) including photo or biodegradable plastic netting for the purpose of cultivation operations and/or erosion control.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

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