



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 8/7/2025

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File #: 25-909

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**To:** Zoning Administrator

**From:** Planning and Building Department

**Agenda Section:** Consent

**SUBJECT:**

Reapproval of McKnight Bar SMARA permits (CA Mine ID #91-12-0040) Conditional Use Permit, Surface Mining Permit and Reclamation Plan  
Assessor's Parcel Numbers: (APN) 524-052-002 and 524-052-004  
Record No.: PLN-2025-19268  
Willow Creek area

Reapproval of 15-year renewal of McKnight Bar SMARA permits, CA Mine ID #91-12-0040, for extraction of 10,000 cubic yards per year.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Zoning Administrator:

1. Adopt the resolution, (Attachment 1) which does the following:
  - a. Finds a Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted for the original project, a Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted for the renewal, and no further environmental review is required; and
  - b. Finds the proposed project complies with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance; and
  - c. Approves the Conditional Use Permit, Surface Mining Permit and Reclamation Plan as recommended by staff, subject to the conditions of approval (Attachment 1A).

**DISCUSSION:**

**Project Location:**

In Humboldt County, along the Trinity River, at River Mile 29.5, approximately 1.6 miles southeast of the town of Willow Creek, on the Salyer 7.5' Quadrangle, within the NE 1/4 of Section 9, T06N, R05E, HB&M.

**Present General Plan Land Use Designation:**

Residential Estates, 2.5-5 acres per dwelling unit (RE2.5-5); Residential Estates, 1-5 acres per dwelling unit (RE1-5); Conservation Floodway (CF)

**Present Zoning:**

AG (Agriculture General); RS-T (Residential Suburban - Manufactured Home)

**State Appeal:**

Project is NOT appealable to the California Coastal Commission.

**Major Concerns:**

None identified by referral agencies.

**Monitoring Required:**

Annual Compliance Monitoring.

**Environmental Review:**

A Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted in 1994 for the original permit approval and a Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration (SMND) was adopted in 2010 for a 15-year permit renewal. The SMND included mitigation measures that along with the original conditions of approval were incorporated into the project and are, in effect, part of the project that is being considered for this 15-year reapproval request. These measures have been and will continue to be in force and monitored annually by County Planning staff. There are no changes in operations, law, or the environment that warrant further environmental review.

**Executive Summary:**

Reapproval of McKnight Bar (CA Mine ID #91-12-0040) Conditional Use Permit, Surface Mining Permit and Reclamation Plan (CUP-10-12X/SMP-09-03X/RP-09-03X) for a 15-year term for continued instream mining operations. Mining permits were issued in 1992 for the extraction of up to 10,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel annually from the Trinity River, then renewed in 2012 and the 15-year term expired prior to submitting the renewal application. Operations include extraction from the exposed river bar, installation of seasonal bridge crossings and temporary storage of equipment. No stockpiling of materials or processing occurs on site. There are no changes to the original approval. The permit term is fifteen (15) years and would expire on August 22, 2040.

***Background Information on the McKnight Bar Mining Operation***

Gravel extraction has occurred at the McKnight Bar since the 1960s. The site has been intermittently mined for highway construction, bridge repair, abutment protection and other local projects. In 1992, the County issued permits for the annual extraction of up to 10,000 cubic yards of aggregate. In 2012 the County issued a fifteen (15) year permit renewal.

The site is located on the Main Stem of the Trinity River watershed system. The river bar area is approximately 20 acres; however, rarely more than 1.8 acres are disturbed in one season. A single, designated extraction site exists along the established gravel bar. The gravel bar is an open active bar without topsoil or significant amounts of vegetation. Ancillary areas are located upland from the bar, which includes the access/haul route from the river bar up to State Highway 299. Surrounding land uses include industrial, agricultural and rural residential.

Extraction occurs in the summer and fall of each year (June 15 through October 15). Any work within jurisdictional water during the wet season (October 15 to May 15) will require approval from the Regional Water Board in coordination with National Marine Fisheries and CDFW. The hours of operation are restricted to daylight hours Monday through Friday, generally 7:30 am to 4:30 pm.

Aggregate extraction consists of removal of deposited alluvial material using heavy equipment (e.g. front-end loaders, excavators, bulldozers, and dump trucks) from the gravel bar. Aggregate extraction methods and volumes will be consistent with approved annual pre-extraction work plans. Extraction occurs during the summer low-flow period when alluvial deposits are exposed and risks to migrating salmonids are minimized. Fisheries and riparian-enhancement activities may be included. A temporary crossing of a secondary channel may be needed to access the gravel bar and timing of the installation and removal of this crossing is conducted to avoid periods of peak flows, salmonid migration and spawning.

Mining is subject to extensive local, state and federal regulations. The proposed extraction volumes, locations and methods require annual coordination with and approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and the Regional Water Board (Waterboard). Although a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) does not exist for Gravel Removal on the Trinity River, the operations at the McKnight Bar are still subject to the Adaptive Management Program and review by the County of Humboldt Extraction Review Team (CHERT), both pre- and post-extraction.

The project has received certification from the Waterboard that it will comply with the Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification, has received a Letter of Permission for Gravel Mining and Extraction Activities within Humboldt County (LOP 2015-1) from the USACE, and a Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) from CDFW.

### ***Post-extraction Procedures***

Prior to October 15 of each extraction year, the extraction area near the active channel will be left in a reclaimed condition and will be consistent and homogenous with the upstream and downstream topography. In conjunction with the end of the extraction season, the operator is responsible for removing any and all machinery and equipment, waste or other evidence of the operation from the

river channel and gravel bar. Additionally, reclamation includes reestablishment of berms across the access roads and any grading necessary for drainage and erosion control purposes will continue to occur annually. An acceptable grass seed mixture, such as the "State Mix" will be planted in select places as needed for drainage and erosion control.

In years when a summer low-flow channel crossing is required, and upon completion of annual extraction activities, the seasonal bridge will be removed, transported off-site and stored at or above the 100-year floodplain. The abutment material will be regraded to blend with surrounding topography. Upon completion of extraction and site-grooming, responsible agencies are notified and final site review is performed to assess the site for additional end-of-season reclamation.

Post-extraction surveys are conducted to identify and minimize short-term effects caused by the extraction process and are utilized to calculate extracted aggregate volumes and evaluate replenishment of material in the proceeding year. A second aerial photographic series is taken late in the season to capture the river channel at its lowest flow and the series is used for biological resource and habitat mapping, evaluation of extraction limits, assessment of vegetative units, monitoring of river morphology, etc.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Marine Fisheries Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Regional Water Board, County of Humboldt Extraction Review Team (CHERT). The project was referred to responsible agencies and all responding agencies have either responded with no comment or recommended approval or conditional approval.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Zoning Administrator could elect to add or delete conditions of approval. The Zoning Administrator could deny approval if unable to make all the required findings. Staff has concluded the required findings in support of the proposal can be made. Consequently, staff does not recommend further consideration of these alternatives.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
  - A. Recommended Conditions of Approval
  - B. Reclamation Plan (3/14/2025)
  - C. Location Map and Site Plan

**Applicant:**

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**File #:** 25-909

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Willow Creek, CA 95573

**Owner:**

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**Agent:**

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