



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 3/19/2026

File #: 26-193

To: Planning Commission

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Consent

SUBJECT:

Russ Quarry CUP/SMP Mining Reapproval
Assessor Parcel Numbers (APN) 313-132-001
Record No.: PLN-2025-19390
Maple Creek area

A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a surface mining operation known as the Russ Quarry for the extraction of gravel from the quarry for use on County roads, for emergency and maintenance activities in the region. The proposed extraction is a total of 30,000 cubic yards over the life of the permit, 15 years, consisting of extractions of up to 25,000 cubic yards at a time as frequently as once every 3-7 years. This is a re-approval of CUP-10-03/SMP-10-03/RP10-03 that has expired. The project is for consideration of the re-approval of a Conditional Use Surface Mining Permit, the re-approval of the Reclamation Plan and a review of financial assurances for an existing quarry with a 15-year permit term to expire November 24, 2040.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt the resolution, (Attachment 1) which does the following:
 - a. Finds the Planning Commission has considered the Negative Declaration (ND) previously adopted for the Russ Quarry reapproval pursuant to Section 15164 of the CEQA guidelines and that no further environmental review is required; and
 - b. Makes all of the required findings for approving the Conditional Use/Surface Mining Permits and Reclamation Plan PLN-2025-19390, based on the substantial evidence submitted; and
 - c. Approves the Conditional Use/Surface Mining Permit and Reclamation Plan.

DISCUSSION:

Project Location: The project site is located in the Maple Creek area, on both sides of Snow Camp Road, approximately 7.5 miles southeast of the town of Korb, on the property known as 10251 Snow Camp Road.

Present General Plan Land Use Designation: Agriculture General (AG) and Timber (T) Slope Stability: E Moderate Instability (2) and High Instability (3).

Present Zoning: Agriculture Exclusive (AE), Special Building Site (B) and Timber Production Zone (TPZ). (AE-B-5(160), TPZ)

Environmental Review: A Negative Declaration was adopted with the original permit in 1995 and reapproved in 2011. No further environmental review is required as no changes to the mining operation are proposed as part of this reapproval.

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

Major Concerns: None

Monitoring Required: Annual Compliance Monitoring

Executive Summary: The project is for consideration of the re-approval of a Conditional Use Surface Mining Permit, the re-approval of the Reclamation Plan and a review of financial assurances for an existing quarry with a 15-year permit term to expire November 24, 2040. The gravel is to be used in County Road maintenance activities in the region. The current project proposes a total extraction volume of 30,000 cubic yards (cy) of rock over the 15-year permit term. Mining may consist of a single 25,000 cy extraction, or smaller extractions, as frequently as every 3- to 7-years. The County originally permitted the pre-existing rock quarry in 1995 for the extraction of up to 20,000 cubic yards, extracting no more than 10,000 cy every 5- to 7-years and a modification in 2011 to allow for up to 30,000 cubic yards. The majority of these materials have not been mined, and the additional permit term will allow for the 30,000 cubic yards as originally contemplated by the 2011 permit modification to be utilized if the need arises. There are no proposed changes to the permitted operations.

Russ Quarry is located on the west side of Snow Camp Road, approximately 0.5 miles south from the intersection of Ward Road and Snow Camp Road, approximately 15 miles southeast of the town of Korb. The property is planned Timber and Agriculture Grazing and zoned Agriculture Exclusive (AE) and Timberland Production Zone (TPZ). Vegetation within the project limits is minimal, although adjacent lands are a mix of grasslands and timbered with second-growth forest. Other adjacent lands have been and will continue to be used for timber harvesting and livestock grazing. The only residence in the project vicinity is located one-half mile away from the quarry

The quarry mainly contains massive greywacke with minor amounts of shale, thin-bedded chert, greenstone and glaucophane schist. The majority of the material is used primarily for maintenance of County roads in the area. Operations include extraction, processing, stockpiling and transporting. Material is mined by ripping and separating with a bulldozer and temporarily stockpiled for crushing. In the event localized greywacke boulders are encountered, small-scale separation with charges may be performed. A portable crusher assembly, consisting of jaw and cone crushers, screens, conveyors, and a generator-trailer will be located temporarily on the quarry floor. Once crushing activities are completed, the crusher assembly will be dismantled and removed from the area. Crushed, sorted rock will then be stockpiled onsite and will later be utilized for road maintenance and winter storm damage repair projects. No permanent or semi-permanent facilities have been constructed at the quarry and none are planned or required. The types of equipment include: front-end loader, bulldozer, excavator and dump trucks. Activity in the quarry will continue to be intermittent. Project frequency of operation is expected to be several times a year for periods ranging from a few days to a few weeks; duration and intensity of activities depend on demand. Final reclamation includes final grading, drainage improvements, restoration of surface soils and revegetation to reclaim the land consistent with agriculture and timber harvesting.

Biological Resources: The quarry site lies in an area comprised of a mix of open prairie and oak-fir forest. The dominant tree species are Oregon white oak, California black oak and Douglas fir. The site contains no wetlands or riparian vegetation listed as threatened or endangered. The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) contains records for fifteen (15) sensitive species as ranked by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). Activities do not include major vegetation removal. The working site is unvegetated; the site does not contain habitat for any sensitive species, although habitat can be found in the vicinity of the project. There is minimal topsoil on this hilltop, as was the case when the original permit was issued. Habitat disturbance will be temporary and final reclamation will restore the area to prior conditions. A botanical survey of the quarry and surrounding area conducted during the 2011 modification determined there were no special status species within the project site.

The project vicinity contains habitat for owls and murrelets. There is no northern spotted owl or marbled murrelet habitat in the project area. The project does not involve removal of large trees and will not affect owl or murrelet habitat. The California Department of Fish & Game Biogeographic Information Systems (BIOS) contains one recorded marbled murrelet occurrence

9.57 miles southwest of the site. BIOS contains four (4) records of northern spotted owl occurrences within a 1.75-mile radius of the project area. No occurrences have been reported in the immediate vicinity of the project. It is unlikely that owls and/or murrelets will be present at the project site as the site is located along Snow Camp Road which is subject to intermittent disturbance from vehicular traffic. In addition, the CNDDB contains records for eight (8) other mammal species ranked by the Department of Fish & Game as a Species of Special Concern (SSC) or on the Watch List (WL) in the project area. Although the quarry site does not contain habitat for any of the eight (8) species, habitat can be found in the project vicinity. Per email comments dated December 5, 2025, the California

Department of Fish and Wildlife supports the project as described. The recommendation for utilization of native seed for reclamation has been incorporated into the Conditions of Approval.

The project will be subject to extensive local, state, and federal regulations. In any given year, project extraction volumes, locations and methods will be submitted by the applicant for approval by local, state and federal agencies, including the County of Humboldt, Department of Fish and Game, CalFire, and Office of Mine Reclamation.

The actual and potential environmental effects reviewed by County staff and referral agencies in relation to the project include noise and hazards, traffic, dust, safety concerns, water quality degradation, impacts to sensitive habitat areas, and depreciation in open space aesthetics. Staff supports approval of the application because, as mitigated and conditioned, it is anticipated to have less than significant impact on the environment; and potential impacts to resources have been addressed through mitigation and operations restrictions. Based upon the operational and performance standards included in the mining operation and reclamation plan, staff and the referral agencies have concluded that the operation can be conducted in a safe and appropriate manner provided these standards are made conditions of project approval.

Noise: Adjacent lands have been and will continue to be used for timber harvesting and livestock grazing. The nearest residence to the quarry is located northeast of the project over the ridge and down slope at a distance of approximately 2850 feet. The noise level will decrease by 6 dBA for each doubling of the distance from the source and will be further reduced as the sound pressure wave refracts and disperses after passing over the ridgeline. The predicted noise level outside of the residence will be approximately 40 dBA, which will not constitute a significant impact. Operations are intermittent, and noise is generated only during periods of operation. This has been an existing operation since at least 1995 and the proposal will not change any potential noise generation from what has been in existence.

General Plan/Zoning: The property is designated as Agricultural General (AG) and Timber (T) in the Humboldt County General Plan. Primary uses include the growing and harvesting of timber and timber production facilities, including portable processing equipment. Compatible uses include watershed management, grazing and other agricultural activities and recreational uses. Surface mining is not specifically identified as a primary and compatible use. However, in previous project reviews, the County has found surface mining to be a compatible temporary use. The site was originally permitted in 1995, when the County of Humboldt permitted the site, however, the quarry has been used for road maintenance activities in the area prior to 1995. The acreage to be utilized will eventually be reclaimed and reverted to land use consistent with the land designation.

Access: The access road leading into the quarry is approximately 1,600 ft in length and averages 12-14 ft in width. Line of sight exists along the entire roadway when traveling in either direction. The elevation of the quarry floor is approximately 50 ft lower than the intersection of the access road with Snow Camp Road, resulting in a slight gradient to the road for most of its length. The access road is ditched, with ditch-relief culverts installed at two locations. The entire length of the road is surfaced

with hard-packed base rock. When quarrying is being performed, the road will be wetted during hours of operation to enhance surface armoring and to minimize the accumulation of dust. The road is gated and locked when the site is not in use. Visibility is satisfactory in both directions when leaving the quarry and entering the County Road.

Geologic Suitability: The project site is in an area rated "moderate and "high instability". The mining operation is required to comply with guidelines and requirements established by the California Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) and the Office of Mine Reclamation (OMR).

Security and Safety: Traffic control will consist of placing warning signs along Snow Camp Road in both directions from the quarry access road. It will not be necessary to detour or otherwise restrict traffic. Minor traffic delays may occur when vehicles encounter trucks leaving or entering the quarry. Incidental delays will be temporary, ending when extraction and processing activities are completed and trucks/equipment are removed from the site. Access to the quarry will be limited when not in operation.

The access road will be graded to course stormwater towards the inboard side of the road each fall prior to the commencement of winter rains. Roadside ditches will be cleared of rocks and organic matter to assure functionality of two ditch relief culverts. The quarry floor will be finish graded to control stormwater by diverting it towards the center of the site. A trench will be constructed at the toe of the quarry face to enhance percolation and/or evaporate onsite stormwater. Each end of the trench will be finished graded to a 10:1 slope to create escape routes for livestock and animals that may become trapped. If the existing stormwater containment berm around the exterior of the site becomes damaged or is breached during extraction or end-haul activities, it will be reconstructed as necessary to control stormwater runoff prior to the commencement of winter rains. Any rebuilt sections of berm will be straw mulched to eliminate the potential for discharge of fine sediment. Stormwater will be controlled onsite to the greatest extent possible.

Tribal Consultation: Archaeological site maps included in the Environmental Data Bank located at the Natural Resource Division of Humboldt County Public Works indicates that there are no known or recorded archaeological resources or historical sites at the project site. The portion of Snow Camp Road east of the site is shown on the 1865 Doolittle Map of Humboldt County as a trail connecting two major east-west trails, which ran between Humboldt Bay and the Trinity County mines and northern Sacramento Valley, respectively. The project site was reviewed by the Northwest Information Center, the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, and the Blue Lake Rancheria. The Bear River Band responded indicating they had no issues with the proposed project as long as the standard Inadvertent Discovery condition is included within the conditions of approval. An informational note has been included with the Conditions of Approval indicating the steps to be taken should cultural resources and/or human remains be discovered during ground disturbing activities.

Environmental Review: A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was adopted on September 25, 1995. An Addendum to the Mitigated Negative Declaration was approved on March 21, 2011, during the reapproval and modification of the permit.

Reclamation Plan: A reclamation plan was previously approved for the end use would remain in effect. There are no changes to the mining operation, permit boundary, extraction volumes, nor to the adopted end use. Annual Winterization will occur after each mining season. The quarry would be subject to the original conditions of approval, and those that were added during the permit modification in 2011 and any additional conditions added for the current reapproval should the Planning Commission find any necessary.

Mining Permit Reapproval Standards: Because this permit had expired, the findings for approval are those required for approval of new surface mining operations. In addition to the required findings for all permits (Section 312-17.1), the County mining ordinance provides that mining permits may be approved for a period up to 15 years. Under §391-4(3) of the Code, the permit may be reapproved by the Planning Commission on the following bases:

1. The application and supporting documents adequately describe the proposed surface mining operation, and adequate measures are incorporated to mitigate the probable or known significant environmental effects which have been or may be caused by the proposed operation. The project has been reviewed by County Staff and outside agencies which have confirmed the operation has been designed to mitigate any environmental or health and safety concerns. The operation is inspected annually by County Planning staff for compliance with the Reclamation Plan and permit conditions. The last inspection report from November 2024 shows no violations or other issues.
2. The proposed use and location of the surface mining operation is properly located in accordance with the General Plan and any relevant element thereof to the community as a whole, and to other land uses in the vicinity. The location of the mining operation occurs in Agriculture General and Timber zone which is allowable with a Conditional Use Permit under the Current General Plan. Affected agencies have reviewed the proposal and only one new condition of approval is proposed. There are no other known changes in the law or circumstances that warrant additions or changes.
3. If the Planning Commission determines that the above findings cannot be made, it shall so state and deny the application. The project has been in operation for several decades with no noted issues and the Staff does not recommend denial at this time.

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. A referral received from the

California Department of Fish and Wildlife provided comments, which have been incorporated into the analysis and recommended conditions of approval as appropriate.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Planning Commission could elect not to approve the reapproval. This alternative is not recommended as the mining operation has been operated and maintained in good standing and no changes from the original approval are proposed.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
 - A. Conditions of Approval
 - B. Reclamation Plan
 - C. Site Plan
2. Addendum to the Negative Declaration (1995)
3. Plan of Operations (2025)
4. Referral Agency Comments and Recommendations
 - A. Public Works Land Use Referral Response
 - B. California Department of Fish and Wildlife Referral Response

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