



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 12/18/2025

File #: 25-1431

To: Planning Commission

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Consent

SUBJECT:

Drewry Pit Surface Mining Permit
Assessor Parcel Numbers (APN) 216-021-007
Record No.: PLN-2025-19190
New Harris area

A 15-year reapproval of a recently expired Conditional Use Permit (CUP-19-092XMX/PLN-13825-SMA) and Surface Mining Permit (SMP-02-92XMX) including a Reclamation Plan (RP-02-92XMX) for up to 20,000 cubic yards of material per year over 15 years. The term is 15 years and would expire in 2040. The site has historically been mined since 1993 by the Humboldt County Department of Public Works. The original permit allowed for annual extraction of 2,000 cubic yards for a total of 30,000 cubic yards and periodic use of a portable crusher two weeks annually. An approved modification in 2009, allowed for an annual extraction of up to 20,000 cubic yards with the total amount of extraction not to exceed 69,200 cubic yards. Operations include extraction, crushing and stockpiling. No washing and no asphalt/cement batch processing will be conducted on site. In the event localized greywacke boulders are encountered, small scale separation with charges may be performed. No new access roads to the quarry will be constructed. Heavy equipment to be used on site includes: an excavator, a front-end loader; and a portable rock crusher. The Humboldt County Department of Public Works has a License Agreement with the owner for activities associated with mining, crushing, and stockpiling.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt the resolution, (Attachment 1) which does the following:
 - a. Finds the Planning Commission has considered the Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration (SMND) previously adopted for the Drewry Pit 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-2025-19190, based on the substantial evidence submitted; and

- c. Approves the Conditional Use/Surface Mining Permit and Reclamation Plan.

DISCUSSION:

Project Location: The project is located in the New Harris area, on both sides of Bell Springs Road, approximately 1000 feet south from the intersection of Island Mountain Road and Bell Springs, on the property known as 7828 Bell Springs Road.

Present General Plan Land Use Designation: Agriculture Grazing (AG) Density: 160 to 120 acres per dwelling unit. Slope Stability: High Instability (3)

Present Zoning: Agriculture Exclusive with a Special Building Site combining zone specifying a 160-acre minimum parcel size (AE-B-5(160)).

Environmental Review: A Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted with the original permit in 1993. A Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared for the modified project in 2009. 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 applicant is seeking reapproval of a recently expired Conditional Use and Surface Mining Permit and approval of the Reclamation Plan for an aggregate mining and stockpiling operation on an approximate 2.0-acre site on Bell Springs Road in the New Harris area. Mined rock is used for County Road maintenance and repair projects in the area. The Humboldt County Department of Public Works has a License Agreement with the owner for activities associated with mining, crushing, and stockpiling. The term is 15 years and would expire in 2040.

The County approved operations for the Drewry Pit in 1993 for the annual extraction of 2,000 cubic yards and for a total extraction volume of 30,000 cubic yards. The site had been mined prior to 1993 and was already partially developed. Over the period from 1993-2024, the rock face was mined several times. The permit allowed periodic use of a portable crusher two weeks annually. A containment berm was constructed along the west side of the quarry floor and stockpile area under the original permit.

A modification was approved in 2009 to allow an annual extraction of up to 20,000 cubic yards. The total volume of rock extracted will not exceed 69,200 cubic yards during the 15-year life of the permit. This permit expired on March 19, 2024.

Previously approved operations are not proposed to change, and they include extraction, crushing, and stockpiling rock from the quarry face. Rock is removed from the quarry face by ripping and pushing it to the floor with a bulldozer. In the event localized greywacke boulders are encountered, small scale separation with charges may be performed. Excavated rock is pushed into temporary stockpiles. Rock from temporary stockpiles will be transported to the crusher via front-end loader. Crushed rock will then be transferred to the permanent stockpile. Once crushing activities are completed, the crusher assembly will be dismantled and removed from the area. Stockpiles are accessed throughout the year as need. Project facilities include a portable rock crusher, consisting of jaw and cone crushers, conveyors, and a generator trailer will be temporarily located on the quarry floor between the quarry face and permanent stockpile area.

The rock quarry is located on top of the ridge which separates the Main Eel River and the South Fork Eel River drainages, in an area of rolling to steep slopes with grasses as main vegetation. The surrounding land use is predominantly timberland. Final reclamation will consist of re-grading the site, spreading topsoil and revegetating the area with pasture grasses for a final end use consistent with previous and surrounding agricultural uses.

There is no surface water at this site. The quarry is not located in an ultramafic rock unit and does not appear to contain asbestos, serpentine or ultramafic rock. Dust control measures will consist of watering the quarry entrance and floor as needed with a water truck using an offsite water source. The nearest residence is 0.4 mile away with all other residences in the area at least one mile away. Operations are consistent with County noise standards.

The project will be subject to extensive local, state and federal regulation. 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, Army Corps of Engineers, and California Regional Water Quality Control Board. Previous to the expiration, the site was inspected annually and found to be in compliance with all requirements.

The 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 residential uses; 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, as well as the history of compliance with all requirements,

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.

Biological Resources: As noted in previous approvals, the site does not contain any surface water, but the site does contain potential habitat for three rare or sensitive plant and lichen species, and the hill above the quarry face contains potential habitat for *beaked tracyina*. Proposed mining activities will continue pushing the quarry face east with a loss of approximately 0.75 acre of potential habitat. The closest recorded occurrence of the plant is approximately 3.7 miles away, and it is unlikely that the plant occurs in the project area. Reclamation will include restoration of the grassland/oak woodland habitat favored by *beaked tracyina*. The project does not include expansion of operations beyond the current footprint and will not affect habitat for the other two plant habitats that may be found in the project vicinity.

The project vicinity contains habitat for owls and murrelets. However, 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 noise generated by mechanized equipment, including the rock crushing assembly, may affect wildlife. However, the edge of the nearest potential habitat is approximately 0.1 mile east of the quarry, and it is unlikely that owls and/or murrelets would be present at this distance since this is the edge of habitat and is along Bell Springs Road which is subject to intermittent disturbance from vehicular traffic.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) was referred this project on March 13, 2025. No response was received. On August 27, 2025, Planning staff reached out to the DFW again for any comments concerning the reapproval of the project. Fish and Wildlife staff stated that they had no comments on the project being reapproved.

General Plan/Zoning: The property is designated as Agricultural Grazing (AG) in the Humboldt County General Plan. This designation is both a resource production zone and an open space implementation zone. The extraction of minerals from the property is consistent with the intended use of the property for resource production and the end use, after reclamation will be open space consistent with the surrounding agricultural grazing land. The zoning of the property, Agricultural Exclusive, allows surface mining subject to a Conditional Use Permit. The surface mine has been in operation for decades with no documented adverse impacts to public health, safety, or welfare.

Access: The property is accessed via a maintained gravel drive off of Bell Springs Road. No new access roads to the quarry will be constructed however the project is conditioned to require the first 25 feet of the driveway to be paved. Material will continue to be transported from this quarry along Bell Springs Road. Operations include extraction, crushing and stockpiling. No washing and no asphalt/cement batch processing will be conducted on site. In the event localized greywacke boulders are encountered, small scale separation with charges may be performed Heavy equipment to be used on site includes: an excavator, a front-end loader; and a portable rock crusher.

Geologic Suitability: The project site is in an area rated “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: Based on information submitted by the applicant, contained in the environmental documents, and referrals from jurisdictional agencies and interested parties at present, staff believes that the project as conditioned will not cause significant environmental effects nor to be detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare.

This project will not pose a significant increase in risk to people on-site due to the following factors: the quarry is in an isolated location, substantial amounts of fuel will not be stored on-site, the quarrying method does not leave large pits or holes, and the material to be mined is structurally stable. Hazards from the project are limited. Once final reclamation efforts are completed, no unstable rock piles or excavation "holes" will exist. No attractive nuisance to encourage trespass will remain. No residual equipment, structures, refuse, etc. will remain on the reclamation site or elsewhere on the parcel.

Based on information in the application, and a review of relevant references in the Department, staff has determined that, provided the conditions of project approval and mitigation measures identified in the Conditional Negative Declaration are required as operating conditions, no adverse effects on fish and wildlife resources or the habitat upon which wildlife depends will result.

Tribal Consultation: The quarry site has been operational for the past 55 years. Prior to the quarry being operated by the County of Humboldt starting in 1993, it was operated and maintained by the property owner Richard Drewry. The site is located on a ridge containing an original trail utilized by the ancestral people this land. An environmental assessment was done in 1977 by the Northwestern Indian Cemetery Protective Association (NICPA), who conducted a Phase 1 field inspection and found no evidence of archaeological resources. The Division of Natural Resources of the Humboldt County Department of Public Works has indicated that their database contains no recorded archaeological sites within the project area. No historical resources as defined in §15064.5 exist. The geology at the project site is not unique to the area nor is it a paleontological resource or site. There is no evidence that the project would impact archaeological resources.

Although no further investigation was recommended, an informational note has been added to the Conditions of Approval stating that work must be halted if cultural resources are discovered during the construction process. An informational note has been included with the Conditions of Approval indicating the steps to be taken should culturally resources and/or human remains be discovered during ground disturbing activities.

Environmental Review: A Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted with the original permit in

1993. A Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared for the modified project. No changes to the mining operation are proposed as part of this reapproval.

Reclamation Plan: A reclamation plan was submitted and approved under RP-02-92XMX in 1993 and reapproved in 2009 (**CUP-19-92XM/SMP-02-92-XM/RP-02-92XM**) The reclamation plan that was previously approved for the end use would remain in effect and would be required to be implemented now if the Planning Commission does not approve the permit reapproval request. There are no changes to the mining operation, permit boundary, extraction volumes, nor to the adopted end use. Post reclamation, the parcel would be utilized for cattle grazing as the surrounding property currently is.

The quarry would be subject to the original conditions of approval, and those that were added during the last permit reapproval in 2009 and any additional conditions imposed for the current reapproval.

Mining Permit Approval 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(b)(3) of the Code, the permit may be approved 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 Exclusive and Agricultural Grazing zone which is allowable with a Conditional Use Permit under the Current General Plan. Affected agencies have reviewed the proposal and no new conditions of approval are proposed. There are no other known changes in the law or circumstances that warrant additions or changes to conditions that staff is aware of.
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 and the Staff does not recommend denial at this time.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The project was referred to responsible agencies. Comments were received only from the department of Public Works, who recommended that all surface mining sites be located on category 4 roadways and have improved driveways onto county roadways. (Attachment 4). The project site is located on a category 4 roadway.

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 Attachment 1B - Drewry Pit Rec Plan 1993.2009
 - C. Drewry Reclamation Plan 2025
 - D. Site Plan
2. Drewry Pit MND
3. Operations Plan
4. Referral Comments
 - A. Department of Public Works

Applicant:

Public Works County of Humboldt
1106 Second St
Eureka, CA 95501

Owner:

Patrick Drewry
Po Box 226
Redway, CA 95560

Agent:

Humboldt County DPW, c/o Danith Davis,
1106 Second St,
Eureka, CA 95501

File #: 25-1431

Please contact Michael Kein, Planner, at MKein2@co.humboldt.ca.us or 707-268-3739 if you have questions about this item.