

**RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**

Resolution Number 25-

Record Number PLN-2025-19168

Assessor Parcel Numbers (APNs): 214-113-003, 214-254-004, 214-254-002, 214-253-002, 214-116-003, 214-116-004, 214-111-003, 214-221-001, 214-221-008, 214-153-003, 214-155-001, 214-245-005, 214-245-004, 214-245-003, 214-246-002, 216-301-006, 216-301-005, 216-301-011 and 216-186-002

Making the required findings for certifying compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and recommends that the Planning Commission approve the Satterlee General Plan Amendment, Zone Reclassification and the additional parcel into the existing Class B Williamson Act Contract

WHEREAS, an applicant-initiated General Plan Amendment, Zone Reclassification and addition of a 52-acre parcel to the existing Fort Seward Ranch Class B Williamson Act Contract in the Fort Seward area. 17 legal parcels, which include 19 APNs, are involved in the application. Four parcels, APNs 214-116-004, 214-221-001, 216-301-005, and 216-301-006, require a General Plan Amendment to change current General Plan designation of Residential Agriculture (RA) and Commercial Recreation (CR) into either Timberlands (T) or Agriculture Grazing (AG). 16 APNs, 214-113-003, 214-254-004, 214-254-002, 214-253-002, 214-116-003, 214-116-004, 214-111-003, 214-221-001, 214-153-003, 214-155-001, 214-245-005, 214-245-003, 214-246-002, 216-301-006, 216-301-005, 216-301-011, are proposed to be rezoned from Agriculture Exclusive (AE), Unclassified (U) and Agriculture General (AG) to Timber Production Zone (TPZ). One of the parcels, 216-186-002, is proposed to be added to the existing Class B Williamson Act Contract for the Fort Seward Ranch.

WHEREAS, the County Planning Division, as the lead agency, found the project exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15305(a) of the CEQA Guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the Humboldt County Planning Commission held a duly-noticed public hearing on **October 2, 2025**; reviewed, considered, and discussed the application for a General Plan Amendment, Zone Reclassification, and addition of a 52-acre parcel into the existing Fort Seward Ranch Class B Williamson Act Contract.

Now, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Planning Commission makes all the following findings:

- 1. FINDING:** **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** A General Plan Amendment (GPA), Zone Reclassification (ZR) and Class B Williamson Act Contract addition involving 17 legal parcels which include 19 Assessor

Parcel Numbers (APNs) owned by the Satterlee family. The GPA is requested for four APNs to change the parcels from Residential Agriculture (RA) and Commercial Recreation (CR) to Timberlands (T) and Agriculture Grazing (AG). The ZR is requested for 16 APNs that will have areas rezoned to Timberland Production (TPZ) from Agriculture Exclusive (AE), Unclassified (U) and Agriculture General (AG). One APN, 216-186-002, is a 52-acre parcel that is proposed to be added to the existing Fort Seward Ranch Class B Williamson Act Contract.

EVIDENCE: a) Project File: PLN-2025-19168.

- 2. FINDING:** **CEQA.** The requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act have been complied with. The project is exempt from environmental review per Sections 15317 (Open Space Contracts) and Section 15264 (Timberland Preserves) of the California Government Code.

EVIDENCE: a) Section 15317 of the CEQA Guidelines, and Section 15264 of the CEQA Guidelines specify that rezoning land to Timberland Preserves and establishing Williamson Act Contracts are exempt from environmental review.

ZONE RECLASSIFICATION (ZR)

- 3. FINDING:** The proposed project is in the public interest.

EVIDENCE: a) The proposed Zone Reclassification is intended to be in the public interest. The 16 APNs that are identified to be rezoned are all adjacent to existing Timberland (T) and Agricultural Grazing (AG) parcels under the same ownership and within the over 24,000-acre Fort Seward Ranch Agricultural Preserve that was established in 1973. All the subject parcels are primarily timbered with Douglas Fir, Black Oak, White Oak and contain grassland for cattle management. Conservation, development and utilization of forest resources are consistent with the California Timberland Productivity Act. Protecting forest and agricultural lands for continued timber, agricultural production and open space is in the public interest.

4. FINDING: The proposed change is consistent with the General Plan.

EVIDENCE: a) The main objective of the proposed Zone Reclassification is to rezone multiple properties to TPZ as the parcels are adjacent and contiguous to the larger Fort Seward Ranch Agricultural Preserve that was established in 1973. The applicant owns multiple properties within the area and the overall result of the proposed project will be consistent with the General Plan should the General Plan Amendment and Zone Reclassification be approved.

5. FINDING: There is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.

EVIDENCE: a) Changes to the land use designation and zoning are requested on 16 APNs, which have a combined acreage of approximately 1,583-acres. All parcels are adjacent and contiguous to the existing Fort Seward Ranch, which is primarily used for cattle and timber production and was established in 1973. No development is proposed which could negatively impact the environment. The zoning amendments will result in less intensive development being permissible on these parcels.

6. FINDING: The proposed development does not reduce the residential density for any parcel below that utilized by the Department of Housing and Community Development in determining compliance with housing element law unless the following written findings are made supported by substantial evidence: 1) the reduction is consistent with the adopted general plan including the housing element; and 2) the remaining sites identified in the housing element are adequate to accommodate the County share of the regional housing need; and 3) the property contains insurmountable physical or environmental limitations and clustering of residential units on the developable portions of the site has been maximized.

EVIDENCE: a) Two of the parcels (APN 216-301-005 and 216-301-006) were identified in the 2019 Housing Inventory. Both parcels were identified within the Above Moderate-Income inventory in the Rural Residential Zoning Group and have the potential to support one housing unit each. APN 216-301-005 is 11.59-acres and APN

216-301-006 is 25.06-acres. Both parcels are undeveloped and vacant and not proximate to public facilities.

Even though creating and protecting affordable housing opportunities is directed within the General Plan, the location of the two parcels is more appropriate for agriculture. The Zone Reclassification aligns with the goals, policies and standards of the Guiding Principles (Section 1.4 in the General Plan) and Forest Resources (Section 4.6 in the General Plan). The Guiding Principles encourage, incentivize and support agriculture, timber ecosystem services and compatible uses on resource lands. The Forest Resource section supports the conservation, development and utilization of forest resources and its policies are consistent with the California Timberland Productivity Act.

Although the applicant is requesting removal of two identified Housing Inventory parcels, the remaining sites identified in the housing element are anticipated to be adequate to accommodate the County's share of the regional housing needs. According to Chapter 8, table 8-5 in the updated 2019 Housing Element of the General Plan, projected fair share housing needs in the Above Moderate-income category are 583 units. In table 8-6, residential land inventory identified within the Above Median-income category (RR, RA and RE Zoning Groups) is 1,116 parcels, with 1,214 potential housing units. This indicates the capacity of Above Moderate-Income housing inventory is over double the projected need. Should the two parcels be removed from the Above Moderate-Income inventory and converted to Agricultural lands, the remaining identified parcels are more than sufficient to meet the target need.

The two parcels identified within the 2019 Housing Element inventory are both more appropriately used for agriculture due to the proximity to other agricultural lands as well as the distance to public facilities. Both parcels are located approximately 10 miles from the nearest town and adjacent to existing lands within an Agricultural Preserve. There are no existing residential unit clusters, and all surrounding parcels contain multiple acres.

GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT (GPA)

7. FINDING: The proposed revision is in the public interest.

EVIDENCE: a) The proposed Amendment is intended to be in the public interest. The four APNs that are identified as requiring a change in land use designation are all adjacent to existing Timberland (T) and Agricultural Grazing (AG) parcels under the same ownership of the over 24,000-acre Fort Seward Ranch Class B Williamson Act Contract. The subject parcels are primarily timbered with Douglas Fir, Black Oak, White Oak and contain grassland for cattle management. The General Plan Amendment aligns with the goals, policies and standards of the Guiding Principles (Section 1.4 in the General Plan) and Forest Resources (Section 4.6 in the General Plan). The Guiding Principles encourage, incentivize and support agriculture, timber ecosystem services and compatible uses on resource lands. The Forest Resource section supports the conservation, development and utilization of forest resources and its policies are consistent with the California Timberland Productivity Act. Protecting forest and agricultural lands for continued timber, agricultural production and open space is in the public interest.

8. FINDING: The proposed revision is consistent with the Guiding Principles in Section 1.4 of the Humboldt County General Plan.

EVIDENCE: a) The proposed General Plan Amendment is in the public interest and is consistent with the Guiding Principles of the General Plan. The four APNs that are identified to change land use designation are all adjacent to existing Timberland (T) and Agricultural Grazing (AG) parcels under the same ownership and within the existing over 24,000-acre Fort Seward Ranch that was established in 1973. All the subject parcels are primarily timbered with Douglas Fir, Black Oak, White Oak and grassland for cattle management. The Guiding Principles of the General Plan provide a framework for the overall objectives and intended protection of community values to preserve the County's unique character and quality of life. Protecting forest and agricultural lands for continued timber and agricultural production by way of appropriately balancing regulations and incentives is consistent with this petition. Although creating and protecting affordable

housing opportunities is also part of the Guiding Principles, the location of the two parcels identified in the 2019 Housing Inventory is more appropriately sited for agriculture. The two parcels that were identified in the 2019 Housing Inventory were part of the Above Moderate-Income inventory in the Rural Residential Zoning Group and have the potential to support one housing unit each. APN 216-301-005 is 11.59-acres and APN 216-301-006 is 25.06-acres. Both parcels are undeveloped and vacant and not proximate to public facilities. According to the General Plan, Chapter 8 table 8-5 in the updated 2019 Housing Element, projected fair share housing needs in the Above Moderate-income category are 583 units. In table 8-6, residential land inventory identified within the Above Median-income category (RR, RA and RE Zoning Groups) is 1,116 parcels, with 1,214 potential housing units. This indicates the capacity of the Above Moderate-Income housing inventory is over double the projected need. Should the two parcels be removed from the Above Moderate-Income housing inventory and converted to Agricultural lands, the remaining identified parcels are more than sufficient to meet the target need. Placing the parcels within the T or AG designation for supporting agriculture and timber ecosystem services as an Agricultural Preserve is in the public interest and consistent with the Guiding Principles of the General Plan.

9. FINDING: The proposed revision is applicable to the goals of the Plan.

EVIDENCE: a) The goal of the Humboldt County General Plan is to establish the kinds, locations, and intensities of land uses as well as applicable resource protection and development policies. The proposed General Plan Amendment will change the land use designations of 4 APNs from Residential Agriculture and Commercial Recreation to Timberland and Agriculture Grazing. Since the parcels are adjacent and contiguous to the existing over 24,000-acre Fort Seward Ranch, the addition of these lands to agricultural activities supports resource protection and the development policies. No additional changes are proposed, and no development is associated with the proposal, therefore the proposed project is consistent with the applicable goals of the Plan.

FINDINGS FOR AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE ESTABLISHMENT

10. FINDING: The proposed project is consistent with the Humboldt County General Plan.

EVIDENCE: a) Chapter 4.5 of the Humboldt County General Plan “Agricultural Resources” recognizes the significance of agriculture in Humboldt County. The two goals listed under 4.5.3 include “Agricultural Production – economically viable agricultural operations contributing to the growth and stability of the economy and a strong market demand for agricultural lands dedicated to agricultural production” and also “Preservation of Agricultural Lands – agricultural land preserved to the maximum extent possible for continued agricultural use in parcel sizes that support economically feasible agricultural operations.” A specific policy, AG-P3, is to “Support the Williamson Act Property Tax Incentive Program” by continuing, enhancing, and growing the County Williamson Act program. The primary purpose of the Williamson Act of 1965 was to preserve agricultural and open space lands by discouraging the premature and unnecessary conversion to urban areas. The Williamson Act Contracts restrict subdivision of preserve lands, rendering rights of division as subservient to the contract. Several additional policies in Chapter 4.5 of the Humboldt County General Plan prioritize the conservation of agricultural lands and soils (AG-P5, AG-P6, AG-P16).

11. FINDING: The land to be included in the agricultural preserve contract is, and will continue to be, used for the purpose of producing agricultural commodities for commercial purposes, and uses compatible with agriculture.

EVIDENCE: a) The subject 52-acre parcel that is proposed to be added to the existing Fort Seward Williamson Act Contract has historically been used for agriculture and timber and was inadvertently left out of the Preserve when the Preserve was established in 1973. The proposed preserve would support and encourage continuation of commercial agricultural uses through contractual obligation. Based on information submitted, the establishment of the preserve will not conflict with any adjoining or surrounding land uses. The Humboldt County

Williamson Act Advisory Committee has reviewed the proposed preserve and recommended approval on July 31, 2025.

CLASS B CRITERIA - HUMBOLDT COUNTY WILLIAMSON ACT GUIDELINES

12. FINDINGS: The preserve area shall contain not less than 600 acres of land, and no individual lot or parcel of land shall be less than 160 contiguous acres.

EVIDENCE: a) The subject parcel is adjacent and contiguous to the existing Fort Seward Ranch, which was established on November 13, 1973. The 52-acre assessor's parcel is legally part of a 160-acre parcel as established under the patent parcel Homestead Certificate Number 1854, dated July 13, 1908. The Fort Seward Ranch is approximately 24,000-acres, which is significantly larger than the required 600-acre minimum.

13. FINDINGS: All land placed into a Class B Grazing Land Preserve and Contract must be zoned Timberland Production Zone (TPZ) or Agriculture Exclusive with a combining zone establishing a 160-acre minimum parcel size (AE-B-5(160)).

EVIDENCE: a) The subject property is a 52-acre Assessor Parcel Number, which is legally part of APN 216-234-001, as established under the patent parcel Homestead Certificate Number 1854, dated July 13, 1908, and contains 160 acres. The parcel is zoned AE-B-5(160).

14. FINDING: Land within the preserve shall be non-prime agricultural land of statewide or local significance.

EVIDENCE: a) All land within the proposed 52-acre parcel to be added into the existing Fort Seward Class B Williamson Act Contract is non-prime agricultural land.

DECISION

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the above findings and evidence, the Humboldt County Planning Commission does hereby

- Adopt the findings set forth in this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Humboldt:

1. Approve the General Plan Amendment and Zone Reclassification.
2. Adopt Ordinance No. _____ amending Section 311-7 of the Humboldt County Code by reclassifying property in the Fort Seward area [PLN-2025-19168] so that the General Plan designation from Residential Agriculture (RA) and Commercial Recreation (CR) to Timberlands (T) and Agriculture Grazing (AG) and Zone Reclassification Agriculture Exclusive (AE), Unclassified (U) and Agriculture General (AG) to Timber Production Zone (TPZ).
3. Approve the addition of APN 216-186-002 into the Fort Seward Class B Williamson Act Contract and enter into an amended contract with the property owners.
4. Direct the Planning Staff to prepare and file a Notice of Exemption with the County Clerk and Office of Planning and Research.

Adopted after review and consideration of all the evidence on **October 2, 2025**.

The motion was made by COMMISSIONER _____ and seconded by COMMISSIONER _____ and the following vote:

AYES: Commissioners:

NOES: Commissioners:

ABSTAIN: Commissioners:

ABSENT: Commissioners:

DECISION:

I, John H. Ford, Secretary to the Planning Commission of the County of Humboldt, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct record of the action taken on the above-entitled matter by said Commission at a meeting held on the date noted above.

John H. Ford, Director
Planning and Building Department