



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 4/17/2025

File #: 25-534

To: Planning Commission

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Consent

SUBJECT:

Cooks Valley Special Events (2023-2027)

Mateel Community Center, Inc.; Conditional Use Permit and Annual Monitoring Report

Application Number PLN-2023-18108

Cooks Valley area

Assessor's Parcel Number(s): (APN's): (Humboldt County): 033-271-007, 033-271-009, 033-271-008, 033-271-004, 033-271-005, and 033-271-015

(Mendocino County): 053-020-011, 053-020-010, 053-020-012, 053-020-013, 053-020-014, 053-020-016, 053-020-015

Review of the Annual Report for the approved Conditional Use Permit authorizing events operated by the Mateel Community Center (MCC) at the County Line Ranch (formerly Dimmick) in the Cooks Valley area. The MCC permit allows two music festivals to be held annually on several parcels spanning the Humboldt/Mendocino county line in the Cooks Valley area. Both events feature live music, camping, and various vendors including cannabis-related concessions and consumption within discrete areas on the properties. One event is the Summer Arts and Music Festival which occurs over two days and is ordinarily held during the third weekend in June. The second event is Reggae on the River, which ordinarily occurs over three days during the first weekend in August. The Summer Arts and Music Festival was not held at the County Line Ranch in 2024 but instead occurred in Redway on June 8th and 9th at the Mateel Community Center. The Reggae on the River event was held on August 2, 3 and 4 of 2024. The Use Permit was approved by the Planning Commission in 2023 and requires the Mateel Community Center to submit a monitoring report to the Commission for review on an annual basis. During review, the Commission may amend conditions or operational requirements to better address impacts or control public nuisance. Authorized attendance levels may also be adjusted based on annual performance.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Planning Commission:

1. Receive the Annual Post Event Report

DISCUSSION:

Project Location: The permit authorizes events occurring on several parcels spanning the Humboldt/Mendocino county line in the Cooks Valley area, on the properties known as 83950 Road 442E and 240 Cooks Valley Road. Both are located on the east side of State Highway 101 at its intersection with State Highway 271 and Cooks Valley Road. Auxiliary parking and support facilities are found on several parcels adjacent to the event site (located at 325 US Highway 101 and 101 Cook Lane), as well as several parcels to the north located near the southern boundary of Richardson Grove State Park, on properties known as 705 US Highway 101, 750 US Highway 101, and 657 Old Highway 101. The northern auxiliary parcels are host to the One Log House and Dispensary, Richardson Grove RV park, and portions of the French's Camp property located on the west side of the South Fork of the Eel River.

Present General Plan Land Use Designation: Timberland (T) and Industrial, Resource Related (IR). Density: (T) 40 to 160 acres per unit. (IR) none-specified; Slope Stability: Low and Moderate Instability.

Present Zoning: Timberland Production Zone (TPZ) and Agriculture Exclusive (AE) and - min parcel size 40-160 acres.

State Appeal: The project NOT is not located within the Coastal Zone.

Major Issues: Fire Safety

Monitoring Required:

Annual Compliance Monitoring.

Executive Summary: Review of the Annual Report for an approved Use Permit authorizing events held by the Mateel Community Center at the County Line Ranch in the Cooks Valley area. The permit allows two music festivals to be held annually. Both events feature live music, camping and various vendors, including areas for cannabis-related concessions and consumption. The Reggae on the River event took place during the first weekend in August and was the only event operated by the Mateel at Cooks Valley in 2024. The post event report provided by the applicant is included as part of Attachment 2B. The approved operations plan is included as part of Attachment 2A. It is recommended that the Planning Commission accept the report as submitted.

Permit Background

On May 18, 2023, the Humboldt County Planning Commission authorized renewal and modification of two Use Permits allowing up to four large events to be held annually in the Cooks Valley area. They

are summarized in the table below.

#	PERMIT	*EVENT	PERMITTEE / OPERATOR	TOTAL # (MAX)			
				DAYS	CAMPING	ATTENDANCE	VEHICLES
1	PLN-2023-18107	Northern Nights	NNMG	4	9000	10,000	4500
2			NNMG	2	4000	5000	2500
3	PLN-2023-18108	Summer Arts & Music Fest.	MCC	2	4500	5000	2500
4		Reggae on the River	MCC	3	4500 ₁ 7000	5000 ₁ 8000	2500 ₁ 4000
MCC – Mateel Community Center NNMG – Northern Nights Music Group, LLC							
* <u>event</u> name omitted where uncertain							
₁ camping, attendance, and parking may be increased where authorized to use Cooks Valley Campground (Bowman) property in Mendocino County							

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The Use Permit held by the Northern Nights Music Group (NNMG) allows operation of a 4-day event and a separate two-day event. The four-day event is known as Northern Nights Music Festival, which has been operating from the site since 2013 and typically occurs during the third week in July. The CLR property is primarily used for auxiliary parking and camping during operation of the four-day event. The last time a second NNMG event occurred was in 2016, during the Lumberstruck Music Festival.

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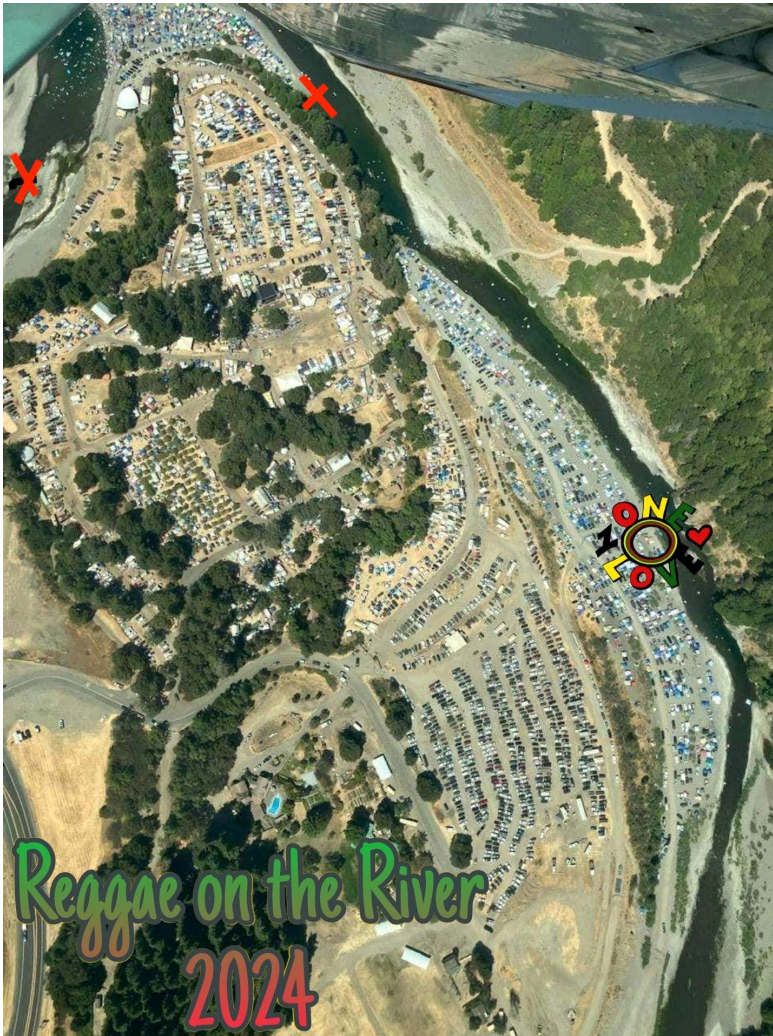
The Use Permit held by the Mateel Community Center (MCC) allows two events to be held annually from the property. Events held in recent years by the Mateel include the 2022 and 2023 Summer Arts & Music Festival and the 2024 Reggae on the River event.

The Mateel Use Permit includes a Condition of Approval requiring they annually submit a post event report detailing compliance with the terms of the permit and commitments made in their Event Operations Plan. The Commission is being asked to review and consider the information provided in the MCC Annual Post Event Monitoring Report as well as feedback from planning staff and relevant agencies to determine whether events are being conducted in compliance with the permit conditions and operational commitments made by the permittee. Under the terms of the permit, the Commission has the authority to adjust the authorized attendance levels for each year's festival(s) during review of the report for the preceding year's event(s). MCC are only planning to hold one event (Reggae on the River) in Cooks Valley in 2025 and are not seeking to increase attendance levels above those permitted in 2024. The Reggae on the River event is planned to occur over three days during the first weekend in August (1,2,3). On June 21st and 22nd the Mateel's annual Summer Arts & Music Festival will be occurring from the Southern Humboldt Community Park instead of at County Line Ranch.

Monitoring & Feedback from Agencies and Public

The 2024 Reggae on the River (ROTR) event took place during the first weekend in August (2,3,4) and an inspection was performed by planning department staff during the event. The County Line Ranch event site was also inspected by staff a week earlier during monitoring of the Northern Nights event.

Additionally, staff have spoken with numerous state and local agencies after circulation of the post-event report to these agencies in March. Agencies include: Caltrans, CHP, Environmental Health, Public Works, HC Sheriff, and Cal-FIRE, as well as several local fire protection districts and volunteer fire departments. Based on conversations with the event operator and agencies, the festival appears to have run smoothly. Traffic controls worked effectively and stage, assembly, camping, and concessions areas all were located and operated consistent with the approved event map and operations plan.



Attendance/Parking/Shuttles

The applicant reports that total daily event attendance ranged from 4,373 to 4,997 persons over the course of the three-day event. Parking exceeded the capacity of the site and required use of auxiliary off-site parking areas. An area for parking on the Arthur property was opened for staff and volunteer use beginning on Thursday. Additionally, an independent parking lot was operated by the owners of the Richardson Grove RV Park, which helped relieve some pressure on on-site parking. These areas are all authorized for auxiliary use under the approved Use Permit. The shuttle program proved successful with ridership ranging from 1200-1500 passengers each day.

Fuels Reduction & Fire Protection

Positive feedback regarding the event has been received from Battalion Chief Ross Dollarhide of Cal-FIRE and Chief Tim Tietz of the Garberville Fire Protection District. GFPD note that Fire Lanes were kept clear and site work was done ahead of the event to accommodate fire personnel and equipment placement and establishment of control lines for prevention and pre-planning. GFPD also note that the fire suppression water supply was sufficient and communication and coordination between site managers and production personnel was beyond satisfactory. In their response Cal-FIRE state that they had no comments or concerns regarding the 2024 Mateel event at County Line Ranch.

Water Use

Approximately 40,200 gallons of water were used during the three days of the event and two days following. To put this in context, approximately 24,500 gallons were used in the entire month of June 2023 during which the 2-day Summer Arts and Music Festival was held -this includes domestic non-event-related water use.



MCC and the CLR are currently working to permit a bladder used to store non-potable water for dust control during events. Though event-related water use has yet to exceed the storage capacity of the site, this remains a matter to monitor closely since usage changes from year to year and the site has yet to host the full complement of permitted events in any given year. Furthermore, a separate Use

Permit is being brought forward to authorize an additional 3,000-person event operated by a different non-profit organization (501T3 / PLN-2024-19010)

While agency feedback concerning the 2024 ROTR event has been largely positive, two issues arose last year stemming from activities not authorized under the permit or failure to comply with MCC responsibilities established under the Use Permit conditions and Mitigation Measures.

ISSUE 1:

Picnic Tables Used as Temporary Bridge over South Fork

In late August of last year the Department received photos and an inquiry concerning picnic tables placed in the South Fork Eel River being used as a bridge between the County Line Ranch and French's Camp (Arthur) property. The placement of picnic tables in the river was not approved as part of any County permit or any other grant of approval. In speaking with representatives of the Mateel, staff learned that this action was spearheaded by a MCC volunteer ahead of the ROTR event without consulting with other members of the event operations team, and was part of an effort to retrieve/relocate materials and equipment from the former event site on the Arthur property to the CLR site ahead of last year's event. The picnic tables were removed from the bed of the river shortly thereafter.

ISSUE 2:

Arthur Pond

The Conditions of Approval and Mitigation Measures require annual draining of the pond on the Arthur property be completed by September 1st of each year. The Mateel is responsible for draining the pond because it was installed for their use at the Arthur site under an earlier version of the Use Permit allowing operation of the ROTR event from the French's Camp site. The requirement for draining was established at the request of CDFW, and is intended to prevent the pond from being useful to invasive bullfrogs. The point of completing it before September is to keep it dry for an extended period to increase the chance for eradication of juvenile bullfrogs and tadpoles. As noted in the post-event report, the Mateel did not begin draining the pond until the end of September and the pond was not fully drained until October 26th. MCC staff had trouble with the line becoming clogged and monitoring of the line was challenging due to the sites location on the opposite side of the river. To address this in the future, the applicant will be completing the draining during the post-event cleanup period when there is still a large number of volunteers and staff available to monitor the effort and troubleshoot any issues that arise during draining.



Environmental Review: An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was certified for the original project in 1992 (SCH 92-033305). Two Supplemental EIRs were certified for revisions to the project in 2005 and 2008 (SCH 92-033035). A third Supplemental EIR was certified for the project on January 3, 2013 (SCH #2012082108). Numerous Addendums have been prepared in concert with prior modifications to the permit. In 2023 an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was adopted during renewal and modification of the two Use Permits ([SCH #2023040570](https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/2023040570/Attachment/82Jybh) <https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/2023040570/Attachment/82Jybh>). The document includes a raft of mitigation measures designed to address potential impacts related to the following checklist categories: Biological Resources, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hydrology/Water Quality, Noise, Transportation, and Wildfire. The Planning Commission's review of the Annual Report serves to implement the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program established under the most recently adopted MND.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

In March 2025 the Planning & Building Department circulated the 2024 post-event report to various agencies and solicited feedback. A list of the agencies contacted and feedback received is summarized under Attachment 3.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Planning Commission could reduce or increase attendance levels for the 2025 events either lower or higher than default levels approved under the permit. This alternative should be implemented if the Commission has information showing the existing attendance levels are inappropriate or insufficient and that a change is justified. Staff does not recommend further

consideration of this alternative because there is no evidence the proposed attendance levels are problematic.

2. The Planning Commission could continue the item further into the future to provide the applicant time to respond to questions or comments. This alternative should be implemented if the Commission is unable to make one or more of the required findings. Planning Division staff is confident that the required findings can be made. Consequently, staff does not recommend further consideration of this alternative.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Project Area Map
2. Applicant's Evidence in Support of the Required Findings
 - A. Operations Plan (2023-27)
 - B. Post Event Wrap-up Report
3. Referral Agency Comments and Recommendations

Owner(s)

PLN-2023-18108 Mateel Community Center, Inc.			
Applicant Mateel Community Center President: Pleasure Strange P.O. Box 1910 Redway, CA 95560 (707)923-3368 pleasure@mateel.org	Owner (Cooks Valley Campground) Conrad & Trudy Bowman 83990 Road 442-E Piercy, CA 95587	Owner (County Line Ranch) Duncan Ley Outraged Orangutan LLC 895 Post Street San Francisco, CA 94109	Agent Alisha Goodrich P.O. Box 1910 Redway, CA 95560 (805)393-3334 rastapontop@gmail.com

Please contact Steven Lazar, Senior Planner, at slazar@co.humboldt.ca.us or at (707)268-3741 if you have any questions about this public hearing item.