

# Introduction

This report on natural resources and hazards in Humboldt County is the second discussion paper of Phase II of the General Plan Update, following the “Building Communities” discussion paper published in February 2002. Phase II is comprised of gathering data, examining the changed situation since the last General Plan update, and preparing to plan for land uses and resource conservation through the Year 2025.

## BACKGROUND

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Humboldt County last revised its General Plan in 1984. In the spring of 2000, the County initiated a comprehensive General Plan Update, with a multi-phased work program. Phase I, which was completed in early 2001, focused on an extensive public outreach effort to engage the public in the General Plan effort. Through a series of over 40 public meetings, public input was received on land use issues and policy concerns. Additional public outreach efforts included development of a web site, newsletter publication, and community survey. Phase I culminated in a compilation of public concerns and issues entitled the *Critical Choices Report*. The issues identified in the Critical Choices Report provide the direction for the current Phase II data collection and analysis.

As stated in the Executive Summary of the Critical Choices Report, the public desires a solid information base for General Plan decision making. The work conducted under Phase II will provide this base by developing accurate information on current conditions, thoroughly assessing issues and existing General Plan policies, and identifying a range of practical policy options that fill in the gaps where existing policies, as currently drafted or modified based on community input, do not adequately respond to the issues identified for the General Plan Update.

## FOCUS

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This report describes and evaluates Humboldt County’s natural resources and hazards, addressing many of the themes and issues identified in the Critical Choices Report.

With regard to natural resources, this report provides an assessment of current conditions related to water (surface, ground, and pollution) and watersheds; biological resources (vegetation, fisheries, and special status species); forest lands (including Timberland Production Zones); agricultural production (including soils and economic structure); parks, recreation, and open space; cultural resources (historical and archaeological sites and landmarks); mineral and energy (sand and gravel, rock, metal, and oil and gas); scenic qualities; and air quality (climate and pollutants).

The potential hazards evaluated in this report are geotechnical, soil, and seismic; flooding; fire and toxics; and noise. The County also has commissioned a separate County Master Fire Protection Plan, which will address fire hazard issues.

## **WATERSHEDS AND COMMUNITY PLANNING AREAS**

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In order to better describe the distribution of natural resources within Humboldt County, the County has been divided into 12 planning watersheds (see Figure 1-1, in Chapter 1). For reference, Table I-1 identifies which CPAs are located within each planning watershed. Note that there is a small amount of overlap among the watersheds between Trinidad and Humboldt Bay.

**Table I-1: Planning Watersheds and Community Planning Areas**

<i>Planning Watershed</i>	<i>Community Planning Area(s)</i>
Lower Klamath	Orleans
Lower Trinity	Willow Creek
South Fork Trinity	None
Redwood Creek	Orick
Trinidad <sup>1</sup>	Trinidad-Westhaven
Mad River <sup>1</sup>	McKinleyville, Fieldbrook-Glendale, Blue Lake
Eureka Plain <sup>1</sup>	Arcata, Jacoby Creek, Freshwater, Eureka
Van Duzen	Hydesville-Carlotta
Lower Eel	Fortuna, Rio Dell, Avenues (Stafford-Redcrest)
Middle Main Eel	Alderpoint
South Fork Eel	Avenues (Weott, Myers Flat, Miranda, Phillipsville), Garberville-Redway-Benbow
Cape Mendocino	Shelter Cove

<sup>1</sup> The northernmost portions of McKinleyville and Fieldbrook-Glendale CPAs extend into the Trinidad planning watershed; Arcata CPA extends east into the Mad River planning watershed.

*Source: Humboldt County GIS, 2002.*

## **ORGANIZATION**

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Due to the extensive amount of resource information, this report is divided into two volumes. Volume I provides a summary discussion that is organized by resource or hazard topic. Each resource or hazard chapter includes the following items:

- An assessment of the resource or hazard, in terms of distribution, location, and condition;
- Regulatory framework, where applicable;
- Existing General Plan policies; and
- Current policy issues (as identified in the Critical Choices Report) and potential policy options that respond to them.

A separate chapter, Chapter 14, is devoted to a summary of opportunities and constraints. This summary quantifies key resources and hazards and assesses the overall opportunities for

future development, based on the amount of “unconstrained” vacant residential and commercial/industrial land. A series of maps shows how these resources and hazards relate to vacant land with development potential under the current General Plan.

Appendix A provides a worksheet for use by the public to provide input on whether existing policies should be maintained, modified, or deleted. Appendix B lists all potential policy options outlined at the end of each resource and hazard chapter. Appendix B is provided as a tool for the public to evaluate these potential policy options. These worksheets, together with the worksheets in the Building Communities Report, will provide the basis for developing a policy framework for the new General Plan.

Appendices are also provided for the chapters on Parks (parkland and access sections from Community Plans and Coastal Zone documents), Air Quality (sample performance standards for cottage industries), and Noise (sample Noise Ordinance language).

Volume II of this report (bound separately) provides detailed information and maps regarding watershed characteristics and regulatory considerations.

## **NEXT STEPS**

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Consistent with themes established in the Critical Choices Report, a Moving Goods and People Report has also been prepared. In addition, “sketch plans” depicting alternative land use scenarios and circulation patterns for the County are currently in development. The primary purpose of these reports and plans is to solicit public review and comment.

After public input, information in the various individual reports and plans will ultimately be incorporated into one comprehensive Phase II Report, which will provide policy options for each of the General Plan themes. The Phase II Report will be presented to the public and County decision makers.

*Humboldt County General Plan Update  
Natural Resources and Hazards*

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