
MENDOCINO COUNTY MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Commission

From: Phil Gorny, Planning Team
Eric Norris, General Plan Consultant

Subject: Recommended Energy Policies; Next Steps in the General Plan Update Process

Date: August 2, 2007

BACKGROUND

As the Commission is aware, a detailed report on energy use and suggested energy policies was released by the Energy Working Group in late June. Following the release of the Working Group's report, the document was extensively reviewed by Planning staff and the General Plan consultant. Several discussions were held, including a meeting of the Planning Team on July 20, resulting in the recommendations in Attachments 1 and 2 to this staff report.

RECOMMENDED ENERGY POLICIES

Attachment 1 contains staff's specific recommendations to the Commission for inclusion in the General Plan Update. Attachment 2 is a detailed response to each of the Energy Working Group's recommended policies. As described to the Commission on July 19, the following guidelines were followed when reviewing the policies:

- The policy should fit within the general mandate to avoid sweeping changes in policy as part of the General Plan Update.
- The recommended policy should minimize new regulations which impose limitations on the use of property.
- The policy should rely primarily on market-based solutions rather than County-imposed mandates.
- The policy should minimize the number and cost of implementation measures, and should avoid committing the County to investing time and/or resources which are not reasonably foreseeable at this time.
- The policy should conform with other parts of the General Plan and with basic sound planning principles.

- The policy should be consistent with direction already provided by the Planning Commission and/or Board of Supervisors (e.g., reducing minimum lot sizes in the AG designation).

As noted in the July 19 staff report, a number of the recommended policies in the Working Group’s report were found to be in keeping with these guidelines. These policies, which are in many cases imaginative and forward-thinking, are recommended to be included in the General Plan Update.

A number, however, were found by staff and the General Plan consultant to be contrary to prior direction from the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, too detailed for inclusion in the General Plan, or unworkable for a variety of reasons. These are not recommended for inclusion in the General Plan.

Staff is prepared to discuss any and all suggested policies. Public input is welcome and the Commission should note that there will be further opportunities for comment as the General Plan Update progresses through hearings.

RECOMMENDATION/NEXT STEPS

As the Commission is aware, staff and the General Plan consultant have been working to meet an ambitious schedule imposed by the Board of Supervisors. The following key items need to be completed in the near future in order to meet this schedule:

- Conduct Review of Energy Policies for Inclusion in the Public Review Draft General Plan Update—This is the task before the Planning Commission today.
- Review of General Plan Update and Direction by the Board of Supervisors— This is tentatively scheduled to occur in August. This review—and direction from the Board to continue refining the General Plan Update into a public review draft later this year—will also mark the start of a 60-day deadline for submission of land use designation changes by property owners. Because the environmental review of the General Plan Update cannot be completed until details regarding proposed land use changes are known, starting the 60-day “clock” is critical to the timely completion of the Update.
- Water Policies—Work is continuing at a staff level on proposed new Water policies. In order to maintain the Update schedule, staff proposes to review the draft policies being prepared by the County Water Agency and insert new policies (based on the Commission’s prior discussions on this issue) in the Public Review Draft General Plan Update. The Commission will be provided with additional opportunities to review these policies before sending the Update to the Board of Supervisors for adoption.

- Timber Conversion Policies—The Commission has reviewed policies related to timber conversion, but is awaiting input from Commissioner Bailey on this issue.

ATTACHMENT 1 – Specific Recommendations to Modify the Draft General Plan in Regard to Energy

ATTACHMENT 2 – Formal Response to the Energy Working Group Recommendations for the Draft General Plan in Regard to Energy