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The Planning Team  
Mendocino County Planning Department  
Room 1204  
501 Low Gap Road,  
Ukiah, CA 95482

## Recommendation on the Draft General Plan Update: GRADING ORDINANCE

Dear Planners,

I am a 27-year resident and taxpayer of the county with current residence address of 203 North State Street in Ukiah.

I am the editor/publisher of the MENDOCINO COUNTRY Independent newspaper, an environmentalist, acting chair of the Green Party of Mendocino County and secretary of the Voters Union, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to electing environmentalists to the Mendocino County board of supervisors.

In my opinion, the Mendocino County Draft General Plan Update as prepared by consultants PMC Inc. and submitted to the board of supervisors is totally insufficient, inadequate and obsolete. It should be scrapped and a different planning process begun to produce a completely new General Plan fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The proposed so-called Update is in fact just a boiler plate tweak of the 1981 General Plan, which itself was a remake of that written in 1971. The underlying social, environmental, economic and scientific assumptions are those of 40 years ago, not simply obsolete but fallacious and counterproductive in today's context.

Under the former General Plan, outside corporations were allowed to devastate our forest lands, creating a 40-year "timber gap" before they achieve their former productivity – if they are allowed to recover. This is the direct result of the decision of county supervisors to reject special forest practice rules in the 1990s. As a result, the salmon fishery has been decimated as spawning streams were allowed to silt up.

Residential and commercial development has been allowed to proliferate with little or no regard for the General Plan under innumerable special interest variances and amendments or with no permits whatever, cutting off the possibility of future use of such lands under sound planning principles.

Traditional land use patterns supporting mechanized, chemical dependant and livestock rearing emphasize large holdings, many of which are fallow. However, our survival in a Post Carbon era depends on massive conversion to small scale intensive organic vegetable and grain agriculture that may involve multiple ownerships integrated with residential communities.

Some major air polluters such as Masonite and Georgia Pacific have gone, while smaller sources of emissions such as two stroke motors, off-road vehicles, motor boats and racing engines have metastasized without regulation.

If the proposed GPU is approved, it is likely Mendocino County will be laid waste for the next 20 years as it has for the last 40, with even more devastating consequences to the public interest, environmental sustainability, economic viability and social welfare.

The Mendocino County General Plan must be founded on our historical experience, as well as an objective, unbiased, scientifically sound assessment of all relevant land use facts, including population growth, planned and unplanned development, resource depletion, and decayed decrepit infrastructure.

Fundamentally, the GP must take into account the approaching crises known as Global Climate Imbalance and Peak Oil. ;

## **Specific Objection: THE GP CONTAINS NO ACTION ITEM FOR THE ADOPTION OF A GRADING ORDINANCE**

Last year, the Board of Supervisors voted to suspend development of a grading ordinance in Mendocino County. ON July 1 of 2002, environmental representatives of a committee charged with developing a draft grading ordinance submitted a version which includes the following recommended standards:

- . A. Minimize soil exposure during the rainy season by proper timing of erosion control measures and grading activities permitted during the winter period.
- . B. Retain trees and natural vegetation to stabilize hillsides, retain moisture, reduce erosion, minimize siltation and nutrient runoff and preserve scenic qualities. 7/1/02
- . C. Vegetate and mulch denuded areas to protect them from winter rains.
- . D. Divert runoff away from steep, denuded slopes or other critical areas with barriers, berms, ditches or other facilities.
- . E. Design grading to be compatible with adjacent areas and result in minimal disturbance of the terrain and natural land features.
- . F. Limit construction, clearing of vegetation and disturbance of the soil to areas of proven stability. Mitigate geologic hazards and adverse soil conditions when they are encountered. Grading and native vegetation removal is prohibited on soil with very high erosion hazard rating.
- . G. Reduce sediment transport off the site to the maximum extent feasible through the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs).
- . H. Propose a new or modified erosion and sediment control technique if the technique is preferred and meets the intent of these regulations. Obtain approval from the County prior to implementation.
- . I. Conduct site inspections to ensure that control measures are working properly and to correct problems as needed.
- . J. Employ additional means of erosion and sediment control as required by the Permitting Agency.
- . K. Any cultural resources discovered prior to or during the grading operation shall be excluded from any impacts or further impacts until there is a complete documentation and significance assessment with conservation recommendations by an archaeologist or other qualified professional that follow the provisions in Chapter 22.12 of this Code (Archaeological Resources). (1/10/02)

### **SECTION 18.030.210 Grading Operations During the Winter Period**

Grading between October 15th and April 15th is prohibited except for the following ongoing agricultural activities: tilling and seeding of crops which are shown to require certain soil moisture conditions. Winter grading operations must comply with all sections of this chapter, including preparation of an Erosion Control Plan.

**Recommendation:** The current proposed GP Update must be rejected, and a new document written by a process not driven by consultants but instead relies on ad hoc citizen advisory committees to be appointed by supervisors. These committees and the Planning Team would regularly report to a special committee of the BOS to assure timely progress.

The current “financial crisis” actually provides a temporary respite from development pressures in order to accomplish this task. A realistic timeline for the presentation of a Draft General Plan for Mendocino County would be April of 2010.

**Verification:** I am the author of this letter and I have personal knowledge of the

facts alleged therein, and swear and affirm under penalty of perjury of the laws of the state of California that all statements within it are true, except to those that are alleged to the best of my knowledge and belief, and those I believe to be true. Signed,

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RICHARD W. JOHNSON,

Date: November 18, 2008