

# GUALALA TOWN PLAN



The Gualala Town Plan is Part of the Coastal Element  
of the Mendocino County General Plan

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## **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 GUALALA TOWN PLAN**

Gualala is a small coastal community situated in the southwest corner of Mendocino County at the mouth of the Gualala River. The town of Gualala is a service center for the south coast of Mendocino County and for The Sea Ranch and northern Sonoma County. While serving a regional population of about 2,500 persons, the scenic beauty and recreational opportunities of the Gualala area attract many thousands of visitors each year.<sup>1</sup>

Gualala is located within the unincorporated area of Mendocino County. Land use decisions are governed by the Mendocino County Local Coastal Program (LCP) and the Mendocino County General Plan, as interpreted by the County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

The Gualala Town Plan amends the Coastal Element of the Mendocino County General Plan, as adopted and certified in November 1985 and revised in March 1991. The regulatory ordinances for implementation of the Gualala Town Plan shall be adopted as amendments to the Mendocino County Coastal Zoning Code (Title 20, Division II of the Mendocino County Code). The Gualala Town Plan provides planning goals and policies establishing a scenario for growth within the Gualala Town Plan area over a 30-year planning horizon.

The Gualala Town Plan and associated implementing zoning ordinance shall be applicable to the geographic area known as the Gualala Town Plan Area as described in Section 1.2 of the Plan. No land, building, structure, or premises shall be developed or reconstructed in a manner that is inconsistent with the Gualala Town Plan or the associated zoning ordinance.

### **1.2 PLANNING AREA**

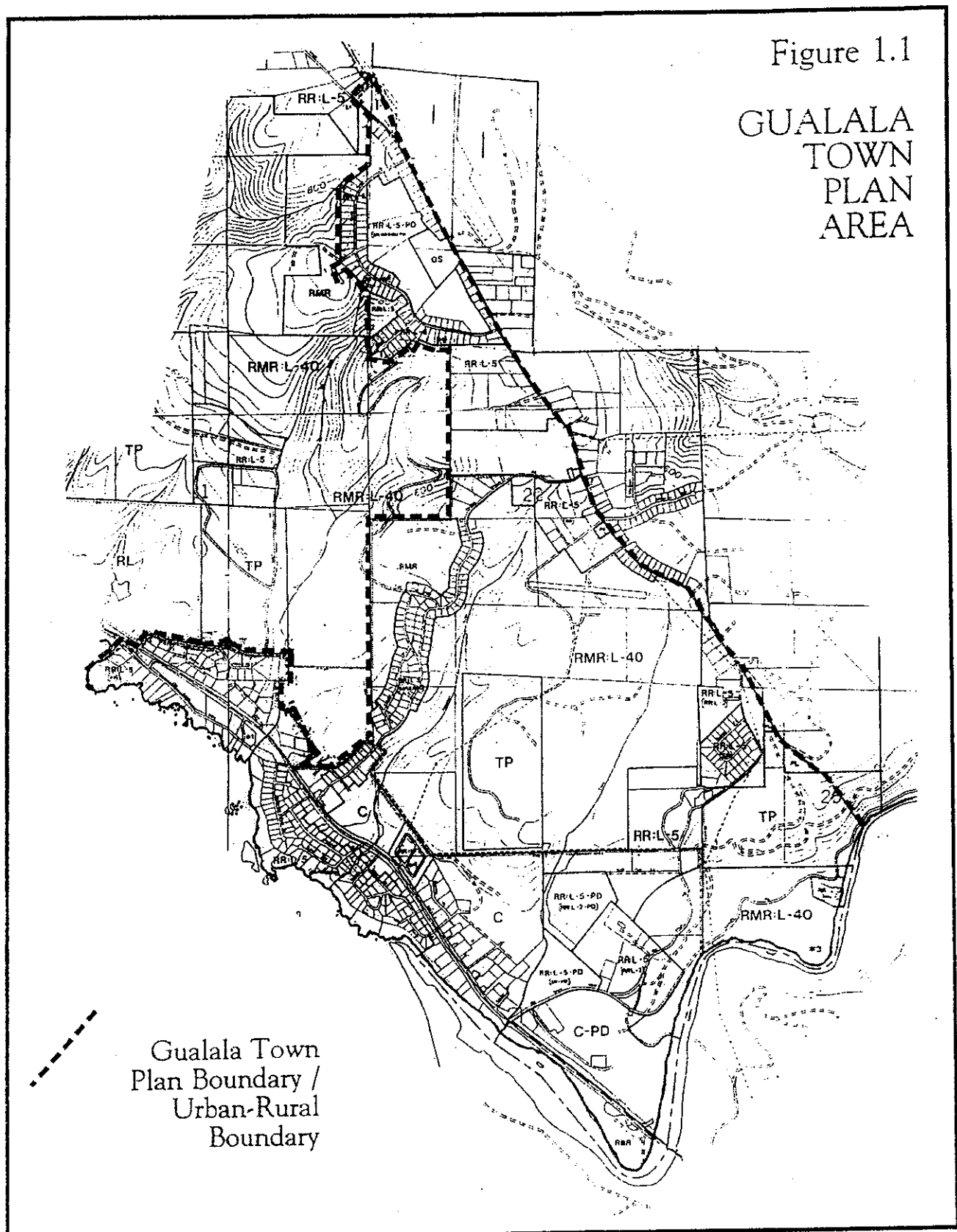
As shown on Figure 1.1, the Gualala Town Plan area includes the commercial district of Gualala and adjoining residential areas. It is roughly bounded by the Gualala River on the south, the Pacific Ocean on the west, Old Stage Road on the east, and the Marine View and Pacific View subdivisions, Pacific Woods Road and the Ocean Ridge subdivision on the north.

The Town Plan area includes most of the lands within the Gualala Community Services District service area and sewer assessment area, as well as the Ocean Ridge subdivision and the intervening residential and resource lands. All of the lands within the Town Plan area are within the North Gualala Water Company's service area, although some parcels are served by private domestic wells.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on information provided by the Mendocino County Tax Collector and The Sea Ranch Association, it is estimated that approximately 65,700 visitors came to the Gualala-Anchor Bay area in 1994 and 93,100 visitors came to The Sea Ranch in 1994 (not including second home residents and campers). The regional population estimate includes residents from Stewarts Point in Sonoma County to Iversen Road in Mendocino County.

GUALALA  
TOWN  
PLAN  
AREA



## 1.3 PLANNING PROCESS

The Mendocino County Coastal Element, adopted in 1985, provides general goals and policies governing development throughout the entire coastal zone, and specific policies for establishment of an urban-rural boundary in Gualala and for public access to the coast in the Gualala area.

In the late 1980's, after a decade of rapid growth and development in Gualala<sup>2</sup>, an ad hoc group called the Gualala Area Coalition formed to evaluate the planning issues facing Gualala and to open up the avenues of communication between Gualala and the County government in Ukiah. In response to the Coalition's activities, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors established a local planning council for the Gualala area in 1990. The Gualala Municipal Advisory Council (GMAC) was created with a two-fold mandate:

- To advise the Board of Supervisors on current development applications; and
- To initiate long-range planning efforts to update the Coastal Element of the Mendocino County General Plan as it pertains to the Gualala area.

The Gualala Town Plan emerged from four years of community discussions at GMAC meetings and community workshops. The Town Plan was prepared with the input of more than three hundred local residents and visitors. The Plan Committee, an informal group of about thirty area residents, land owners, developers, and business people, met regularly to develop the basic concepts presented in the Town Plan. The GMAC reviewed the Town Plan, facilitated public discussions of its content, and at public meetings over the course of more than three years, adopted the various policies and recommended implementing ordinances. The GMAC's Gualala Town Plan was submitted to the County Board of Supervisors in May 1995. After an initial review by County staff and public agencies, a revised draft Gualala Town Plan was prepared by the Gualala Town Plan Advisory Committee which included representatives of GMAC, the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission and Planning Department staff. Final adoption of the Gualala Town Plan follows public hearings by the Mendocino County Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and California Coastal Commission.

## 1.4 HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the planning issues and goals for the Gualala Town Plan area. Chapter 3 establishes policies for future development in the Town Plan area. Chapter 4 defines the land use classifications for the Gualala Town Plan. Chapter 5 provides definitions, and Chapter 6 contains the appendices.

The Gualala Town Plan amends the Mendocino County Coastal Element, providing specific goals and policies governing development in the Gualala Town Plan area. It should be noted that

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<sup>2</sup> According to the U.S. Census of Population and Housing, the population of the Gualala area (from Iversen Rd. to the Gualala River) was about 1,275 persons in 1980 and grew to about 1,750 persons in 1990, representing a 37% increase in population. During this same period, the overall growth rate for unincorporated Mendocino County was about 20%, which is considerably less than that experienced in the Gualala area.

both goals and policies are intended to be the standard of review utilized by the permit issuing authority; including the Coastal Commission in its review of an appeal of a project approved by the County within the Town Plan area. The Town Plan is consistent with the established goals and policies of the Coastal Element which pertain to environment and resources, access and recreation, and development. Several minor text amendments in the Coastal Element provide references to the Gualala Town Plan. Amendments to the Land Use Plan maps incorporate the revised land use designations for the Gualala Town Plan. Where there is a conflict among policies within the Town Plan, or between policies in the Town Plan and the rest of the certified Local Coastal Program, the more restrictive policy shall apply.

The Gualala Town Plan is implemented by the Mendocino County Coastal Zoning Code (Title 20, Division II). Amendments to the Zoning Code incorporate the four newly-created zoning districts for the Gualala commercial area and the second residential units ordinance. Other provisions of the Coastal Zoning Code, including but not limited to Use Type definitions, Residential zoning district regulations, off-street parking regulations, signage regulations, environmentally sensitive habitat area regulations, etc., will continue to apply to development in the Gualala Town Plan area.