

## CHAPTER 2 - ISSUES AND GOALS

The Gualala Town Plan evolved out of four years of discussions, meetings, and workshops attended by local residents, property owners, business persons and developers. Results of a survey questionnaire and summaries of three community workshops helped direct the Town Plan. Many community concerns regarding future development were identified during the planning process. Although unanimity was not always achieved as to how to resolve the challenges posed by new development, there was general consensus in the definition of the key planning issues facing Gualala. The issues and goals which help define a vision for Gualala's future are discussed in this chapter.

### 2.1 COMMUNITY IDENTITY<sup>3</sup>

The town of Gualala does not have a town center, distinctive architectural style or historic context that provides a visual community identity. The Gualala Hotel and the Kidd House are two of the few structures which give testimony to Gualala's past. There are no visible remnants of the saw mills or other hints of the logging industry that formed the town's economic base for so much of its history. Most buildings in town were constructed in the 1960's and 1970's and fall within the architectural genre loosely known as the north coast style which is characterized by one- or two-story, wood frame structures with mildly sloping roofs and varying degrees of overhang. Windows and door openings are simple, and exterior facades are generally constructed of weathered or painted wood.

Gualala is a service center and, as such, has developed with primary consideration given to automobiles. The commercial district of Gualala stretches along a two-mile section of Highway 1. Buildings are scattered along the highway strip, and people frequently drive from one destination in town to the next. With few exceptions, there are no sidewalks along the highway and only one crosswalk. Despite this, pedestrians routinely wind their way through parking lots and along the edge of the highway, attempting to navigate the town on foot.

The conjunction of several elements of natural beauty provides the setting for the town of Gualala. Gualala is located on the north bank of the Gualala River at its junction with the sea. On the south side of the river, in Sonoma County, the headlands and beach at Gualala Point are protected as a public park. Scenic vistas of the river, ocean, beach and headlands are available from many locations in town. On its inland edges, the town is framed by a backdrop of forested hillsides.

Gualala, as the southern "gateway to the Mendocino Coast," has great potential to achieve a more distinctive, attractive and memorable town character. This potential derives, in part, from the present lack of large-scale developments, franchises, traffic lights, and other urban fixtures which would diminish the small-town, rural feel of Gualala. Existing development is relatively small-

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<sup>3</sup> Portions of this discussion were excerpted or paraphrased from "Which Way Gualala?" by Jo Ann Rouse, a publication sponsored by the North Coast Institute (1987).

scale and dispersed, with plenty of vacant land for infill projects and the development of other public amenities. The large, undeveloped area immediately east of town could serve as a future downtown expansion area, averting continued strip development along Highway 1. Many coastal views are presently blocked by buildings. Some redevelopment is likely to occur on the west side of Highway 1 in the future, since several of the existing buildings do not take advantage of their spectacular settings. Future redevelopment should provide greater access to views of the river and coastline. Additionally, a public access easement has been acquired along the bluff of the Gualala River, west of the commercial district. Development of a public coastal trail within the easement will offer access to spectacular views of the river, Gualala Point beach and the Pacific Ocean.

**Goal G2.1-1:** To preserve and enhance the rural, coastal character of the town of Gualala, to better integrate future development with the natural surroundings, to protect and restore coastal views, and to improve public access to the coast.

## 2.2 COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL BUILDOUT IN GUALALA TOWN PLAN AREA

The Gualala Village Mixed Use, Gualala Highway Mixed Use, and Gualala Planned Development districts replace the “Commercial” zoning designation assigned by the Coastal Element (as revised, March 1991) and provide more restrictive development standards. Table 2.1 presents a comparison between the regulations which affect the scale of new development in the Coastal Element (March ‘91), and in the Gualala Town Plan.

<b>TABLE 2.1</b> <b>COMPARISON OF COMMERCIAL ZONING REGULATIONS</b>				
	Commercial District (LCP, March ‘91)	Gualala Village Mixed Use District	Gualala Highway Mixed Use District	Gualala Planned Development District
Maximum Building Height	35’	28’ (E of Hwy) 18’ (W of Hwy)	28’	28’
Maximum Lot Coverage	50%	25% (E of Hwy) 20% (W of Hwy)	20%	to be determined <sup>2</sup>
Max. Floor-Area Ratio (FAR)	none <sup>1</sup>	35% (E of Hwy) 30% (W of Hwy)	30%	to be determined <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since three-story structures and a 50% lot coverage are permitted, the FAR is effectively 150%. It should be noted that in 1994, the average FAR in Gualala was 15%.

<sup>2</sup> In the Gualala Planned Development district, lot coverage and FARs are established as part of a Precise Development Plan.

As shown on Table 2.1, the Gualala Village Mixed Use, Gualala Highway Mixed Use, and Planned Development zoning districts of the Gualala Town Plan are considerably more restrictive than the Commercial district of the Coastal Element and Zoning Code (March ‘91).

Table 2.2 presents summary information comparing commercial development in 1993, buildout under the Coastal Element (March '91), and buildout under the Gualala Town Plan. As shown, estimated commercial buildout under the Gualala Town Plan is about 1.8 million square feet less than (or 28% of) the estimated buildout that could occur under the Coastal Element (March '91).

<b>TABLE 2.2</b> <b>COMMERCIAL BUILDOUT COMPARISON</b> <b>FOR GUALALA TOWN PLAN AREA</b>	
Existing Commercial Development (1993)	185,000 square feet
Commercial Buildout under Coastal Element (March '91) <sup>1</sup>	2,846,210 square feet
Commercial Buildout under Gualala Town Plan <sup>2</sup>	1,015,383 square feet
<b>Reduction in Commercial Buildout Potential under Gualala Town Plan</b>	<b>-1,830,827 square feet</b>

<sup>1</sup> Assumes 62 acres of Commercial property, plus 104 acres of Commercial property in large parcels, of which .20 is dedicated to roads and utilities, leaving 83.2 acres for development. A total of 145.2 acres at .60 FAR (i.e., 2 stories in height and 30% lot coverage)=3,794,947 sf. Although the Commercial zone allows 50% lot coverage, generally 30% is the maximum that can be achieved while meeting County off-street parking requirements. Commercial buildout is assumed to be 75% of full buildout=2,846,210 sf

<sup>2</sup> Assumes 62 acres of GVMU, GHMU and 83.2/2 acres of GPD (since 50% residential development is req'd)=103.6 acres at .30 FAR=1,353,845 sf(75%)= 1,015,383 sf

While the Gualala Town Plan significantly reduces commercial buildout potential, it increases potential residential buildout in Gualala by about 428 dwelling units. This increase results from three factors: (1) residential uses are allowed as principal uses in the Mixed Use districts; (2) at least 50% of the acreage of Gualala Planned Development district parcels is required to be developed with residential uses; and (3) second residential units are permitted in the Town Plan area.

The potential for future residential development in the Gualala Town Plan area is summarized in Table 2.3. Buildout projections for the outlying area (north of the Town Plan area to Iversen Road) are also shown, in order to provide a broader context in which to view future growth. Table 2.3 does not include development projections for the Residential Reserve area since the Town Plan does not actually change the land use classifications and zoning on the subject properties.

Table 2.4 presents the bottomline— comparisons of compounded annual growth rates and projected populations associated with buildout under the Coastal Element (March '91), and the Gualala Town Plan.

**TABLE 2.3**  
**RESIDENTIAL BUILDOUT PROJECTIONS FOR GUALALA TOWN PLAN AREA**

	<b>Buildout Under Coastal Element (March '91)</b>	<b>Buildout Under Gualala Town Plan <sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Buildout of Iversen Rd. to north boundary of Gualala Town Plan area (per Coastal Element, March '91)</b>
(a) Existing Dev'ped Parcels	390	390	577
(b) Existing Undev'ped Parcels	<u>183</u>	<u>183</u>	<u>475</u>
(c) Total Existing Parcels <i>(c)=a+b</i>	573	573	1,052
(d) Potential New Parcels	389 <sup>2</sup>	244	221
(e) Residential Devpmt. on Mixed Use and Planned Development parcels	—	400	—
(f) Second Residential Units	—	100	—
100% Buildout (new residences/total residences) <i>(b+d+e+f)/(c+d+e+f)</i>	572/962	927/1,317	696/1,273
75/50% Buildout <sup>3</sup> (new residences/total residences) <i>a+(.75b)+(.5d)+e+f</i>	331/721	759/1,149	467/1,044

<sup>1</sup> The Gualala Town Plan residential buildout projections do not include potential future development on parcels within the "Residential Reserve" area. Although the Plan designates the "Residential Reserve" as an appropriate location for future residential growth, substantial environmental analysis, followed by LCP amendments and rezoning, would be necessary prior to development at densities greater than the 40-acre and 160-acre minimum parcel sizes permitted by the present RMR-40 and FL zoning.

<sup>2</sup> This number includes 120 new parcels which could potentially be created in the North Gualala Subdivision, since the SR zoning allows 6,000 sf lots in areas with community water and sewer systems. It also includes 53 new parcels which could be created when sewer facilities are extended to serve the Gualala Heights Subdivision. A substantial number of these parcels (114) have existing homes which may preclude further subdivision.

<sup>3</sup> Full buildout represents development of residences on all existing parcels and on all parcels which could be created by land divisions, in accordance with designated minimum lot sizes. Since the 100% buildout scenario is unlikely to ever occur, the Planning Division selected a partial buildout scenario to represent the maximum theoretical buildout scenario. This scenario assumes that 75% of existing undeveloped parcels would be built upon and 50% of the new parcels which could be created by potential land divisions would be created and built upon. For the Gualala Town Plan buildout scenario, it is assumed that 400 residential units on Mixed Use and Planned Development parcels would occur. It is also assumed that 100 second residential units would be constructed.

**TABLE 2.4**  
**POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND ANNUAL GROWTH RATES**

	Population Estimates <sup>1</sup>	Compounded Annual Population Growth
Historic Annual Growth Rates for Unincorporated Mendocino County(1980-1990)		1.8%
Historic Annual Growth Rate for area from Sonoma County line to Iversen Road (1970-1990)		3.4%
Estimated 1994 Population of Gualala Town Plan area	652	
Estimated 1994 Population of Area north of Gualala Town Plan boundary to Iversen Road	<u>964</u>	
TOTAL Estimated 1994 Population Sonoma County line to Iversen Road	1,616	
Gualala Town Plan area (a) Buildout under Coastal Element (March '91) 75/50% Scenario (20-year buildout)	1,205	3.1%
Area north of Gualala Town Plan boundary to Iversen Road (b) Buildout under Coastal Element (March '91) 75/50% Scenario (20-year buildout)	1,744	3.0%
Sonoma Co. line to Iversen Road(c)=a+b Buildout under Coastal Element (March '91) 75/50% Scenario (20-year buildout)	2,949	3.1%
Gualala Town Plan area(d) Buildout under Gualala Town Plan 75/50% Scenario (30-year buildout)	1,920	3.7%
Sonoma Co. line to Iversen Road Buildout under Gualala Town Plan (75/50% Scenario) (e)=d+b (30-year buildout)	3,664	2.8%

<sup>1</sup> Population estimates are based on the existing and projected number of housing units and assume that 77% of total housing units are occupied and 2.17 persons reside in each occupied housing unit. (The occupancy and persons per household statistics are from 1990 U.S. Census data for the Gualala area.)

## 2.3 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

A primary goal of the Gualala Town Plan is to concentrate future residential growth within the Town Plan area, thereby relieving development pressures on resource lands in the outlying areas. This is also intended to decrease automobile traffic and relieve traffic congestion by allowing for alternative modes of transportation. By providing for more residential development and less commercial development, the Town Plan strives to achieve a closer balance between residential

and commercial growth. Four significant policy changes affect future residential growth in the Gualala Town Plan area:

1. The Gualala Town Plan assigns a “Mixed Use” zoning designation to most of the commercial properties in Gualala. The Mixed Use designation allows residential uses as a principal use, alleviating the requirement for a use permit.
2. The Gualala Town Plan assigns a “Planned Development” zoning designation to the two largest commercial properties in town (40-acre parcel east of Church Street, 58-acre Lower Mill site south of Old State Highway). The Planned Development district requires that at least half of the total acreage be devoted to residential uses.
3. The Gualala Town Plan allows for development of second residential units on parcels within the Town Plan area. The second units are intended to help provide more affordable housing in the Town Plan area.
4. The Gualala Town Plan also provides for the long-range planning of future residential development areas. A 480-acre area east of town is designated “Residential Reserve,” identifying it as a suitable location for future residential development.<sup>4</sup>

Goal G2.2-1: To guide development and preservation efforts in the Gualala Town Plan area over the next twenty years by reviewing and adjusting land use designations and providing criteria for judging future development proposals.

Goal G2.2-2: To provide for the development of affordable housing in the Gualala Town Plan area by:

- adopting inclusionary zoning measures,
- allowing residential development as a principal use in the commercial districts,
- requiring residential development on Gualala Planned Development district parcels, and
- allowing for second residential units within the Gualala Town Plan area.

Goal G2.2-3: Three guiding principles are established to determine appropriate locations for future residential development:

1. Concentrate new development within the Gualala Town Plan area, where it can be served by community water and sewer systems and will minimize traffic impacts on Highway 1.

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<sup>4</sup> The Residential Reserve area is presently zoned Remote Rural-40 acre minimum (RMR-40) and Forest Land (FL). In acknowledgment of the need for substantial environmental analysis prior to increasing residential densities in the Residential Reserve area, the Gualala Town Plan leaves the existing zoning in place. Future Local Coastal Plan (LCP) amendments and rezoning would be necessary for residential development at greater densities than permitted by the RMR-40 and FL zoning within the Residential Reserve area.

2. Preserve and protect land used for crop and timber production, and environmental resources, including wetlands, steep gulches, stream corridors and coastal views.
3. Retain the character of existing residential neighborhoods.

## 2.4 COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

As shown in Table 2.2, under the Coastal Element (March '91), more than 2.8 million square feet of commercial space could be developed in Gualala. Under the Gualala Town Plan, maximum commercial buildout is reduced to approximately one million square feet. This represents a 64% reduction in the buildout potential of commercial properties.

Existing development represents only a small percentage of potential commercial development. It is imperative that future development be planned and coordinated so that the existing commercial district remains viable, pedestrian and automobile circulation works, and the town retains, or develops, a visually-integrated appearance.

Goal G2.4-1: To provide for a level of commercial development that corresponds to potential residential development opportunities, public service availability, and road capacity.

About 60 percent of vacant commercial property in Gualala is contained in two large parcels: a 40± acre site east of Church Street and the 58± acre Lower Mill site east of Highway 1 and south of Old State Highway (Figure 2.1). Clearly, development of these properties will greatly influence the future character of the town of Gualala.

Goal G2.4-2: To establish a process for the planned development of the two large commercial parcels (Lower Mill site and east of Church Street) which will allow for creative site planning and design, and will provide substantial opportunities for public participation in the planning process.

A widely distributed survey questionnaire helped reveal community concerns about the aesthetic appeal of Gualala's commercial district. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 representing "very much needed" the need for the following elements was assessed:

Building height limits	4.6
Design guidelines	4.3
Tree removal limits	4.2
Landscaping	3.6
Sign guidelines	3.5
Street tree planting	3.0

At three community workshops held to help establish goals for the Gualala Town Plan, discussion repeatedly focused on the need for development to fit in with the coastal setting and the desire for protection (and restoration) of coastal views in town.

Goal G2.4-3 To provide guidelines for new development and public improvements which inspire creativity and enhance the character of Gualala's commercial district by encouraging development that is in harmony with the natural, coastal setting of the town.

Goal G2.4-4 To encourage the preservation and enhancement of coastal and river views and the provision of public access to these views.

## 2.5 PUBLIC SERVICES AND ROAD CAPACITY

While it is instructive to look at the total amount of existing and potential residential and commercial development in the Town Plan area, it is also important to understand the various factors that constrain future growth. Development in Gualala is constrained, in part, by the capacity of the infrastructure which serves it. In particular, the capacity of Highway 1, the availability of water, and the capacity of the community sewer system limit both the amount and location of development in the Town Plan area.

### Highway 1 Capacity

In the California Coastal Act of 1976, the California legislature mandated that Highway 1 "in rural areas of the coastal zone remain a scenic two-lane roadway" (PRC Section 30254). While this mandate serves as an overall constraint to future growth on the Mendocino coast, highway improvements within urbanized areas, such as Gualala, can increase the local capacity of the roadway to accommodate growth. The Gualala Traffic Study (TJKM, February 1995) evaluates existing and projected traffic conditions on Highway 1 in the Gualala area.

The Traffic Study found that under existing conditions, all intersections and road segments on Highway 1 in the Gualala commercial district were operating at "acceptable" levels of service (LOS) in 1994.<sup>5</sup> The heaviest congestion and delays were experienced at the Sundstrom Mall entry/Highway 1 intersection, which operated at LOS D.

The Traffic Study found that projected increases in traffic volumes on Highway 1 resulting from buildout of commercial and residential lands under the Gualala Town Plan (under the 75/50% Scenario) would degrade operations on Highway 1 from Old State Highway to Pacific Woods Road and at five intersections in the commercial district to a level of service F, which is unacceptable. However, the Traffic Study found that increased traffic volumes can be

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<sup>5</sup>Level of service (LOS) is used to rank traffic operations based on traffic volumes and roadway capacity, using a series of letter designations ranging from A to F. Generally, LOS A represents free flow conditions and LOS F represents forced flow or breakdown conditions. According to Caltrans' *Route Concept Report*, a level of service D is acceptable on rural road segments.



accommodated if improvements are made to increase the capacity of the Highway 1 corridor within Gualala's commercial district. Recommended improvements necessary to accommodate increased traffic volumes from projected buildout under the Gualala Town Plan, while ensuring Highway 1 operates at a level of service D or better, include:

- Two-way left-turn lane on Highway One from Old State Highway to Bakertown.
- Development of parallel roadway east of Highway One (along Church Street alignment), with a bridge over China Gulch.
- Installation of traffic signals on Highway 1 at Old State Highway, Sundstrom Mall and Ocean Drive.
- Left-turn channelization on Highway 1 at Old State Highway, Center Street, Sundstrom Mall, Ocean Drive and Pacific Woods Road.
- Northbound right-turn channelization on Highway 1 at Old State Highway.

At a public meeting to discuss the findings of the Gualala Traffic Study and at subsequent Gualala Municipal Advisory Council meetings, the general consensus was that traffic signals are undesirable, but may eventually be necessary to address public safety concerns. The other recommended improvements are considered acceptable, and alternative approaches to reducing congestion should be encouraged (such as mixed use developments, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, transportation demand management techniques, public transportation).

Goal G2.5-1 To create safe and pleasant pedestrian circulation within the commercial district and to reduce vehicular congestion and improve safety conditions along the Highway 1 corridor.

## Water Supply

The entire Gualala Town Plan area is designated a Critical Water Resource zone by the Mendocino County Coastal Ground Water Study (State Department of Water Resources, 1982). Water service in the Gualala Town Plan area is provided in most locations by the North Gualala Water Company (NGWC), a privately-owned, public utility. The service area of the NGWC presently includes approximately 12,000 acres of land extending from the Gualala River north to the Haven's Neck subdivision and Fish Rock Road. The NGWC's primary water source is a production well (well #4) located on the North Fork Gualala River near Elk Prairie.<sup>6</sup> Secondary water sources include two surface water sources at Robinson Gulch and Big Gulch.

The State Department of Health Services (DHS), Division of Drinking Water prepared a recent evaluation of the maximum possible source production from the NGWC's water sources. Assuming a 250 gallons per minute (gpm) production capacity for well #4, 50 gpm at Big Gulch,

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<sup>6</sup>In 1992, 53% to 87% of the NGWC's water came from well #4 (Charles Rich, SWRCB, Nov. 18, 1993).

and 28 gpm at Robinson Gulch, DHS estimated the combined pumping capacity of the three existing water sources during low flow periods at 328 gpm. This is sufficient water to supply approximately 1,700 connections (equivalent meters), or about 783 additional connections beyond the year 1995 service connections.<sup>7</sup>

Standard acceptable engineering practice dictates that a municipal water supply shall be capable of: (1) meeting maximum day demand plus fire flow requirements, or peak hour demand— whichever is larger; and (2) meeting demands without the availability of the largest single water supply source. It is also accepted practice to increase the source incrementally to meet projected demand. A safety factor is maintained by only allowing development to reach a point which consumes 80% of the peak day demand available, before increasing the source.<sup>8</sup> When the NGWC reaches 80% of capacity (1,360 connections based on a 328 gpm pumping capacity), a new source should be developed.

Table 2.5 presents information about current water consumption in the NGWC service area and projected future water demands within the Gualala Town Plan area and within the entire NGWC service area. The water demand projections presented in Table 2.5 exceed the supply projections by 543 connections.

If assessments of the current water supply, combined with future water development projects that may be successfully completed, do not demonstrate a sufficient amount of available water, then several possible actions may be necessary to achieve a balance between water supply and demands, including:

- Developing new water supply sources,
- Developing increased storage capacity for water supply during low flow periods,
- Increasing water conservation efforts,
- Restricting the amount of new development.

The North Gualala Water Company is urged to proceed with the institution of a water conservation plan. Additionally, voluntary water conservation measures are encouraged for all water users within the planning area.

The topic of water resources is considered in both the County's General Plan and Coastal Element. Numerous goals and policies are included within these documents with the intention of emphasizing the importance of the protection of the County's water resources. Coastal Element Policies 3.8-8 and 3.8-9 pertain to public water supplies, as well as "proof of water" requirements associated with development proposals. The General Plan Water Resources Chapter contains findings, goals, and policies that address water conservation, in-stream water flows, reduction of water pollution, protection of fisheries and wildlife, and prioritization of water users.

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<sup>7</sup>Engineering Report for NGWC, Sept. 1993, Office of Drinking Water, State Department of Health Services.

<sup>8</sup>Based on information contained in an analysis of Water Supply Requirements for the North Gualala Water Company prepared by Rau & Associates, Inc., dated February 22, 1996.

**TABLE 2.5**  
**WATER CONSUMPTION & PROJECTED WATER DEMANDS**  
**FOR GUALALA TOWN PLAN AREA**

1995 connections in North Gualala Water Co. (NGWC) service area <sup>1</sup> (a)	917	
DHS-estimate of maximum number of connections which could be served by NGWC system <sup>2</sup> (b)	1,700	
	<b>Gualala Town Plan</b>	<b>Coastal Element (March '91)</b>
Estimated future residential connections within Gualala Town Plan area (75/50% buildout scenario) (c)	759	331
Estimated future commercial connections within Gualala Town Plan area <sup>3</sup> (d)	277	887
Total projected new connections within Gualala Town Plan area (c + d) = (e)	1,036	1,218
Estimated future connections within NGWC service area outside of Gualala Town Plan area <sup>4</sup> (f)	290	290
Total projected future connections in NGWC service area (e + f) = (g)	1,326	1,508
Deficit in connections at buildout of Gualala Town Plan, based on DHS-estimated NGWC source capacity (b - a - g)	-543	-725

<sup>1</sup> Rau & Associates, analysis of Water Supply Requirements for North Gualala Water Company, February 22, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> The "Engineering Report for NGWC," Sept. 1993, Office of Drinking Water, State Department of Health Services, estimates the production capacity of the NGWC system and estimates the number of connections which could be served based on historic water demand figures. Assuming low flow production of 250 gpm from Well #4, 28 gpm from Robinson Gulch, 50 gpm from Big Gulch, the maximum output would be 0.47 million gallons per day. Assuming a maximum daily demand of 277/gal/connection, approximately 1,697 connections could be served.

<sup>3</sup> Assuming 1,015,383 sf of commercial development at buildout under the Gualala Town Plan and 185,000 sf of existing commercial development, and given an average of one connection per 3,000 sf, approximately 277 additional connections are necessary to serve future commercial development. As shown in Table 2.2, the Coastal Element (March '91) would allow an estimated 2,846,210 sf of commercial development, therefore (2,846,210 sf - 185,000 sf/3,000 sf/connection) 887 additional connections would be necessary.

<sup>4</sup> Estimate of future demands for service within NGWC service area but outside of the Gualala Town Plan Area was provided by Rau & Associates in analysis of Water Supply Requirements for North Gualala Water Company dated February 22, 1996 and is based on a 3 percent annual growth rate.

### Sewer Service/Septic Availability

The Gualala Community Services District (GCSD) wastewater treatment system was completed in 1993. The GCSD area encompasses approximately 1,430 acres, 550± acres of which are included within the initial Sewer Assessment District boundary. The Gualala Town Plan area includes most of the GCSD area.

Construction of the community wastewater treatment system removed one of the primary constraints to commercial development in Gualala. The initial design capacity of the system of 625 Equivalent Single-Family Dwellings (ESDs) assumed a two percent annual residential growth rate and a three percent annual commercial growth rate for a 20-year planning horizon.

As of October 1997, approximately 460 ESDs were allocated, and the unused capacity represented approximately 165 remaining ESDs.

New development within the GCSD assessment/service area cannot proceed unless connection to the wastewater treatment system has been authorized by the GCSD. The remaining ESDs may not be sufficient to accommodate the demands for sewer connections for the 30-year planning horizon of the Gualala Town Plan. As shown on Table 2.3, buildout of residential uses under the Coastal Element, March '91 (assuming the 75/50% scenario) would demand an additional 331 ESDs. Under the Gualala Town Plan (75/50% scenario), buildout of residential uses would require 759 ESDs. Under both of these scenarios (neither of which account for increased demands from commercial uses), the remaining capacity of the GCSD treatment plant would be exceeded.

When 500 ESDs are in use, the GCSD is required to initiate plans for wastewater treatment plant expansion. The treatment plant design was selected, in part, to make future increases in treatment capacity possible. A Local Coastal Plan amendment and further environmental review will be necessary prior to approval of any expansion of the GCSD facilities.

Minimum parcel sizes in the coastal zone have been assigned with consideration of septic requirements and development on parcels outside of the GCSD assessment/service area requires approval of a septic system by the Mendocino County Department of Environmental Health.

### **Development Constraints/Thresholds**

Development constraint thresholds are included in the Town Plan for the purpose of linking existing and potential development with infrastructure capacity. As the planning time horizon of this Plan is approximately 30 years, the timing of mitigation is an integral component of the comprehensive planning process. For example, it is anticipated that, given a projected growth rate of 3.7 percent in the Town Plan planning area, 80 percent of the remaining water connections available from the North Gualala Water Company would be utilized by the year 2007. If assessments of the current water supply, combined with future water development projects that may be successfully completed, do not demonstrate a sufficient amount of available water, then additional actions would be necessary to achieve a balance between water supply and demand. Actions could include, but are not limited to, development of new water sources, development of increased storage capacity for water supply during low flow periods, increased water conservation efforts, and restriction of the amount of new development which increases water usage. Similar analysis and contingency plans are included within the Town Plan relative to the topics of sewage disposal and traffic.

Based upon a projected annual population growth rate within the GTP area of 3.7%, development thresholds (80% of point at which development would exceed infrastructure capacity) associated with water supply, sewer capacity, and traffic are estimated as follows:

<b>TABLE 2.6</b>					
<b>DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS/THRESHOLDS</b>					
<b>CONSTRAINT</b>		<b>EXISTING</b>	<b>CAPACITY<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>THRESHOLD</b>	<b>YEAR<sup>5</sup></b>
Water Connections		917 (Year 1996)	1700	80% (1360 connections)	2007
Sewer Capacity ESD's <sup>1,4</sup>		460 (Year 1997)	625	80% (500 connections)	1999
State Route 1 Capacity LOS <sup>2</sup> Road Segment	Gualala River Bridge to Old State Hwy	LOS C 543	2170 (Two Direction)	E	>2020
	Old State Hwy to Center Street	LOS A 274	700 (One Direction)	D	2018
	Center Street to Moonrise	LOS A 346	700 (One Direction)	D	2013
	Moonrise to Ocean Drive	LOS A 346	700 (One Direction)	D	2013
	Ocean Drive to Pacific Woods Road	LOS D 607	1534 (Two Direction)	E	>2020

1. ESD = Equivalent single-family dwelling
2. LOS = Level of Service, Gualala Traffic Study, 1994 Volume Figures are worst case peak hour turning movements and flows.
3. As determined in 1997.
4. As of October 10, 1997, there were 280 residential hookups, 180 commercial hookups, approximately 200,000 total commercial square footage developed and estimated 1 commercial ESD per 1100 square foot of space.
5. Subsequent to the completion of the Gualala Traffic Study (February 1995), the Gualala Transportation Financing Study (1997) was prepared, which focuses upon an analysis of financing requirements associated with the projected roadway improvements. When reviewing the financing study, GMAC based its funding recommendations upon Alternative 2, which in the opinion of GMAC, best reflects a realistic ratio of commercial to residential buildout.

New development shall be permitted only if the infrastructure and resources to support it are available, or made available as part of the developer's project plan.

Goal G2.5-2 To ensure that public services and utilities can be provided for new development and that traffic generated by new development will not result in unacceptable levels of service on Highway 1.

Goal G2.5-3 To ensure that water extractions comply with provisions of the Water Resources Chapter of the County General Plan.

## 2.6 RECREATION, COASTAL ACCESS AND TRAILS

Since the recreational demands generated by residents and visitors in the Gualala Town Plan area are met, in large part, by facilities located outside of the Town Plan area, the discussion of recreation, coastal access and trails includes areas outside of the Gualala Town Plan boundaries.

At present, Gualala has few community recreation facilities. Recreational facilities serving Gualala residents and visitors include Bower Park, a community park operated by Mendocino County, the baseball diamond on Old Stage Road, which is owned by the Arena Union Elementary School District, and Gualala Point Regional Park in Sonoma County. Access to the

Gualala River for swimming, fishing and boating is obtained in several locations, by permission of the property owners or by trespass. Local residents and visitors presently use many such “informal” resources for recreation. As development intensifies, these resources may be eliminated, while at the same time, increased demands are placed on existing recreational sites.

The two special event facilities in Gualala are the Gualala Community Center and the Gualala Arts Center, both operated by private, non-profit boards. The community survey questionnaire for the Gualala Town Plan indicated strong interests in development of additional community/recreation facilities, including a teen center, senior center, town park, swimming pool, athletic center and library.

As Gualala continues to grow, it is essential that additional community and recreation facilities be provided to serve residents and visitors.

The coastline of the Gualala area is widely varied, with rocky coves, sandy beaches, seawalls, islands, and promontories. The Coastal Element identifies ten locations for public coastal access along the twelve miles of coast extending from Iversen Road to the Gualala River (Figure 2.1). Despite the number of coastal access points designated in the Coastal Element, coastal access is limited relative to the number of residents and visitors in Gualala and neighboring areas. The Anchor Bay Beach shoreline access is presently accessible to the general public upon payment of a day-use fee. Coastal access can be obtained at Serenisea with permission of the owners. Prescriptive rights for shoreline access exist in two locations in the Gualala commercial district (behind the Surf Motel and immediately south of the Breakers Inn). Informal coastal access (i.e., across private property) is obtained at several other locations, including Getchell Cove, St. Orres Beach, Cooks Beach, and at the Gualala River bridge. Coastal access is also available at Gualala Point Regional Park in Sonoma County (day-use fee).

At present, there is no public access to the blufftop in the commercial district of Gualala. Although limited views of the coast are available between the buildings and across vacant parcels, the blufftop and riverbank are only accessible with the permission of private property owners. The Coastal Element addresses this problem by designating a blufftop trail, located along the bluff's edge on the western portion of the commercial properties from Seacliff Center and extending south to the Gualala River bridge (LCP Policy 4.12-13). A 25-foot wide public access easement along the top of the bluff has been obtained for much of the designated Gualala Bluff Trail.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, a deed restriction has been made to ensure the continued protection of a prescriptive access easement providing vertical access to the river at the Surf Motel site. Prescriptive access has been acknowledged by the property owners and the California Coastal Commission for vertical access to the river at the Breakers Inn.

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<sup>9</sup>A non-profit land trust, the Redwood Coast Land Conservancy, was established with a primary goal of constructing, operating and maintaining the Gualala Bluff Trail. The California Coastal Commission approved acceptance of the public access easements by the Land Conservancy.

At present in Gualala, no pedestrian access facilities connect neighborhoods, commercial areas, recreation facilities and areas of scenic beauty. A major goal of the Gualala Town Plan is to create a more pedestrian-oriented community by providing pedestrian walkways and trails. Such walkways and trails would provide increased recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, while decreasing reliance on automobile transit and relieving traffic congestion.

- Goal G2.6-1 To ensure that as future development occurs within the Gualala Town Plan area, additional recreation and coastal access facilities are developed.
- Goal G2.6-2 To encourage development of a broad range of recreational and cultural opportunities and community facilities for residents and visitors.
- Goal G2.6-3 To encourage development of diverse opportunities for recreation and enjoyment of the natural environment by residents and visitors to the area by providing public parks, recreation facilities, and public access to beaches, the Gualala River, and areas of special natural beauty.
- Goal G2.6-4 To encourage development of a network of pedestrian trails, bike paths and/or equestrian trails which link existing and future neighborhoods, commercial areas, and visitor accommodations to recreational facilities and areas of natural beauty.
- Goal G2.6-5 To encourage development of the Gualala Bluff Trail within the public access easements on the bluff of the Gualala River.
- Goal G2.6-6 To encourage development of a coastal trail which connects the Gualala and Anchor Bay commercial districts, linking the pedestrian walkways of the Gualala Highway 1 Streetscape Plan with coastal access points and trails designated on the land use plan map.

## **2.7 PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES**

The Gualala area is rich in natural resources including pure air. In the past, the timbered hillsides formed the backbone of the area's economy. Now, the scenic qualities and recreational opportunities of the area attract both residents and visitors to Gualala. A primary goal of the Mendocino County Coastal Element and the Gualala Town Plan is to concentrate development within urbanized areas, in an effort to protect resource lands in the outlying areas. At the same time, it is necessary to recognize and protect sensitive environmental resources within designated development areas.

Figure 2.1 (Page 281) prepared  
as seperate document



The Gualala River estuary/lagoon is one of the primary environmental resources in the Gualala Town Plan area.<sup>10</sup> It is a fragile ecosystem which provides habitat for numerous species, including the anadromous steelhead trout. The river offers numerous recreational opportunities and is a key element in scenic vistas from Highway 1 and other properties in Gualala. The Coastal Element's environmentally sensitive habitat area (ESHA) policies apply to the Gualala River which includes the following ESHAs: anadromous fish stream, wetlands, riparian areas, habitats of rare and endangered plants and animals. Protection of the river is offered through policies enforced by various state regulatory agencies, including its designation as a Special Treatment Area, which requires timber harvesting practices that protect the natural and scenic resources of the area. In addition to the river, sensitive resources in the Gualala Town Plan area include tide pools, the coastline, three major gulches (China, Robinson and Big Gulch), and riparian habitat associated with stream courses and wetlands.

Goal G2.7-1 To protect land used for timber and crop production outside of the Residential Reserve area and environmental resources, including the Gualala River estuary/lagoon, stream corridors, riparian areas, and wetlands from incompatible development.

The town of Gualala is located on the mouth of the Gualala River and offers magnificent views of the headlands, sandy beach and rocky reef of Gualala Point, the estuary/lagoon and wetlands of the Gualala River, and a broad expanse of the Pacific Ocean. Much of the viewshed is located in Sonoma County and is protected as a county park. Development on the west side of Highway 1 obscures views of the river and ocean for travellers on Highway 1 through much of the commercial district. There are several hills and plateaus in town which provide coastal views of exceptional quality, particularly on the eastern hillslopes. In turn, development on the hillsides has the potential to be highly visible from many locations.

Goal G2.7-2: To restore, enhance and protect coastal views in the Gualala commercial district.

Goal G2.7-3 To ensure that water extractions do not adversely affect fisheries habitat.

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<sup>10</sup>According to Bill Cox, Fisheries Biologist at the California Department of Fish and Game, the mouth of the Gualala River is an estuary. At times, a sand bar forms, creating a lagoon. The following passage is excerpted from the "Sea Ranch Gas & Water Company Supplemental Water Supply Application 26146," prepared by Dept. of Water Resources Northern District for State Water Resources Control Board (Sept 1988):

The Gualala River terminates at the ocean in what is defined as a drowned valley estuary because of its relatively deep inlet from the ocean. That the Gualala terminates in an estuary, however, applies only during the high flow periods when the river mouth is open to the ocean. During the remainder of the year, the mouth becomes a coastal lagoon, sealed off from the ocean by a barrier sandbar.

## 2.8 SCHOOLS

The substantial additional residential development proposed within the Town Plan area could result in a significant increase in the population of school-age children. The existing elementary school and high school serving the Gualala area are in Point Arena. School officials indicate that as of 1997 the elementary school is approaching maximum capacity. The Gualala area already has the largest population of school-aged children attending these schools. Most children take the bus to and from school - a significant expense to the school district. Construction of a local school could enable many children to walk to school. The school district presently owns a 10 acre site adjoining, but outside of, the Town Plan area. It is possible that another site within the Town Plan area may be acquired at a future date.

Goal G2.8-1 To provide for development of needed educational facilities for the anticipated growth in the student population.