



## **CHAPTER 3 -- THE LAND USE PLAN: RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES AND POLICIES**

### **3.5 VISUAL RESOURCES, SPECIAL COMMUNITIES AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

#### [Narrative](#)

#### **Coastal Element Policies: Visual Resources; Special Communities and Archaeological Resources**

- 3.5-1 State Highway 1 in rural areas of the Mendocino County coastal zone shall remain a scenic two-lane road.

The scenic and visual qualities of Mendocino County coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. New development in highly scenic areas designated by the County of Mendocino Coastal Element shall be subordinate to the character of its setting.

- 3.5-2 The Town of Mendocino is designated as a "special community". Development in the Mendocino Town shall maintain and enhance community character, as defined in the Mendocino Town Plan.

Other communities and service centers along the Mendocino Coast including Westport, Caspar, Little River, Albion, Elk and Manchester shall have special protection to the extent that new development shall remain within the scope and character of existing development by meeting the standards of implementing ordinances.

- 3.5-3 The visual resource areas listed below are those which have been identified on the land use maps and shall be designated as "highly scenic areas," within which new development shall be subordinate to the character of its setting. Any development permitted in these areas shall provide for the protection of ocean and coastal views from public areas including highways, roads, coastal trails, vista points, beaches, parks, coastal streams, and waters used for recreational purposes.

- The entire coastal zone from the Ten Mile River estuary (including its wooded slopes, wetlands, dunes and ocean vistas visible from Highway 1) north to the Hardy Creek Bridge, except Westport Beach Subdivision which



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is a recognized subdivision containing parcels of approximately 20 acres in size covered by Policy 4.2-1 and is East of Highway 1.

- Portions of the coastal zone within the Highly Scenic Area west of Highway 1 between the Ten Mile River estuary south to the Navarro River as mapped with noted exceptions and inclusions of certain areas east of Highway 1.
- Portions of the coastal zone within the Highly Scenic Area west of Highway 1 between the Navarro River and the north boundary of the City of Point Arena as mapped with noted exceptions and inclusions of certain areas east of Highway 1.
- Portions of the coastal zone within the Highly Scenic Area west of Highway 1 between the south boundary of the City of Point Arena and the Gualala River as mapped with noted exceptions and inclusions of certain areas east of Highway 1.

In addition to other visual policy requirements, new development west of Highway One in designated "highly scenic areas" is limited to one-story (above natural grade) unless an increase in height would not affect public views to the ocean or be out of character with surrounding structures. Variances from this standard may be allowed for planned unit development that provides clustering and other forms of meaningful visual mitigation. New development should be subordinate to natural setting and minimize reflective surfaces. All proposed divisions of land and boundary line adjustments within "highly scenic areas" will be analyzed for consistency of potential future development with visual resource policies and shall not be allowed if development of resulting parcel(s) could not be consistent with visual policies.

- 3.5-4 Buildings and building groups that must be sited within the highly scenic area shall be sited near the toe of a slope, below rather than on a ridge, or in or near the edge of a wooded area. Except for farm buildings, development in the middle of large open areas shall be avoided if an alternative site exists.

Minimize visual impact of development on hillsides by (1) requiring grading or construction to follow the natural contours; (2) resiting or prohibiting new development that requires grading, cutting and filling that would significantly and permanently alter or destroy the appearance of natural landforms; (3) designing structures to fit hillside sites rather than altering landform to accommodate buildings designed for level sites; (4) concentrate development near existing major vegetation, and (5) promote roof angles and exterior finish which blend with hillside. Minimize visual impacts of development on terraces by (1) avoiding development in large open areas if alternative site exists; (2) minimize the number of structures and cluster them near existing vegetation, natural landforms or artificial berms; (3) provide bluff setbacks for development adjacent to or near



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public areas along the shoreline; (4) design development to be in scale with rural character of the area. Minimize visual impact of development on ridges by (1) prohibiting development that projects above the ridgeline; (2) if no alternative site is available below the ridgeline, development shall be sited and designed to reduce visual impacts by utilizing existing vegetation, structural orientation, landscaping, and shall be limited to a single story above the natural elevation; (3) prohibiting removal of tree masses which destroy the ridgeline silhouette. Nothing in this policy shall preclude the development of a legally existing parcel.

- 3.5-5 Providing that trees will not block coastal views from public areas such as roads, parks and trails, tree planting to screen buildings shall be encouraged. In specific areas, identified and adopted on the land use plan maps, trees currently blocking views to and along the coast shall be required to be removed or thinned as a condition of new development in those specific areas. New development shall not allow trees to block ocean views.

In circumstances in which concentrations of trees unreasonably obstruct views of the ocean, tree thinning or removal shall be made a condition of permit approval. In the enforcement of this requirement, it shall be recognized that trees often enhance views of the ocean area, commonly serve a valuable purpose in screening structures, and in the control of erosion and the undesirable growth of underbrush.

- 3.5-6 Development on a parcel located partly within the highly scenic areas delineated on the Land Use Maps shall be located on the portion outside the viewshed if feasible. Highly scenic areas delineation is approximate and shall be subject to review and correction if necessary at the time of a land development proposal or application.

Where representatives of the County Planning Department, the California Coastal Commission, or the applicant are uncertain about the boundaries of the viewshed on any parcel such disagreements shall be investigated by an on-site inspection by the landowner and/or agents, County Planning Department staff member, and a representative of the California Coastal Commission.

The on-site inspection shall be coordinated by the County Planning Department and will take place within 3 weeks, weather and site conditions permitting, of the receipt of a written request from the landowner/agent for clarification of viewshed boundaries.

If all of the members of this group agree that the boundaries of the scenic resource in question should be adjusted following the site inspection, such development should be approved only upon specific findings that the scenic resource as identified will not be significantly degraded by the proposed development. If such findings cannot be made, the development shall be denied.

If it appears that the highly scenic area delineation should be substantially extended



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or reduced to include or exclude areas adjacent to those presently designated "highly scenic" to protect the scenic resource, this shall be accomplished through the plan amendment process.

- 3.5-7 Off-site advertising signs, other than small directional signs not exceeding 2 square feet, will not be permitted in designated "highly scenic areas". Direction, access, and business identification signs shall minimize disruption of scenic qualities through appropriate use of materials, scale and location. Caltrans should be requested to develop and install a system of small standardized highway signs which will identify, by easily recognized symbols, a full range of visitor services and accommodations, including restaurants, inns, and campgrounds. Appropriate handcrafted signs should be encouraged.
- 3.5-8 Power transmission lines shall be located along established corridors. Elsewhere transmission lines shall be located to minimize visual prominence. Where overhead transmission lines cannot be located along established corridors, and are visually intrusive within a "highly scenic area", the lines shall be placed underground west of Highway One and below ridgelines east of Highway One if technically feasible. Certain lines shall, over time, be relocated or placed underground in accord with PUC regulations (see Big River Planning Area Policy 4.7-3 and Policy 3.11-9). Distribution lines shall be underground in new subdivisions.
- 3.5-9 The location of all new access roads and driveways in rural areas shall be reviewed prior to any grading work to ensure safe location and minimum visual disturbance. Direct access to Highway 1 shall not be permitted where it is feasible to connect to an existing or proposed public road or to combine access points for two or more parcels.
- 3.5-10 The County shall review all development permits to ensure that proposed projects will not adversely affect existing archaeological and paleontological resources. Prior to approval of any proposed development within an area of known or probable archaeological or paleontological significance, a limited field survey by a qualified professional shall be required at the applicant's expense to determine the extent of the resource. Results of the field survey shall be transmitted to the State Historical Preservation Officer and Cultural Resource Facility at Sonoma State University for comment. The County shall review all coastal development permits to ensure that proposed projects incorporate reasonable mitigation measures so the development will not adversely affect existing archaeological/paleontological resources. Development in these areas are subject to any additional requirements of the Mendocino County Archaeological Ordinance.
- 3.5-11 Development of the parcels between Caspar South Subdivision and Indian Shoals Subdivision should be clustered to provide for a maximum amount of permanent open space for the western portion of the headland. Because the parcels are



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presently in separate ownerships and the possibility may exist for the area to become a receiver site for off-site development, the Coastal Conservancy should be requested to provide assistance in implementing the planned unit development for all parcels. The planned development proposal should consider the inclusion of all parcels at one time. Notwithstanding the LUP maps, a visitor-serving facility may be permitted with a Land Use Plan amendment. South of Point Cabrillo Lighthouse Road, development on the parcels should be clustered to the east and provide for the maximum amount of permanent open space along the western portions of the property and the lighthouse.

- 3.5-12 Development of the fourteen parcels between a portion of that area south of Salmon Creek and the Navarro River should be clustered to provide for a maximum amount of permanent open space for the western portion of the headlands area. The Coastal Conservancy should be requested to provide assistance in implementing a restoration plan for those property owners willing to participate in such a plan. The restoration plan should consider the inclusion of all such parcels in one plan at one time. All development on the parcels should be clustered to the north and provide for the maximum amount of permanent open space along the western and southern portions of the property.

The restoration plan may provide up to densities identified on the LUP maps. However, the plan shall provide incentives for concentrating future development in the northern most section by allowing for increased densities in this location for its current owners and for other owners who voluntarily transfer development to this location.

- 3.5-13 The LUP maps shall be modified as required in Policy 3.5-5 to include areas where tree removal will restore views to the ocean.

- 3.5-14
1. Whiskey Shoals be considered for transfer of development credits;
  2. Subject to the approval of planned development site plan, the maximum permitted density at a pre-selected receiver site would be equal to seventy one (71) units previously approved for Whiskey Shoals;
  3. As a condition of approval for the site-to-site development transfer, the Whiskey Shoals site shall be subject to a permanent restriction on development with uses limited to those allowed by the open space classification;
  4. The receiver site selected shall have the voluntary approval of the property owner(s) involved;
  5. A reasonable density bonus shall be allowed;



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6. Whiskey Shoals shall be designated as "highly scenic";

3.5-15 Installation of satellite receiving dishes shall require a coastal permit. In highly scenic areas, dishes shall be located so as to minimize visual impacts. Security lighting and floodlighting for occasional and/or emergency use shall be permitted in all areas. Minor additions to existing nightlighting for safety purposes shall be exempt from a coastal permit. In any event no lights shall be installed so that they distract motorists and they shall be shielded so that they do not shine or glare beyond the limits of the parcel wherever possible.