

**Sonoma County  
Local Coastal Plan**

**I**NTRODUCTION  
**P**RELIMINARY **D**RRAFT

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**Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department  
2550 Ventura Avenue  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403**

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# INTRODUCTION

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## 1. AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

### Authority For and Administration of Local Coastal Plan

#### California Coastal Act

The California Coastal Act (Public Resources Code Section 30000 *et seq.*; Coastal Act) was passed by the State Legislature in 1976 and became effective on January 1, 1977. The Coastal Act replaced the original Coastal initiative, Proposition 20, passed in 1972. The Coastal Act transferred the responsibility of preparing a Local Coastal Program (LCP; consists of a Local Coastal Plan and an Implementation Plan) from the State and Regional Coastal Commissions to each of the 15 counties and 53 cities along the California Coast. Each jurisdiction is responsible for developing an LCP that covers a 20-year planning period and which brings local government plans and regulations, as well as those of all public agencies, into conformance with Coastal Act policies. The Coastal Act requires that LCPs be reviewed and updated every five years.

The purpose of this Local Coastal Plan Update is to retain existing land use designations certified by the California Coastal Commission, and to revise the LCP to reflect policies related to coastal development that were adopted by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors in General Plan 2020. In addition, this LCP Update adds new information and policy in the following areas: sea level rise (2100 planning horizon), biotic resources, geologic hazards, water quality, and public access. The document has been re-organized to reflect General Plan 2020 format and includes previously certified Appendices, including the Housing Element, Right-to-Farm Ordinance, Historic Resources Inventory, and development guidelines specific to The Sea Ranch. This updated LCP considers growth on the Sonoma County Coast as projected considering continuation of historic population growth and anticipated increases in visitor-serving uses. Build-out is projected based on the continuation of existing zoning land use, density, and minimum parcel size for the period 2015 to 2035.

Below are the Sections of the California Coastal Act which state the Legislative findings and declarations regarding the goals of the State of California, for the Coastal Zone, ecological balance and economic development in the Coastal Zone, and the necessity of continued planning and management.

#### ***30001. Legislative findings and declarations; ecological balance.***

*The Legislature hereby finds and declares:*

- (a) That the California coastal zone is a distinct and valuable natural resource of vital and enduring interest to all the people and exists as a delicately balanced ecosystem.*
- (b) That the permanent protection of the state's natural and scenic resources is a paramount concern to present and future residents of the state and nation.*
- (c) That to promote the public safety, health, and welfare, and to protect public and private property, wildlife, marine fisheries, and other ocean resources, and the natural environment, it is necessary to protect the ecological balance of the coastal zone and prevent its deterioration*

*and destruction.*

*(d) That existing developed uses, and future developments that are carefully planned and developed consistent with the policies of this division, are essential to the economic and social well-being of the people of this state and especially to working persons employed within the coastal zone.*

**30001.2. Legislative findings and declarations; economic development.**

*The Legislature further finds and declares that, notwithstanding the fact electrical generating facilities, refineries, and coastal-dependent developments, including ports and commercial fishing facilities, offshore petroleum and gas development, and liquefied natural gas facilities, may have significant adverse effects on coastal resources or coastal access, it may be necessary to locate such developments in the coastal zone in order to ensure that inland as well as coastal resources are preserved and that orderly economic development proceeds within the state.*

**30001.5. Legislative findings and declarations; goals.**

*The Legislature further finds and declares that the basic goals of the state for the coastal zone are to:*

*(a) Protect, maintain, and where feasible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the coastal zone environment and its natural and artificial resources.*

*(b) Assure orderly, balanced utilization and conservation of coastal zone resources taking into account the social and economic needs of the people of the state.*

*(c) Maximize public access to and along the coast and maximize public recreational opportunities in the coastal zone consistent with sound resources conservation principles and constitutionally protected rights of private property owners.*

*(d) Assure priority for coastal-dependent and coastal-related development over other development on the coast.*

*(e) Encourage state and local initiatives and cooperation in preparing procedures to implement coordinated planning and development for mutually beneficial uses, including educational uses, in the coastal zone.*

**30004. Legislative findings and declarations; necessity of continued planning and management.**

*The Legislature further finds and declares that:*

*(a) To achieve maximum responsiveness to local conditions, accountability, and public accessibility, it is necessary to rely heavily on local government and local land use planning procedures and enforcement.*

*(b) To ensure conformity with the provisions of this division, and to provide maximum state involvement in federal activities allowable under federal law or regulations or the United States Constitution which affect California's coastal resources, to protect regional, state, and national interests in assuring the maintenance of the long-term productivity and economic vitality of coastal resources necessary for the well-being of the people of the state, and to avoid long-term costs to the public and a diminished quality of life resulting from the misuse of coastal resources, to coordinate and integrate the activities of the many agencies whose activities impact the coastal zone, and to supplement their activities in matters not properly within the jurisdiction of any existing agency, it is necessary to provide for continued state coastal planning and management through a state coastal commission.*

## **Local Coastal Programs**

The California Coastal Act requires each local government lying, in whole or in part, within the Coastal Zone to prepare a “Local Coastal Program” for that portion of the Coastal Zone within its jurisdiction. Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) are basic planning tools used by local governments to guide development in the Coastal Zone, in partnership with the Coastal Commission. LCPs contain the ground rules for future development and protection of coastal resources. The LCPs specify the appropriate type, location, and scale of uses of land and water and applicable resource protection and development policies. Each LCP includes a “Land Use Plan” (LUP) and an “Implementation Plan” (IP) setting forth measures to implement the plan (such as zoning or ordinances). Prepared by local government, these programs govern decisions that determine the short-term and long-term conservation and use of coastal resources. While each LCP reflects unique characteristics of individual local coastal communities, regional and statewide interests and concerns must also be addressed in conformity with Coastal Act goals and policies. Following adoption by a city council or county board of supervisors, an LCP is submitted to the Coastal Commission for review for consistency with Coastal Act requirements.

This Local Coastal Plan is the “Land Use Plan”, and the Coastal Zoning Ordinance is the “Implementation Plan” of the Sonoma County Local Coastal Program. The existing Coastal Commission Certified Administrative Manual component of the Sonoma County Local Coastal Program has been incorporated into this updated LCP.

**Goals and Policies.** In adopting the California Coastal Act, the legislature declared that its basic goals were to:

- (1) Protect, maintain, and where feasible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Coastal Zone environment and its natural and man-made resources.
- (2) Assure orderly balanced utilization and conservation of Coastal Zone resources taking into account the social and economic needs of the people of the state.
- (3) Maximize public access to and along the Coast and maximize public recreational opportunities in the Coastal Zone consistent with sound resource conservation principles and constitutionally protected rights of private property owners.
- (4) Assure priority for coastal-dependent and coastal-related development over other development on the Coast.
- (5) Encourage State and local initiatives and cooperation in preparing procedures to implement coordinated planning and development for mutually beneficial uses, including educational uses, in the Coastal Zone.

The Coastal Act established a framework for guiding development and preserving sensitive resources in the Coastal Zone. Through its policies, it sets up a land use priority system which gives the highest priority to the preservation and protection of environmentally sensitive habitats and prime agricultural land and timberland. The Coastal Act states that the maximum amount of prime resource land shall be maintained in production, and that only resource dependent uses may be allowed in sensitive habitats. On shoreline lands which are not sensitive habitats or prime agricultural land or timberland, development which requires a site on or adjacent to the sea has the next priority. On lands not needed for any of the above, the

next priority goes to public recreation and visitor-serving facilities. Private development is permitted after all these priorities have been considered. **Table C-INT-1** shows the priority of coastal land uses under the Coastal Act.

**Table C-INT-1. Priority of Coastal Land Uses Under the California Coastal Act**

PRIORITY OF USE	RURAL, UNDEVELOPED AREAS	SECTIONS OF COASTAL ACT	ALREADY DEVELOPED AREAS
<b>High</b>	Agriculture (prime coastal dependent), forestry (productive timberland), coastal dependent public recreation [30213, 30241, 30242, 30243, 30250(a,b)]	Coastal dependent public recreation [30213, 30220, 30221]  Water dependent* public recreation [30220, 30221, 30223]  Coastal or non-water* dependent public recreation [30220, 30221]  Visitor-serving commercial recreation, low cost [30222, 30213, 30250(c)]  Visitor-serving* commercial recreation, high cost [30222, 30250(c)]	Coastal dependent industry and commerce, commercial fishing, coastal dependent public recreation, and special communities [30213, 30234, 30250(a,b), 30253(5), 30255]
<b>Low</b>		Moderately priced housing  Private residential, general industrial, or commercial development; high-priced housing* [30213, 30222, 30250, 30255]	

\* Concentration of development policies [30250(a)] limit development in rural areas, except public recreation and visitor-serving uses.

## Administration and Interpretation

After a Local Coastal Program has been certified by the Coastal Commission, coastal permitting authority over most new development is transferred to the local government, which applies the requirements of the Local Coastal Program in reviewing proposed new developments. The Coastal Commission retains permanent coastal permit jurisdiction over development proposed on tidelands, submerged lands, and public trust lands; and the Commission also acts on appeals from certain local government coastal permit decisions.

All land use and development decisions in the Coastal Zone must be consistent with the Local Coastal Program. In the Coastal Zone, the Local Coastal Program supersedes and takes precedence over other local plans, policies, and regulations. In authorizing coastal development permits after Local Coastal Program certification, the County must make the finding that the development conforms to the certified Local Coastal Program as well as all other findings required by the Coastal Zoning Ordinance.

The following general principles provide the framework for administration and interpretation of the Local Coastal Plan:

- (1) The policies of Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act (California Public Resources Code Sections 30210 through 30264) shall guide interpretation of the Local Coastal Plan.
- (2) Where policies within the Local Coastal Plan overlap or conflict, the policy which is the most protective of coastal resources shall take precedence.
- (3) Prior to the issuance of any development permit required by the Local Coastal Plan, the County shall make the finding that the development meets the standards set forth in all applicable Local Coastal Plan policies and Coastal Zoning Ordinance regulations.
- (4) Prefacing discussion in text is intended as justification for the enumerated Local Coastal Plan policies and map designations. Therefore, the text shall be considered as the findings justifying the specified policies and Land Use and Open Space Map designations.
- (5) The policies contained herein bind the County's actions and establish the standard of review for determining whether land use and development decisions and zoning changes are consistent with the local Coastal Plan.

## Appeals

Certain types of development, as well as development within certain geographic areas that are acted on by the County after certification of the LCP, are appealable to the Coastal Commission (Public Resources Code Section 30603). These include:

- (1) Developments approved by the local government between the sea and the first public road paralleling the sea or within 300 feet of the inland extent of any beach or of the mean high tide line of the sea where there is no beach, whichever is the greatest distance.

- (2) Developments approved by the local government not included in the above, located on tidelands; submerged lands; public trust lands; within 100 feet of any wetland, estuary, stream; or within 300 feet of the top of the seaward face of any coastal bluff.
- (3) Development approved by the local government not included above that are located in a sensitive coastal resource area.
- (4) Any development approved by the local government that is not designated as the principle permitted use in the Coastal Zoning Ordinance.
- (5) Any development which constitutes a major public works project or a major energy facility (whether approved or denied by the local government).

## History of the Local Coastal Plan

The process of preparing the Sonoma County Local Coastal Plan (LCP) began in 1978, and from the beginning included strong citizen participation. Technical and Citizen Advisory Committees were established, with citizens appointed by the Board of Supervisors to assist staff in developing the LCP. Public meetings were held to discuss the major issues on the Sonoma County Coast, including shoreline access, transportation, harbor development, environmental protection, housing, and future development. Over several years the committees met and developed the LCP and policies with public input. During that time the California Coastal Commission retained review authority over all coastal development.

The Draft LCP was completed and adopted by the Board of Supervisors in May 1980, certified by the Coastal Commission in December 1980, and became effective in January 1981. However, adoption and certification of The Sea Ranch portion of the LCP was deferred due to disagreement about public access and pending litigation between the developer Oceanic and the Coastal Commission. Following resolution of these issues with a settlement agreement, the County developed the Land Use Plan for The Sea Ranch. In 1982 the Coastal Commission certified The Sea Ranch portion of the LCP and the LCP implementation plan that included the Administrative Manual and the Coastal Zoning Ordinance.

In 1989 the County adopted a new General Plan, which directed the County to update and revise the Local Coastal Plan to be consistent with the new General Plan. In 1993, 1995, 1999, and 2001 the Coastal Commission certified amendments to the LCP, which adopted technical changes to ensure consistency with the General Plan. Minor corrections were made to the Land Use Plan and revisions were made to all chapters for internal consistency. In 2001 the Coastal Zoning Ordinance was changed significantly based on the format and style of the Countywide Zoning Ordinance, while retaining provisions that were specific to the Coastal Zone.

In 2001 the County started revising and updating the 1989 General Plan and simultaneously the Local Coastal Plan. The County's intent was to incorporate all pertinent policies of the updated General Plan into the updated LCP, and to develop the Sonoma County Local Coastal Plan as a document separate from the General Plan which specifically addresses the Sonoma Coast/Gualala Basin Planning Area, which includes the Coastal Zone. The primary purpose of the updated General Plan was to conduct a policy review which focused on specific issues that were of paramount importance to County communities. The broad purpose of General Plan



2020 is to express policies which will guide decisions on future growth, development, and conservation of resources through 2020 in a manner consistent with the goals and quality of life desired by County residents.

The County adopted Sonoma County General Plan 2020 on September 23, 2008. Accordingly, the Local Coastal Plan Update incorporates applicable General Plan 2020 goals, objectives, and policies; and includes objectives and policies unique to the Coastal Zone and the larger Sonoma Coast/Gualala Basin Planning Area.

## **2. REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT**

### **Regional and Sonoma County Coast Setting**

Sonoma County, the most northerly of the nine counties in the San Francisco Bay Region, is located along the Pacific coastline about forty miles north of San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge. The County is just over 1500 square miles, making it the largest of the nine Bay Area counties.

Sonoma County is bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the west; Marin County and San Pablo Bay to the south; Solano, Napa, and Lake Counties to the east; and Mendocino County to the north. Because of the geographic configuration and topography of the North Bay area, transportation linkages to adjacent counties are limited to a few routes. The U.S. Highway 101 Freeway is the major north-south route, connecting Sonoma County to San Francisco and Marin Counties on the south and to Mendocino County on the north.

The Sonoma County Coastal Zone is a landscape of unsurpassed variety and beauty. Much of the area is encompassed within federal, state, and county parks, which provide habitat protection and opportunities for public recreation. The Coastal Zone also includes several small communities, productive agriculture areas, scattered residences, visitor serving commercial areas, and significant amounts of open space. The Sonoma County Local Coastal Program is designed to preserve the unique environment of the Coastal Zone and to encourage the protection and restoration of its coastal resources, while encouraging public enjoyment of its coastal recreation opportunities.

The Local Coastal Plan covers the area referred to in the Sonoma County General Plan as the Sonoma Coast/Gualala Basin Planning Area. The Planning Area runs the 40-mile length of the Pacific Coast margin from the Gualala River to the Estero Americano. In addition to several coastal communities, it extends inland to include Annapolis, Cazadero, Duncans Mills, Bodega, Freestone, Camp Meeker, and Occidental. Roughly paralleling the San Andreas Fault Zone, the rugged Sonoma Coast is a scenic area of regional, State, and National significance, with nearly vertical sea cliffs and sea stacks along the shoreline, dunes, marine terraces, coastal uplands, and headlands. In the north, the Gualala River South Fork extends inland into the coniferous forests of the western Mendocino Highlands.

The Coastal Zone portion of the Planning Area is 55 miles in length and extends inland generally 1000 yards from the mean high tide line. In significant coastal estuarine habitat and recreational areas it extends inland to the first major ridgeline paralleling the sea or five miles

from the mean high tide line of the sea. The Coastal Zone boundary is generally 3000 to 12,000 feet inland from the shoreline, except around Duncans Mills, Willow Creek, and Valley Ford, where it extends up to five miles inland along the Russian River corridor and the Estero Americano.

The Sonoma Coast/Gualala Basin Planning Area is the most sparsely populated of the nine planning regions due to its relative remoteness and inaccessibility. In 2000, the 8,417 residents mostly lived in various small villages. Outside of these communities, rural settlement is very sparse. The region's economy is primarily oriented to recreation and tourism, commercial fishing, timber production, and sheep ranching. Residences, originally planned as second homes, including The Sea Ranch and Bodega Harbor, are now increasingly occupied by permanent residents. In addition, many residences are also occupied as home based businesses. The Land Use Plan projects 3,283 new residents for this Planning Area resulting in a population of 11,700. The greatest gains in employment are associated with the recreation and tourism industries.

## **History of Sonoma County Coastal Protection by Citizens**

Sonoma County citizens have played a pivotal role in the establishment of the California Coastal Commission, and have been leaders in coastal protection.

In Northern California, contemporary awareness of the need for coastal protection began with the attempt by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (P&E) in 1962 to build a nuclear power plant on Bodega Head. The project was defeated due to work by a local and statewide opposition and the presence of the San Andreas Fault on the site. PG&E abandoned the site and left the excavation for the nuclear reactor as a water-filled "Hole in the Head".

In the mid to late 1960s, industrial projects, housing developments, and other projects which threatened the California coast began to multiply: 1) five additional power plant sites were proposed; 2) the mouth of the Russian River was to be dredged for gravel to construct Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART); 3) coastal wetlands were being filled or dredged for new marinas; 4) public views and access to beaches were eliminated due to construction of miles of beach houses along the Malibu coastline; 5) public access to 10 miles of the Sonoma County Coast were to be eliminated for The Sea Ranch second home development; 6) the City of Long Beach ruled that all new buildings along the most scenic coastal roadway be high-rise structures; and 7) the last straw, a blowout from an oil drilling platform off the Santa Barbara coast in January 1969. The result was a huge public outcry for greater protection of the California coast.

## **COAAST, Coastal Access Initiative, and Dunlap Bill**

In 1968 activists in Sonoma County, challenged by The Sea Ranch precedent of privatization of the coast, had formed Californians Organized to Acquire Access to State Tidelands (COAAST). They proceeded to mount the "Coastal Access Initiative" that would require public access whenever coastal property was developed. The initiative lost to a massive campaign investment by the The Sea Ranch developers.

Two years later, Assemblyman John Dunlap was successful in passing Assembly Bill 493 (Dunlap Bill) that carried out the Coastal Access Initiative language for the whole state. Under the Dunlap Bill, no county shall approve either the tentative or final map of any subdivision fronting on the coastline or shoreline which does not provide or have available reasonable

public access by fee or easement from the public highway to the ocean or bay shoreline.

## **Coastal Alliance and Proposition 20**

The Coastal Access Initiative also caught the attention of Assemblyman Alan Sieroty, who with Assemblyman Dunlap came to Sonoma County to hold Assembly hearings on The Sea Ranch and to ask COAAST to organize statewide all the groups involved in coastal protection. Sonoma County's Bill Kortum of COAAST created a statewide network of coastal protection activists (the Coastal Coalition comprised of 12 environmental groups), which in 1970 advocated for a bill to establish a commission for the California coast. The Coastal Coalition morphed into the Coastal Alliance, comprised of 110 environmental groups interested in saving the California coast, chaired by Kortum.

In 1971 and 1972, Assemblymen Sieroty and Dunlap introduced Assembly Bill 1471 (AB 1471) to protect the entire California coast. Their idea was to introduce legislation to create a Coastal Commission to address statewide concerns for coastal protection. They advocated the equivalent of a State planning commission with the police power of zoning for the California Coast superceding local jurisdictions. Competing bills emphasized local rather than state control. For three years legislation passed through the State Assembly but not the Senate Committee. The heavy lobbying from the energy sector, California Real Estate Association, County Supervisors' Association, League of California Cities, and many others was effective in defeating the legislation calling for a Coastal Commission.

Recognizing that legislative efforts were going nowhere, the Coastal Alliance, with assistance from attorney Peter Douglas of Assemblyman Sieroty's staff and attorney Lew Reid, wrote a ballot initiative measure known as Proposition 20 (California Coastal Zone Conservation Act of 1972 ) containing the main language of Sieroty and Dunlap's AB 1471. Proposition 20 appeared on the November 7, 1972 ballot and was approved by voters.

The State Commission established by the measure had twelve members appointed equally by the Governor, the Senate, and the Assembly. Using the same appointment procedure, five coastal regional commissions were established to hold hearings and issue local permits. The State Commission was to serve as an appeals body for regional commission decisions. The State Commission, with input from the regional commissions, was to develop a California Coastal Plan to be adopted by the California Legislature in 1976, at which time the Commission was to be made a permanent institution.

In 1976 the Legislature voted with a narrow margin to carry out the mandate of Proposition 20 with two significant additions. To satisfy local government, the Legislature mandated that coastal counties and cities develop a local coastal plan that met the criteria of the California Coastal Plan developed by the California Coastal Commission. The California Coastal Conservancy was created and money appropriated money to buy coastal land and help develop trails and public access and conduct habitat restoration.

## **Coastwalk California**

Coastwalk originated in 1985 at the instigation of longtime Sonoma County coastal activists Bill and Lucy Kortum. They proposed a trek along the Sonoma County Coast to draw awareness of public access and coastal preservation needs, and to publicize the fact that the California

Coastal Act calls for a continuous coastal trail the length of California. That first Coastwalk was planned and led by Tom and Vivian McFarling, Sonoma County environmental activists. It was so popular that it was repeated again and became an annual event in Sonoma County, later spreading to other counties. By 1990 longtime Sonoma County volunteer Richard Nichols became Executive Director of Coastwalk, and with the help of his wife Brenda, Coastwalk grew and prospered, eventually putting on walks in each of the 15 California coastal counties. In 2008 Coastwalk renamed itself Coastwalk California to reflect its statewide network. The Coastwalk California mission is “To ensure the right of all people to reach and responsibly enjoy the California coast. We are a California-wide non-profit organization that advocates for coastal protection and access via the California Coastal Trail and offers fun and educational walking tours.” The Coastwalk California 2013 website states: “Today, with the help of dedicated volunteers, Coastwalk continues its legacy of thousands of people to the natural and human history of the spectacular California coastal landscape and helping to promote its conservation.”

## **Sonoma Land Trust**

The Jenner Headlands Preserve (formerly the Rule Ranch), acquired by the Sonoma Land Trust in December 2009, is 5,630 acres of a mosaic of redwood and Douglas fir forests, oak woodland, chaparral, and coastal prairie located north of the town of Jenner where the Russian River meets the Pacific Ocean. The property adjoins State Route 1 for 2.5 miles adjacent to Sonoma Coast State Park just north of the Russian River Estuary. Acquisition of the Jenner Headlands Preserve was financed by the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District, California Coastal Conservancy, California Wildlife Conservation Board, Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Forest Legacy Program of the U.S. Forest Service, and private foundations. Ownership of the preserve was transferred to the Wildlands Conservancy in September 2013.

In 1997 and 2001, the Sonoma Land Trust, in partnership with the California Coastal Conservancy and Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District, acquired portions of the Estero Americano Preserve, over 120 acres surrounding the tidal estuary that forms the border between Sonoma and Marin Counties. Part of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, the Estero Americano Preserve is one of the most important biological areas on the northern California Coast. The Preserve contains a variety of habitat types, including coastal brackish marsh, freshwater seep, coastal prairie, perennial grassland, and northern coastal scrub; and is a key coastal area for numerous plant and animal species of concern.

## **Other Organizations**

Other organizations that have been involved in coastal protection in Sonoma County include:

- Bodega Land Trust
- LandPaths
- Save Penny Island
- Save the Redwoods League
- Sierra Club
- Sonoma County Conservation Action

- Sonoma County Surfriders
- Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
- Wildlands Trust

## Intergovernmental Planning Coordination

Sonoma County has a particular interest in coordination of land use, infrastructure, and environmental protection with other local, state, federal, and tribal governmental jurisdictions within the County. This Local Coastal Plan Update (LCP Update) is generally compatible with the plans and policies of the nine cities and jurisdictions established by other government agencies. The County also acknowledges both the presence of federally-recognized tribal governments within Sonoma County, and the need for communication and coordination with federal and tribal governments, where development of tribal and non-tribal land is proposed and where tribes seek to acquire new trust land.

The LCP Update also considers the policies and concerns of adjacent counties and regional agencies, such as the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District, the Bay Area Water Quality Control Board, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Sonoma County Water Agency, the California Coastal Commission, the Coastal Conservancy, and others. The text of the various Elements notes those situations where these agencies have particular responsibilities that affect the physical development of the Sonoma County Coast and approval of permits.

## Consultation and Coordination With Mendocino County

A travel website advertising the allure of the Mendocino and Sonoma County Coasts tells the reader that “Gualala” is a Native American word meaning “where the waters meet.” Indeed, the northern Sonoma Coast meets the southern Mendocino Coast at the Gualala River. The river estuary and mouth is the southern border of the Gualala town area, a year-round working community of several hundred residents that serves the retail needs of the surrounding region, known as “Mendonoma.” South of Gualala lay the Sonoma County communities of The Sea Ranch, Annapolis, Stewarts Point, Timber Cove, and Fort Ross. North of Gualala lay the Mendocino County communities of Anchor Bay, Point Arena, Manchester, Irish Beach, and Elk. Much is shared and linked across County lines in this region, from public services to commercial economies to Gualala River water quality issues. Therefore, it is necessary that Sonoma and Mendocino Counties consult and coordinate in implementation of their Local Coastal Plans.

**Public Services.** Law enforcement services in Mendonoma are provided by the Mendocino County and Sonoma County Sheriff’s Departments and the California Highway Patrol. Fire protection services are provided by local volunteer fire departments and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Redwood Coast Medical Services provides primary and preventative medical services and urgent care to the northern California Coast from Timber Cove north to Irish Beach in Mendocino County. Facilities consist of a main medical clinic in Gualala, dental and selected medical clinic in Point Arena, and counseling and outreach services at another clinic in Gualala that used to be in Stewarts Point. The Coast Life Support District is a special tax district charged with providing basic and advanced life support ambulance services and responding to calls involving including fires, vehicle accidents, hazardous materials

incidents, and requests from law enforcement officers over 270 square miles in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties. High School students from The Sea Ranch and Stewarts Point in Sonoma County attend Point Arena High School in Mendocino County.

**Economies.** The economies of the northern Sonoma Coast and southern Mendocino Coast are interactive and inter-dependent, especially between The Sea Ranch and Gualala, based primarily on tourism and visitor support services, building trades, various cottage industries, home-based enterprises using telecommuting technologies, forestry-related jobs, and real estate.

**Gualala River.** Most of the 40-mile Gualala River is in Sonoma County, but a portion is in Mendocino County. For its last few miles, it forms the boundary between the two counties. The river provides recreation; municipal and industrial water supply for the community of Gualala; drinking water for The Sea Ranch community; and wildlife habitat including cold freshwater habitat for migration and spawning of coho salmon and steelhead trout, two fisheries of concern in northern California.

The primary land uses in the Gualala River watershed are timber production and grazing. About 34 percent of the watershed is owned by timber companies. The main issues for the Gualala River and its tributaries are excess sedimentation and elevated water temperature. Logging and road construction/maintenance have greatly increased the amount of sedimentation in the river and its tributaries. A North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board analysis in 2000 found that compared to natural sources, human activities account for about two-thirds of the sediment load in the watershed. The Gualala River Watershed Council in 2008 estimated that 85 percent of the human-caused sediment sources impacting the river result from improperly constructed/maintained timber and ranch roads. Logging in the watershed has also resulted in degradation of salmon and trout habitat as a result of removal of large streamside trees that provide shade, increasing water temperature; and reducing woody debris that creates spawning pools.

Today hillside vineyard development is becoming an increasing threat to water quality and fish habitat as more steep land is converted to vineyards, increasing the sediment load in the river; and stream flow is decreased as water from wells or shallow gravel aquifers connected to the river or its tributaries is used for vineyard irrigation in dry periods.

## **Adaptation to Change**

On the Sonoma County Coast, change is both here and now and also lies ahead of us. It comes as a result of climate change in the form of progressive inundation and increased flooding of low-lying areas which contain some of our roads, trails and beaches, and commercial developments; and in the form of as yet undetectable changes in the kind of crops we can grow, our farming success, and the types of our natural habitats and their use by wildlife. It also comes in the shape of a significant downturn in the national, state, and local economies which has resulted in lost houses and jobs, increased unemployment and decreased wages, and lower quality of life. And our state's demographics are changing - many of its cities and counties are rapidly aging, the inland areas are growing faster than coastal regions, and ethnic diversity is increasing. Our Sonoma County Coast will not be, look, or feel the same in 100 years.

With the release of our updated Local Coastal Plan comes the need for our communities to adapt to these changes and others we don't anticipate. As H.G. Wells said, "Adapt or perish, now as ever, is nature's inexorable imperative." As Charles Darwin said, "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change." But according to Stephen Hawking, who is more representative of our technological age, "Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change." Therefore, more importantly than strength and humor, we will need intelligence to approach and adapt to these changes in our coastal natural, physical, social, and economic environments. And the future looks bright, because here in Sonoma County we have intelligence in our communities; an intelligence that will continue to grow and allow us to adapt; for as Wendy Carlos (an American composer and electronic musician) once said, "As human beings we do change, grow, adapt, perhaps even learn and become wiser."

### **3. ORGANIZATION AND OVERVIEW**

#### **Local Coastal Plan Format**

The previous Local Coastal Plan consisted of the following 6 Chapters:

- (1) Historical
- (2) Environment and Hazards
- (3) Resources (Agriculture and Timber)
- (4) Recreation
- (5) Harbor
- (6) Development (Housing, Public Services, Transportation, Visual, Land Use)

This Local Coastal Plan Update consists of the following 9 Elements:

- 1) Land Use
- 2) Agricultural Resources
- 3) Open Space and Resource Conservation
- 4) Public Access
- 5) Water Resources
- 6) Public Safety
- 7) Circulation and Transit

- 8) Public Facilities and Services
- 9) Noise

**Table C-INT-2** shows the Chapters and Sections of the previous Local Coastal Plan which correspond to the Elements of this Local Coastal Plan Update. For example, the Land Use Section of the Development Chapter of the previous Local Coastal Plan corresponds mainly to the Land Use Element but also to the Public Facilities and Services, Open Space and Resource Conservation, and Public Access Elements of this Local Coastal Plan Update.

## **SubAreas**

The Sonoma County Coast has been divided into 10 SubAreas for ease of discussion and analysis in the Local Coastal Plan, particularly for the issues of land use, public access, and recreation:

- 1) The Sea Ranch North
- 2) The Sea Ranch South
- 3) Stewarts Point/Horseshoe Cove
- 4) Salt Point
- 5) Timber Cove/Fort Ross
- 6) The High Cliffs/Muniz-Jenner
- 7) Duncans Mills
- 8) Pacific View/Willow Creek
- 9) State Beach/Bodega Bay
- 10) Valley Ford

## **Local Coastal Plan Elements**

### **Policies**

A policy is a specific statement in text or a diagram guiding and implying clear commitment to an action. It is a mandatory declaration of an obligation intended specifically to govern the approvability of permit applications. This Local Coastal Plan includes as policies what are sometimes referred to as "Other Initiatives," which are non-binding and/or advisory statements of intent, encouragement, or pledges of support for specific endeavors, programs, or outcomes; and which may set guidelines and priorities for County actions.

Policies bind the County's actions and establish the standards of review for determining whether land use and development decisions, zoning changes, or other County actions are consistent



with the Local Coastal Plan. Approved developments must be found consistent with all Local Coastal Plan policies. A development project's demonstrated inconsistency with a Local Coastal Plan policy is the basis for denying a proposed development or appealing a permit action.

It is important to note that significant differences exist between the State General Plan law and the Coastal Act with respect to how policies are to be read and interpreted. For example, development projects are typically required to be found consistent on balance with an overall or comprehensive reading of the General Plan's policies. In contrast, the Coastal Act requires that development projects in the Coastal Zone must be found to be consistent with all of the policies and standards of the Local Coastal Program, in this case the Sonoma County Local Coastal Plan and Coastal Zoning Ordinance.

This Local Coastal Plan incorporates those General Plan 2020 goals, objectives, and policies which are applicable to the Coastal Zone; and incorporates as policies the "Recommendations" in the previous Local Coastal Plan. In some cases the wording of these policies has been revised for clarity and to accurately reflect the Coastal Zone, current County Policy, or new data and information. The Local Coastal Plan also includes new policies based on the requirements and recommendations of the California Coastal Commission, new data and information, and input received at the 2013 public workshops. The numbered "Recommendations" in the previous Local Coastal Plan which no longer reflect County policy have not been included in this Local Coastal Plan and are shown in ~~strikeout~~.

**Table C-INT-2. Correspondence of Previous Local Coastal Plan Chapters and Sections with Local Coastal Plan Update Elements**

PREVIOUS LCP CHAPTER - SECTION	LCP UPDATE ELEMENT(S) (primary Element - <b>bold</b> )
Development - Land Use	<b>Land Use</b> Public Facilities and Services Open Space and Resource Conservation Public Access
Development - Public Services	<b>Public Facilities and Services</b> Water Resources
Development - Transportation	<b>Circulation and Transit</b>
Development - Visual Resources	<b>Open Space and Resource Conservation</b>
Environment - Environmental Hazards	<b>Public Safety</b> Water Resources
Environment - Environmental Resources	<b>Open Space and Resource Conservation</b>
Harbor	<b>Open Space and Resource Conservation</b> Public Access
Historic Resources	<b>Open Space and Resource Conservation</b>
Recreation	<b>Public Access</b>
Resources	<b>Open Space and Resource Conservation</b> Agricultural Resources Water Resources Land Use Public Safety

After each policy is a term in parenthesis that describes where it comes from and whether it has been revised:

<b>GP2020</b>	the policy is the same as in General Plan 2020
<b>GP2020 Revised</b>	the policy in General Plan 2020 has been revised
<b>Existing LCP</b>	the policy is the same as the Recommendation in the Existing LCP
<b>Existing LCP Revised</b>	the policy (Recommendation) in the Existing LCP has been revised (revisions are shown in <u>underline</u> and <del>strike-out</del> )
<b>New</b>	the policy is new

## Land Use Element

The previous Local Coastal Plan contained a chapter on “Development” that included a section on “Land Use.” This section has been incorporated into the Land Use Element.

In addition to the ten general goals and policies, the Land Use Element describes where the different kinds of uses for land may be established on the Sonoma County Coast, establishes the land use and density of properties on the Coast and shows them on Land Use Plan Maps, and presents policies specific to the Coast or particular SubAreas.

## Agricultural Resources Element

The previous Local Coastal Plan contained a chapter on “Resources” that included a section on “Agricultural Resources.” This section has been incorporated into the Agricultural Resources Element.

The Agricultural Resources Element presents guidelines and policies that apply to lands designated in the Agriculture land use category. Policies address marketing of agricultural products, stabilization of agricultural use at the edge of urban areas, limitations on intrusion of residential uses, location of agricultural services and visitor-serving uses, provision of farmworker housing, streamlining of permit procedures for agricultural uses, and recognition of the aquaculture and horse industries as agricultural uses.

## Open Space and Resource Conservation Element

The Open Space and Resource Conservation Element addresses scenic resources/design, biotic resources, soils, timber resources, mineral resources, energy resources, air quality, and commercial fishing and support facilities.

**Scenic Resources.** The previous Local Coastal Plan contained a chapter on “Development” that included a section on “Visual Resources.” This section has been incorporated into the “Scenic Resources” section of the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element.

The Scenic Resources/Design section includes maps of the Coast SubAreas showing the locations of designated Scenic Landscape Units, Vista Points, and Scenic Corridors. Scenic Landscape Units incorporate “Major Views”, established along with Vista Points in the previous Local Coastal Plan and retained in this Local Coastal Plan Update. The section presents siting and design guidelines to protect coastal views and to minimize other visual impacts of development.

The eight types of natural landforms in the Coast’s rural areas are identified, and policies and design guidelines to preserve, retain, and enhance the character of these rural areas are presented. They call for preserving existing site features contributing to rural character, siting of buildings and development features to blend in with the surrounding landscape, and allowing certain rural design features in new development. Design guidelines for specific landform types are also provided to minimize the visual impacts of new development.

This section also describes the visual characteristics of the major urban communities on the Coast. It presents both urban design guidelines specific to some of these communities in order to retain and enhance their unique character, and general urban design guidelines for other urban development on the Coast.

**Biotic and Other Natural Resources.** The previous Local Coastal Plan contained a chapter on “Environment and Hazards” that included a section on “Environmental Resources”, which has been incorporated into the “Biotic Resources” section of the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element. This section includes maps of the Coast SubAreas showing the locations of designated “Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas” (ESHAs), which include Riparian Corridors; and Biotic Habitat Areas, which include Sensitive Natural Communities and Special Status Animal and Plant Occurrences and Habitats. The previous Local Coastal Plan established a hierarchy of environmental sensitivity for ESHAs; only the “Preservation” sensitivity designation is retained in the Local Coastal Plan Update. Policies in the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element address the protection of ESHAs. They also address the protection and preservation of other natural resources, including soils, timber resources, mineral resources, energy resources, and air quality.

**Commercial Fishing and Support Facilities.** The previous Local Coastal Plan contained a chapter on “Harbor” which has been incorporated into the “Commercial Fishing and Support Facilities” section of the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element. The section contains policies for the protection and upgrading of facilities serving the commercial fishing industry, and for the protection of natural resources associated with dredging in Bodega Bay.

## **Public Access Element**

The California Constitution provides that the public has the right-of-way to navigable waters, and the California Coastal Act carries out this provision. Policies of the Coastal Act state that the public has a right to maximum access to the shoreline and that development shall not interfere with that right. The policies also give priority to recreation and visitor-serving uses over all other uses except coastal dependent industry and agriculture, and promote enhancement of public and private recreation opportunities. The previous Local Coastal Plan contained a chapter on “Recreation” that has been incorporated into the Public Access Element.

The Public Access Element is divided into the following sections: Background, Public Access Facilities, Recreational Boating, and Visitor-Serving Commercial Facilities. The Background describes the legal basis for public access to the shoreline under the California Constitution, Coastal Act, Coastal Trail Act, and other guiding policy documents.

**Public Access Facilities.** This section is divided into sections on Facility Classification, Acquisition, Planning and Development, and Management and Operation. It describes in general the public and private parks, trails, and other recreational facilities on the Sonoma County Coast and includes maps showing the locations of these facilities.

The Facility Classification section describes the classification system for public access facilities - parks and preserves, regional trails, coastal access trails, and bikeways.

The Facility Acquisition section describes the methods, issues, and priorities for acquisition of public access facilities. Policies are presented for maximizing public access to and on the Coast; carrying out the Public Access Plan (Appendix A) as the primary policy for determination of park needs and acquisition of public access; minimizing adverse impacts of development on public access; requiring dedication of a public access easement or fee title as a condition of approval for new development on property containing a facility proposed in the Public Access Plan; protecting areas where public prescriptive rights to the coast may exist; acquiring property not included in the Public Access Plan standards for Offers to Dedicate and siting of public access facilities; and identifying, prioritizing, and developing the California Coastal Trail.

The Facility Planning and Development section describes how the Public Access Plan was developed and the standards on which it is based; and the considerations for planning and developing public access facilities. Policies are presented for carrying out the Public Access Plan as the primary policy for development of public access facilities; facility design and construction; trail surfaces and improvements; providing signs, restrooms, bicycle storage, and other amenities; providing adequate parking; providing campgrounds and overnight accommodations; and evaluating adverse impacts of facilities on people and the environment.

The Facility Management and Operation section describes the allowable uses of public access facilities and some issues associated with management and operation funding, maintenance, policing, and private fee access. Policies are presented for ensuring adequate operation and maintenance of public access facilities to protect natural resources and public safety.

**Recreational Boating.** This section identifies and describes the existing recreational boating facilities on the Sonoma County Coast and presents policies for providing adequate facilities at parks, harbors, and marinas.

**Visitor-Serving Commercial Facilities.** This section identifies and describes the existing restaurants, overnight accommodations, auto service stations, grocery stores, and similar commercial uses for visitors by Coast SubArea; and presents policies for encouraging new and expanding existing visitor-serving commercial development where it can be accommodated with minimal impacts on coastal views and natural resources.

## **Water Resources Element**

The previous Local Coastal Plan contained a chapter on “Development” that included a section

on “Public Services” with a subsection on “Water Supply.” This subsection has been incorporated into the Water Resources Element, a new Element developed in recognition of the importance of water to the environment, economic stability, agricultural protection, and overall quality of life of Sonoma County Coast residents. Policies address subjects such as surface water, groundwater, water conservation and re-use, public water systems, and water quality.

## **Public Safety Element**

The previous Local Coastal Plan contained a chapter entitled “Environment and Hazards” that included a section on “Hazards,” which has been incorporated into the Public Safety Element. Special limitations and procedures for review of development projects located in areas subject to natural hazards are included in the Element. Natural hazards addressed include seismic and other geologic hazards, landslide and erosion on unstable slopes, beach erosion and coastal cliff/bluff stability, flooding, sea level rise, tsunami, and wildland fire. Hazardous materials are also addressed.

## **Circulation and Transit Element**

The previous Local Coastal Plan contained a chapter on “Development” that included a section on “Transportation,” which has been incorporated into the Circulation and Transit Element. Plans for the Sonoma County Coast’s future highway and transit systems are presented, with emphasis on State Route 1. The Element emphasizes an increased role for public transit in serving commute trips and the importance of measures which will allocate existing highway capacity more efficiently during peak travel periods. The Element recommends improvements to various intersections to increase the capacity and safety of State Route 1; and an increased role for pedestrian, bicycle, and other alternative transportation modes.

## **Public Facilities and Services Element**

The previous Local Coastal Plan contained a chapter on “Development” that included a section on “Public Services,” which has been incorporated into the Public Facilities and Services Element. The various public facilities and services which may affect the future development of land on the Sonoma County Coast are emphasized in this Element, including water, wastewater treatment and disposal, parks and recreation, fire protection, law enforcement, and solid waste management. The Sonoma County Coast is a water scarce area, and land conditions are poor for septic systems. Policies in this Element address this lack of basic services on the Coast, which limits development potential in most areas. The policies also address limitations to emergency medical and other health care services for the Coast’s small population spread over large distances. Policies related to youth, family, and senior services are also included.

## **Noise Element**

The previous Local Coastal Plan did not address Noise. The Noise Element evaluates existing and projected future noise conditions related to traffic on highways and major roads, heavy commercial and industrial activities, mineral extraction, solid waste landfills and transfer stations, and special events; and presents policies and standards to assure noise compatibility in future land development.

## 4. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN PLAN PREPARATION

Sonoma County encourages a high degree of public awareness of planning and development issues and participation by interested citizens in the preparation and consideration of planning policies. General Plan 2020, on which this Local Coastal Plan Update is largely based, was assisted by a Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) appointed by the Board of Supervisors that was responsible for reviewing and making recommendations on all issues and related policies that were included in the General Plan Update. In effect, the CAC directly participated in the drafting of the goals, objectives, and policies to be submitted for consideration by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. During all phases of policy development, local residents, businesses, property owners, and interest groups were encouraged to express their views on planning issues and policies proposed for incorporation into General Plan 2020.

Public workshops on the Local Coastal Plan Update were held as follows:

- July 14, 2015 County PRMD Hearing Room, Santa Rosa
- July 7, 2015 Del Mar Center, Gualala
- June 29, 2015 Bodega Bay Fire Station
- June 24, 2015 Monte Rio Community Center
- May 28, 2013 Del Mar Center, Gualala
- June 5, 2013 Bodega Bay Fire Station
- June 8, 2013 Jenner Community Center

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (Local Coastal Plan Update and General Plan 2020)

### Board of Supervisors

Mike Cale, Valerie Brown, Susan Gorin	1 <sup>st</sup> District
Mike Kerns, David Rabbitt	2 <sup>nd</sup> District
Tim Smith, Shirlee Zane	3 <sup>rd</sup> District
Paul Kelley, Mike McGuire, James Gore	4 <sup>th</sup> District
Mike Reilly, Efren Carrillo	5 <sup>th</sup> District

### Planning Commission

Charlie Cooke, Dick Fogg, Greg Carr	1 <sup>st</sup> District
Don Bennett, Marcel Feibusch, Shawn Montoya Nadin Sponamore, Lee Van Geisen, Jeff Civian, Kathleen Doyle	2 <sup>nd</sup> District
Komron Shahhosseini, Paula Cook	3 <sup>rd</sup> District
Pam Alberigi, Dennis Murphy, Jason Liles, Willie Lamberson, Tom Gordon	4 <sup>th</sup> District
Rue Furch, Allen Siegle, Pamela Davis, Tom Lynch	5 <sup>th</sup> District

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