COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 7/8/2025

File #: 25-814

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Consent

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:
Saterlee General Plan Amendment Petition on Four Parcels (APN 214-116-004, 214-221-001, 216-301-005, and 216-301-006) to Change the Land Use Designation on Four Parcels from Residential Agriculture (RA) and Commercial Recreation (CR) to Timberlands (T) and Agriculture Grazing (AG)

RECOMMENDATION(S):
That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Accept the petition and adopt the attached resolution (Attachment 1) based on the findings in the staff report; and
2. Direct the Clerk of the Board to give notice of the decision to the applicant and any other interested party.

STRATEGIC PLAN:
This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Sustainable Natural Resources & Infrastructure Stewardship
Strategic Plan Category: 5004 - Preserve agricultural and timber land

DISCUSSION:
The Board is being asked to accept an applicant-initiated General Plan Amendment on four parcels (APN 214-116-004, 214-221-001, 216-301-005, and 216-301-006) for processing. The purpose of the amendment is to change the four parcels from Residential Agriculture (RA) and Commercial Recreation (CR) to Timberlands (T) and Agriculture Grazing (AG) exclusively. The General Plan Amendment is part of a larger project to rezone 16 properties to Timberland Production Zone (TPZ) and Agriculture Exclusive (AE) under a separate application (PLN-2025-19168).

The intention of the General Plan Amendment and Zone Reclassification is to afford the landowner the reduced tax benefit of TPZ-zoned property, to maintain large-scale vacant land for commercial timber production and open space for preserving forest ecosystems. In addition, with the General Plan Amendment and the proposed Zone Reclassification, these four recently purchased parcels will be added to the existing over 24,000-acre Fort Seward Ranch Agricultural Preserve, which was established in 1973 under resolution 73-151. One parcel identified in the subsequent application is proposed to be added to the existing Williamson Act contract. Two of the parcels (APN 216-301-005 and 216-301-006) are included in the 2019 Housing Element Inventory. However, Staff believe that a finding can be made that the reduction of inventory is consistent with the Housing Element and the remaining sites are adequate to meet the requirements of Humboldt County's share of regional housing needs. The petition is consistent with the General Plan's required findings and criteria for amendments. The applicant submitted a letter (Attachment 2) supporting the findings required to make an amendment to the General Plan.

APNs 214-116-004 and 214-221-001 are located in the Phillipsville area, just west of State Highway 254 and Crooked Lane. APNs 216-

301-005 and 216-301-006 are located in the Fort Seward area, on both sides of Fort Seward Road, just southwest of the Dobbyn Creek Cutoff.

Current General Plan Land Use designations for the subject properties:
APN 214-116-004: Residential Agriculture 20-160-acres (RA20-160). AVES area plan. Density: 20-160 acres per unit.
APN 214-221-001: Agricultural Grazing (AG) and Commercial Recreation (CR); AVES area plan, Density range: 20-160 acres per unit.
APN 216-301-005: Residential Agriculture 40-acres (RA40), Inland General Plan. Density 40-acres per unit.
APN 216-301-006: Residential Agriculture 40-acres (RA40), Inland General Plan. Density 40-acres per unit.

Current zoning on the subject properties:
APN 214-116-004: Agriculture General (AG-B-5(20)).
APN 214-221-001: Agriculture Exclusive (AE-B-5(160)).
APN 216-301-005: Unclassified (U).
APN 216-301-006: Unclassified (U).

Requirements for a Petition for General Plan Amendment:
The General Plan Amendment Petition is consistent with the General Plan's required findings and criteria for amendments. A petition for a General Plan Amendment may be accepted for processing upon the Board of Supervisors making one or more of the following findings:

A. Base information or physical conditions have changed; or
B. Community values and assumptions have changed; or
C. There is an error in the plan; or
D. To maintain established uses otherwise consistent with a comprehensive view of the plan; or
E. The proposed amendment has the potential for public benefit and is consistent with the Guiding Principles and applicable goals of the General Plan.

The Board must also determine the revision is not appropriate for the next scheduled update.

Finally, for approval of General Plan Amendments, the Board must make the findings that the proposed revision is in the public interest and is consistent with the Guiding Principles in Section 1.4 and applicable goals of the Plan.

Criteria for Amendment:
The applicant submitted a letter (Attachment 2) requesting a General Plan Amendment petition and provided information to support the request, based on the following finding:

B- Community values and assumptions have changed. The current General Plan designates three of the parcels (APNs 214-116-004, 216-301-005, and 216-301-006) as Residential Agriculture (RA), two of which (APNs 216-301-005 and 216-301-006) are identified in the 2019 Housing Element inventory. No existing houses, utility infrastructure, or driveways exist on the parcels. No building permits have been or are currently applied for. Prior to the recent purchase, these parcels sat dormant. APN 214-221-001 does have an existing vacant house on it in the Commercial Recreation (CR) designation. All the subject parcels are adjacent to existing TPZ/AE parcels owned by the same owners and within the Fort Seward Ranch and fit well within the agricultural uses of the ranch. All the subject parcels are primarily timbered with Douglas Fir, Black Oak, White Oak and grassland for cattle. Under Agricultural Preserve contracts, the county is directed to provide incentives to maintain large-scale land ownership for commercial timber production, cattle management and to protect forest ecosystems. By accepting the General Plan Amendment petition and approving the subsequent Zone Reclassification application, these parcels build the land base of the Fort Seward Ranch and maintain large-scale and contiguous open space.

Not appropriate for the next scheduled update:
The uses established on the parcel are current and it is more appropriate for the General Plan Amendment to be processed as soon as possible to resolve the discrepancy rather than wait for the next scheduled update, which is slated to occur in 2027.

Amendment is in the public interest and consistent with Guiding Principles:
The proposed General Plan Amendment is in the public interest and is consistent with the Guiding Principles of the General Plan.

The four parcels that are identified in the petition are all adjacent to existing Timberland (T) and Agricultural Grazing (AG) parcels under the same ownership and within the existing over 24,000-acre Fort Seward Ranch. All the subject parcels are primarily timbered with Douglas Fir, Black Oak, White Oak and grassland for cattle management. The Guiding Principles of the General Plan provide a framework for the overall objectives and intended protection of community values to preserve the county's unique character and quality of life. Protecting forest and agricultural lands for continued timber and agricultural production by way of appropriately balancing regulations and incentives is consistent with this petition. Although creating and protecting affordable housing opportunities is also part of the Guiding Principles, the location of the two parcels identified in the 2019 Housing Inventory is more appropriately sited for agriculture. The two parcels that were identified in the 2019 Housing Inventory were part of the Above Moderate-Income inventory in the Rural Residential Zoning Group and have the potential to support one housing unit each. APN 216-301-005 is 11.59-acres and APN 216-301-006 is 25.06-acres. Both parcels are undeveloped and vacant and not proximate to public facilities. According to the General Plan, Chapter 8 table 8-5 in the updated 2019 Housing Element, projected fair share housing needs in the Above Moderate-income category are 583 units. In table 8-6, residential land inventory identified within the Above Median-income category (RR, RA and RE Zoning Groups) is 1,116 parcels, with 1,214 potential housing units. This indicates the capacity of the Above Moderate-Income housing inventory is over double the projected need. Should the two parcels be removed from the Above Moderate-Income housing inventory and converted to Agricultural lands, the remaining identified parcels are more than sufficient to meet the target need. Placing the parcels within the T or AG designation for supporting agriculture and timber ecosystem services as an Agricultural Preserve is in the public interest and consistent with the Guiding Principles of the General Plan.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:
Applicant fees.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:
Narrative Explanation of Financial Impact:
There will be no impact on the General Fund. The applicant is responsible for paying all actual costs involved in the processing of the application

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:
The project was referred to County Counsel, which has not expressed concern with the proposed petition. Should the petition be accepted, responsible and trustee state and local agencies will be involved in the referral process of the Reclassification, including Native American Consultation pursuant to SB 18 and AB 52, and as part of the environmental review for the project.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:
The Board could reject the petition if it believes the required findings cannot be made. Staff believes the necessary findings for accepting the petition may be made, so staff does not recommend further consideration of this alternative.

ATTACHMENTS:
Attachment 1: Draft Resolution
Attachment 2: Applicant Petition Submittal
Attachment 3: Location Map

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:
Meeting of: N/A
File No.: N/A