



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: David Loya, Community Development Director

PREPARER: David Loya, Community Development Director

DATE: October 15, 2025

TITLE: **Initiate Adoption of the Comprehensive Update to the City’s Local Coastal Program - Statutorily Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Guidelines Section 15265.**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommend that the Council:

1. Open the public hearing, receive a staff report, receive public comment, deliberate; then
2. Continue the public hearing to Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 6:00 p.m., in the Council Chamber.

INTRODUCTION:

The City of Arcata certified Local Coastal Program (Program) was last comprehensively updated in 1994. Much has changed regarding both planning and our understanding of the impact of global climate change. The June 10, 2025, version of the Program posted on the City’s website includes the Planning Commission’s latest recommendation (<https://www.cityofarcata.org/549/Local-Coastal-Program-Update>). Staff received input and a request to defer adoption from Coastal Commission Staff. The October 7, 2025, version on the website includes updates proposed by staff to address Coastal staff comments. These changes have not been vetted by the Planning Commission, and the Coastal staff are still reviewing them as well. This action will defer local adoption until March of next year, which will provide City and Coastal staff the opportunity to collaborate on final edits.

BACKGROUND:

The City has been working closely with Coastal Commission staff over the last eight years on the current version of the comprehensive update. During this time, the City engaged the community, State and Federal agencies, the Commission and the Council to define the City’s coastal policies consistent with the Coastal Act. Importantly, this update establishes the City’s policy stance and approach to sea level rise resiliency and adaptation.

DISCUSSION:

The Coastal Commission staff provided recommended changes to the June 10, 2025, version. These changes cannot be made through a conditional certification process. They must be addressed in the City’s original submittal. As such, staff is recommending deferring local adoption to provide time

for addressing the edits. Coastal staff have committed to working diligently with City staff to resolve all outstanding issues in a three-month period. The Council should vote to continue the hearing to March 4, 2026.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The Local Coastal Program establishes the policy framework for development and land use in the coastal zone.

COMMITTEE/COMMISSION REVIEW:

The Planning Commission made a recommendation to the City Council on July 8, 2025. The Coastal staff subsequently requested additional updates.

The Wetlands and Creeks Committee recommended approval with modifications that were incorporated in the June 10, 2025, version. The changes do not affect the Committee action.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

Local adoption of Local Coastal Programs are statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The California Coastal Commission operates as a “certified regulatory program”, which implements the core principals of CEQA while not being subject to the procedural requirements outlined in the Public Resources Code or the CEQA Guidelines. The City acknowledges the statutory exemption applies to its adoption in its adoption of Resolution No. 256-02 and Ordinance No. 1581.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

This action will have negligible fiscal impact. The grants have largely offset the cost of the update.

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

1. Open the public hearing;
2. Receive a staff report;
3. Receive public comment;
4. Deliberate; then
5. Motion to continue the public hearing to Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 6:00 p.m., in the Council Chamber.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Letter from the Arcata Fire District Board