



# COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

## DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** February 27, 2024  
**TO:** Department of Transportation  
**FROM:** Julia Krog, Director  
**SUBJECT:** Proposed Vacation of Cahto Road

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Established by Resolution Number 84-199, enacted on September 25, 1984, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors developed procedures to facilitate the request for vacation of a County highway, right-of-way, or public service easement.

Per Resolution No. 84-199, the Mendocino County Department of Planning & Building Services shall do the following:

- A)** Conduct the environmental studies required by CEQA.
- B)** Determine whether or not the proposed vacation is consistent with the County General Plan. (California Government Code section 65402(a))
- C)** Review and make a recommendation as to whether or not the County highway or public service easement proposed to be vacated is useful as a pedestrian, bicycle or equestrian trail.

On December 5, 2023, the Department of Planning & Building Services received a request to review the proposed road vacation of a portion of Cahto Road. Cahto Road is not listed as a public road or highway and is not included in the Mendocino County's Road System. Regardless, if Cahto Road was ever considered to be in the Mendocino County's Road System, the intention is to vacate the portion described in the legal description provided and as shown on the enclosed map. Below, as required by Resolution 84-199, Planning and Building staff address the aforementioned requirements:

### Environmental Review

As proposed, the project would vacate a portion of Cahto Road. The requested vacation meets the standards for a Class 12 Categorical Exemption (Surplus Government Property Sales). As a result, Staff prepared a 'Notice of Exemption' to be filed with the Mendocino County Clerk Recorder. The Class 12 Categorical Exemption consists of sales of surplus government property except for parcels of land located in an area of statewide, regional, or areawide concern identified in Section 15206(b)(4) of the CEQA Guidelines unless additional findings are made by the Lead Agency. The portion of Cahto Road to be vacated is not located in an area of statewide, regional, or areawide concern identified in Section 15206(b)(4) of the CEQA Guidelines. The closest area of statewide, regional or areawide concern is the California Coastal Zone, which is located 1,000 feet west of the western most portion of the proposed road vacation. Therefore, under the authority cited per Section 21083, Public Resources Code and Section 21084, Public Resources Code, this project qualifies for a Class 12 Categorical Exemption. As the project is exempt from CEQA, no filing fee per Fish and Game is required.

## **General Plan Consistency & Active Transportation Potential**

The Mendocino County Pedestrian Needs Assessment and Engineered Feasibility Study (June 4, 2019) was a project led by the Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) and funded by Caltrans and MCOG. The project maintains a simple goal: to improve sidewalks, paths, and safe crossings in Mendocino County. This report strived to describe potential pedestrian access improvement projects identified through the review of past studies, inventory and analysis of existing conditions for pedestrian access, agency staff input, and public input from workshops, meetings and on-line surveys.

Within the Westport area, the Pedestrian Needs Assessment focused on a Study Area which is located west of the proposed road vacation area. The Study Area is generally identified as the village portion of Westport, running from the Westport Water District to the intersection of Highway 1 and Pacific Avenue and bounded on the eastern edge by Hillcrest Terrace. The proposed Cahto Road vacation area is located east of the Study Area. At the eastern terminus of the proposed road vacation is Branscomb Road, which is outside the Study Area for the Laytonville area. Based upon the lack of inclusion in the Pedestrian Needs Assessment, the area of the proposed vacation would not be useful as a pedestrian, bicycle or equestrian trail.

The County General Plan (August 2009) does not include any recommendations for expanded pedestrian, bicycle or equestrian trails within this area of Westport or of Branscomb Road. The General Plan does contain policies related to pedestrian and bicycle improvements; however, none of the policies are applicable to a rural area such as the area of the proposed road vacation. The policies largely speak to developed areas that have needs for improved pedestrian or alternative transportation due to density of development or educational facilities. The area of the proposed road vacation appears to be a largely undeveloped area that consists of large acreage parcels zoned for Timberland Production. Given the proximity of the western terminus to the Coastal Zone, staff reviewed Chapter 4.2 of the Coastal Element of the General Plan which provides recommended public access locations for the Rockport to Little Valley Road Planning area, which includes Westport. Chapter 4.2 of the Coastal Element does not include any recommendations for inland trails for the Cahto Road area.

The County of Mendocino has an adopted Emergency Operations Plan and an annex of that Plan is the Mendocino County Evacuation Plan (July 2020). Westport is within Planning Area 4 of the Evacuation Plan and there are several special concerns noted for the Westport area including limited cell phone coverage and a remote campground that could present an evacuation challenge in the event of a tsunami warning. The primary evacuation routes noted for Planning Area 4 are Highways 1, 20 and 128. In addition, several secondary roads that transition from Highway 1 and 128 away from the coast to the inland valley are listed as alternative evacuation routes, including Branscomb Road. Branscomb Road is a County-maintained road located approximately 2 miles north of Westport and is considered another evacuation route for residents of the Westport area. The Mendocino County Evacuation Plan highlights specific subdivisions throughout Planning Area 4 that have the highest level of evacuation concern associated with them and delineated those subdivisions into Area Specific Pre-Identified Evacuations Zones to allow for both law enforcement and fire officials to concentrate evacuation efforts and resources in those areas. Westport is not one of the identified subdivisions or communities requiring this heightened Area Specific Pre-Identified Evacuation Zone.

The General Plan contains policies and action items regarding identifying and ensuring the preservation of routes and sites for evacuation, emergency operations, and recovery, as well as to develop evacuation alternatives for hazards and communities. General Plan Policy DE-219 speaks to locating and designing critical infrastructure to withstand and operate during hazard events and subsequent recovery phases and includes several action items, specifically Action Items DE-219.3b and DE-219.3c, that include identification of new evacuation routes and alternative evacuation routes consistent with the Mendocino County Evacuation Plan, ensuring effective ingress and egress from isolated communities. General Plan Policy DE-155 speaks to periodically updating the Mendocino County Evacuation Plan, current version is dated July 2020,

to ensure assets and capabilities meet the changing needs of the county. This policy lists several action items including Action Item DE-155.1 requiring the implementation of the Mendocino County Evacuation Plan and DE-155.2 which states that all roadways used for evacuation purposes must meet the minimum roadway widths as determined by the County Department of Transportation. The road proposed to be vacated is currently not designated as an evacuation route nor is it appropriate for evacuation use as it is impassable for vehicular travel and has been gated by property owners of the properties traversed by the road for more than 5 consecutive years. As such, Staff finds that the proposed road vacation does not conflict with any General Plan policies related to evacuation or emergency operations.

As discussed above, there are no policies within the General Plan that the road vacation conflicts with and is therefore found to be consistent with the General Plan.

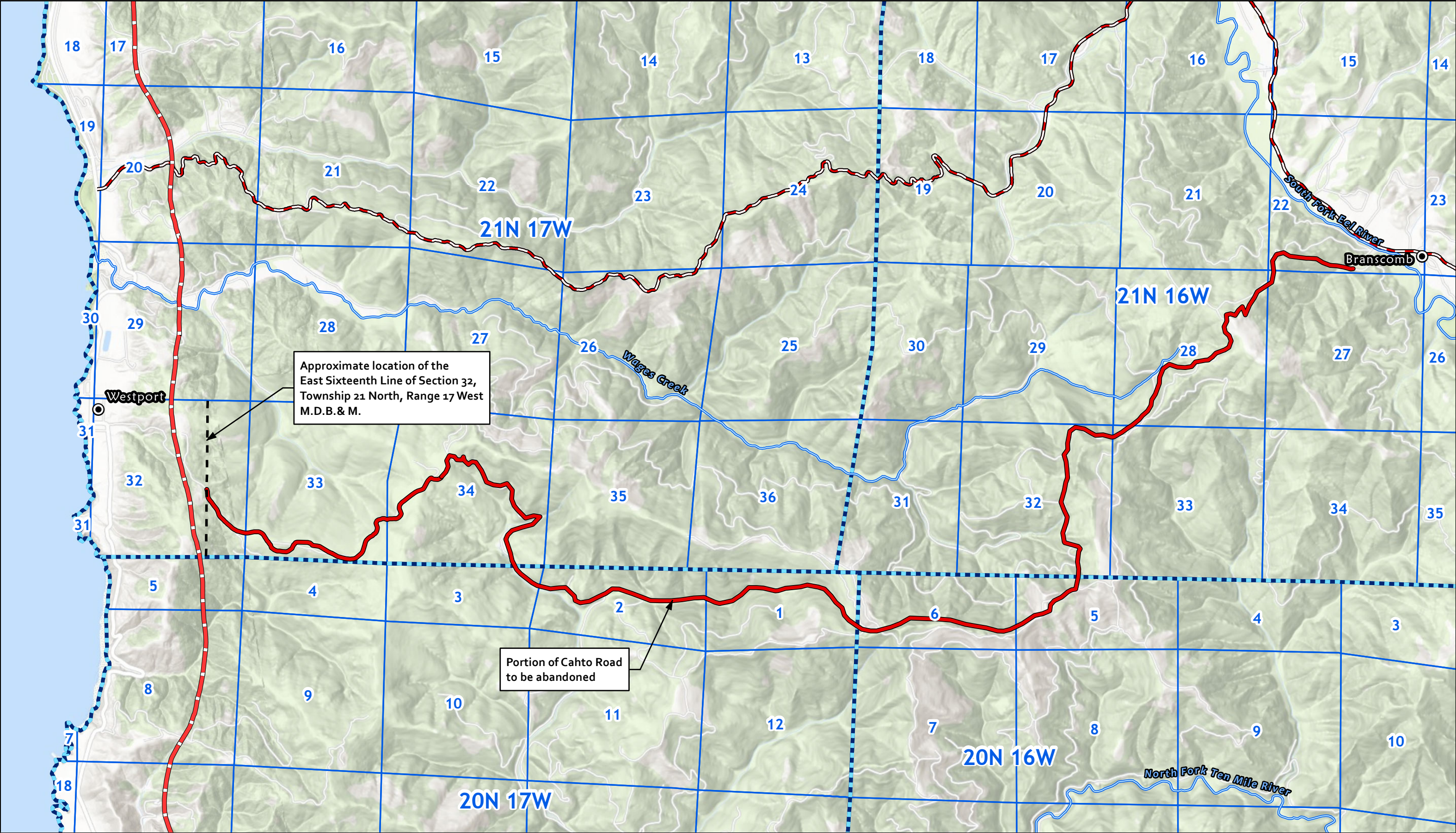
Sincerely,

  
Julia Krog  
Director

CC: Jared Schwass, Deputy County Counsel

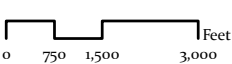
Encl: Map of proposed road vacation





Map produced by the Mendocino County Planning & Building Svcs. Dept., January 2024  
Coordinate System: NAD 83, Calif. State Plane Zone II  
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic  
Parcel Data: Mendocino County Information Services, October, 2020  
Aerial Imagery: US Dept. of Agriculture/ArcGIS Online mosaic  
Topographic Data: USGS 7.5 minute quad series Mount Diablo Base & Meridian  
Parcel numbers are for tax purposes only and do not represent legal or salable parcels.  
All spatial data is approximate. This map is not a substitute for a proper land survey.

- Major Towns & Places
- Major Rivers
- Major Roads
- Townships
- Sections
- Coastal Zone Boundary



1 inch = 3,000 feet

LOCATION MAP

**THIS MAP AND DATA ARE PROVIDED WITHOUT WARRANTY OF ANY KIND.**  
**DO NOT USE THIS MAP TO DETERMINE LEGAL PROPERTY BOUNDARIES**