



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 10, 2025

TO: Department of Transportation

FROM: Russ Ford, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Proposed Partial Vacation of Wilderness Lodge Road (CR 320)

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 June 6, 2025 the Department of Planning & Building Services received a request to review the proposed road vacation of a portion of Wilderness Lodge Road, a publicly maintained road in the Branscomb area of Mendocino County. Wilderness Lodge Road is located 2.5± miles northwest of the community of Branscomb on the north side of Branscomb Road (CR 429), 1.3± miles east of its intersection with Wilderness Ridge Road (private). Wilderness Lodge Road runs north for approximately 1.5 miles before becoming a private road not maintained by the County. Staff analysis as required by Resolution 84-199 is included below.

Environmental Review

As proposed, the project would vacate a small portion of the end of Wilderness Lodge Road, more particularly described as all that portion of the publicly maintained portion of Wilderness Lodge Road that lies within the NE¼ of the NW¼ of Section 32, Township 22 North, Range 16 West, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian, consisting of approximately 450 feet, more or less. The proposed vacation meets the standards for exemption from CEQA review under sections 15061(b)(3) (Common Sense Exemption) and 15312 (Surplus Government Property Sales). The 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) of the CEQA Guidelines unless additional findings are made by the Lead Agency. The project does not meet any of the requirements specified in §15206(b) to be considered of statewide or areawide importance, so Staff finds that the exception provided in §15312 may be applied. Additionally, PRC §15061(b)(3) provides an exemption from CEQA review where it can be seen with certainty that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment. As the proposal is to transfer ownership of a portion of an existing road from public to private control, this exemption would also be applicable. Therefore, under the authority cited in PRC §21083 and

PRC §21084 staff has determined that no additional environmental review is required and a 'Notice of Exemption' has been prepared for filing with the Mendocino County Clerk Recorder. As the project is exempt from CEQA, no filing fee per Fish and Wildlife is required.

General Plan Consistency & Active Transportation Potential

The publicly maintained portion of Wilderness Lodge Road intersects with Branscomb Road and runs north for approximately 1.5 miles before becoming a private road. The remote location of the road and lack of transportation infrastructure severely limit the use of the road for a walking trail, biking trail, or pedestrian access, although public access would remain available for the balance of the County's portion of the road. Staff identified no relevant policies within the Mendocino County General Plan that would apply to this proposed vacation, and the site was not part of those addressed in the Mendocino County Pedestrian Needs Assessment and Engineered Feasibility Study completed in June of 2019. The proposed vacation would not violate any goals or policies within the General Plan.

Summary & Determination

As discussed above, staff finds the proposed vacation to be consistent with the relevant goals and policies of the Mendocino County General Plan, and that it qualifies for a Categorical Exemption under CEQA §15312 for sales of surplus government property.

Sincerely,

Russell Ford

Senior Planner