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DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORTATION

Road Commissioner
County Engineer, RCE 42001
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COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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July 29, 2025

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
501 Low Gap Road, Room 1010
Ukiah, CA 95482

RE: NOTICED PUBLIC HEARING - DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION INCLUDING ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION OF THE MENDOCINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS VACATING THE PORTION OF WILDERNESS LODGE ROAD (COUNTY ROAD 320) WITHIN ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER 013-520-33 IN THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 32, TOWNSHIP 22 NORTH, RANGE 16 WEST (BRANSCOMB AREA) AND FINDING THAT SAID ROAD VACATION IS EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT PURSUANT TO THE CATEGORICAL AND/OR COMMON SENSE EXEMPTIONS IDENTIFIED IN SECTIONS 15061 AND 15312 OF THE CEQA GUIDELINES

Honorable Board of Supervisors:

The Director of Transportation has received a request from The Angelo Coast Range Reserve to vacate approximately 0.19 miles of the County right-of-way for Wilderness Lodge Road (Country Road (CR 320). Wilderness Lodge Road runs north off of Branscomb Road, has no outlet, and is unpaved in this area.

State statute and Board policy require a report from the Department of Transportation (DOT) on several aspects of the proposed road vacation, including location of the road to be vacated, whether or not it is part of the County Maintained Road System, DOT's recommendation regarding the proposed vacation action, and any other information DOT deems pertinent to the proceedings. This letter constitutes DOT's report.

There is no deeded ownership by the County, hence a vacation of this road does not involve any transfer or disposal of property; only an elimination of the public easement.

The portion of road to be vacated is entirely contained within a parcel owned by The Angelo Coast Range Reserve, with the new end of the County road being located at the edge of the parcel. This vacation does not qualify for summary vacation because of the presence of utility infrastructure.

As discussed in the attached memorandum from the Department of Planning and Building Services, 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 a Class 12 Categorical Exemption (Surplus Government Property Sales) under Public Resource Code (PRC) §15312. 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) of the CEQA Guidelines unless additional findings are made by the Lead Agency. It also meets the requirements to meet the “common sense exception” in CEQA guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), as there is no reasonable possibility that the vacation will cause a significant effect on the environment.

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. Therefore, under the authority cited in PRC §21083 and PRC §21084 this project qualifies for a Class 12 Categorical Exemption. Staff has prepared a ‘Notice of Exemption’ to be filed with the Mendocino County Clerk Recorder. As the project is exempt from CEQA, no filing fee per Fish and Wildlife is required.

Notice of the public hearing was posted at each end of the portion to be vacated on June 20, 2025. Notice was also published in the Ukiah Daily Journal on June 20th and 22nd. Notices were sent to the Angelo Reserve, PG&E, and all locatable property owners that access off of Wilderness Lodge Road past the Reserve. The Clerk of the Board was notified of the Public Hearing on June 11, 2025. No public comments for this vacation were received.

The Department of Transportation's determinations regarding the Road Vacation of a portion of Wilderness Lodge Road are as follows:

- 1) The Department of Transportation has determined that the portion of Wilderness Lodge Road is adjacent to the petitioner's property only and does not affect other property owners access in the area.
- 2) All public utilities located in the proposed area to be vacated will retain their rights to their infrastructure.
- 3) The portion of Wilderness Lodge Road does not lead to any public land or place that the general public has the right to travel.
- 4) Wilderness Lodge Road does not provide access to any publicly owned or publicly accessible recreational facilities or lands.

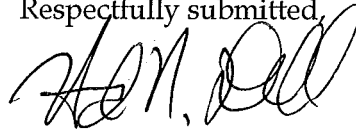
- 5) Wilderness Lodge Road does not lead to or connect with any current or foreseeable future public road other than Branscomb Road.
- 6) The vacation of Wilderness Lodge Road is consistent with the County's general land use policies, since the area served by Wilderness Lodge Road is not located near any cities, is zoned as forest land and timber production land, has historically been used for timber production, and is not favored for future growth under the general plan.
- 7) The Department of Transportation has no plans to develop Wilderness Lodge Road, and does not believe that the street serves a necessary public purpose.
- 8) Vacating Wilderness Lodge Road would serve the public interest by relieving the County of responsibility for maintaining Wilderness Lodge Road, and by reducing or eliminating the County's future tort liability for any injuries arising from conditions on Wilderness Lodge Road.

Because the determinations above indicate that there will be minimal impacts to the surrounding areas, the Department of Transportation supports and recommends the requested road vacation. After consideration of the staff reports, should the Board decide that the evidence supports the requested vacation, we have prepared a resolution for your consideration that will vacate the portion of Wilderness Lodge Road.

Alternatively, if after consideration of the staff reports on the matter, the Board decides that the evidence presented does not support the requested vacation, the Board may deny the petition by Minute Order.

I will, of course, respond to any questions that you may have.

Respectfully submitted,



HOWARD N. DASHIELL
Director of Transportation

Attachments:

- (1) Planning and Building Services Staff Analysis
- (2) Map depicting roads proposed to be vacated
- (3) Draft Resolution of Road Vacation

cc: Julia Krog, Director of Planning and Building Services
R/W File CR 320, Wilderness Lodge Road
Board Correspondence