



Mendocino County

Legislation Text

File #: 17-0105, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors Public Health, Safety and Resources Committee

From: Executive Office and Transportation

Meeting Date: February 13, 2017

Department Contact: Janelle Rau
CEO Resource/ Contact: Howard Dashiell

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Time Allocated for Item: 30 min.

Agenda Title:

Discussion and Possible Direction to Staff Regarding the County's Little River Airport Land Management

Recommendation:

Receive an update from staff regarding the status of the Little River Airport Land Management and provide direction to staff as appropriate.

Previous Board/Board Committee Actions:

August 26, 2014: The Board of Supervisors voted to continue discussion and action regarding the bid related to the timber sales prospectus, and resulting sale of timber to be harvested in relation to the Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) at the County-owned Little River Airport "to allow an opportunity for interested conservation groups to assess the feasibility of alternate long-term management of the property;" September 23, 2014: the Board of Supervisors appointed Supervisors Hamburg and McCowen to an ad hoc committee to work with conservation groups and other interested parties to work toward a resolution that provides for alternate management; January 10, 2017: the Board of Supervisors disbanded the ad hoc committee and referred the topic to the Public Health, Safety, and Resources Committee.

Summary of Referral:

The formation of the ad hoc in 2014 was to provide an opportunity for the County to consider information gained through discussions with conservation groups and other interested parties with respect to alternate management of the property and those portions of the Little River Airport property not needed for airport operations. In addition to alternate management of the 57 acres of forestland, strong interest had been expressed in alternate management of additional County-owned pygmy forest habitat that was not needed for airport operations.

In September 2014, CalFire received an amendment to the NTMP submitted by County RPF Roger Sternberg as a "major amendment" requiring an on-the-ground inspection of the site that was necessary should the County elect to harvest the timber located at Little River Airport.

In early 2015, Calfire outreached to County staff inquiring as to the County's interest in moving forward with the NTMP amendment, as it had been placed on hold based upon the direction of the Board. Calfire was informed that the Board had not authorized our Registered Forester to work any further on the project and

was considering a possible conservation easement with interested parties. At that time, they were told that the entire project was on hold.

The hoc committee and Department of Transportation (DOT) were working with various conservation groups to come to an agreement regarding the land. The Board also gave staff a directive that no further funds were to be expended on the project and that DOT work with the FAA.

Further, in a letter dated April 1, 2015, Caltrans Aeronautics Division contacted the County in April of 2015 with concerns regarding the Airport meeting Caltrans' meeting all applicable FAA design safety standards. The letter detailed several issues regarding trees that penetrated the FAA Regulations and were considered obstruction hazards. DOT took care of the small trees that are covered under their Utility Exemption, which would make them unavailable for sale.

FAA update:

- 1) To date, DOT has removed the small redwoods on the high point nearest the runway which were the subject of the Caltrans Aeronautics letter transmitted in 2016. The removal of those trees is considered part of the County's "utility exemption", therefore making the airport compliant with FAA regulations. Caltrans Aeronautics conducts annual inspections which may result in additional trees identified as obstructions. DOT will alert the Executive Office if any large "Second Growth Redwood Old Growth Residuals" in the five acre area are marked for removal by Caltrans Aeronautics or the FAA.
- 2) The Little River Airport land title was given by the Federal Government with a reversion clause; therefore the FAA controls property rights. The FAA has indicated that they are more interested in the property serving aviation and generating finances to pay for flight operations, which is their policy for airport property in general, which would lend them reluctant to pursue a land title sale.

NTMP update:

In January 2017, a letter was received from Calfire notifying the County of their disapproval of Major Amendment No. 5 to the NTMP. Within the letter, they provided a basis for their disapproval, finding the amendment not in conformance with the Forest Practices Rules (letter from Calfire attached for reference).

As the RPF of record, Roger Sternberg indicated that the response from Calfire and disapproval of the NTMP amendment contained major errors and was fundamentally inaccurate, however, would not be responding unless the County determined to pursue a timber harvest.

Recently, Mr. Sternberg reported that prices for redwood and Douglas-fir continue to increase, and has shared some estimates should the County decide to pursue a timer harvest.

Given the recent decision by Calfire to deny the NTMP amendment, the County would need to research options and necessary steps if a timber harvest or a potential land swap is going to be considered.

Supplemental Information Available Online at: n/a

Fiscal Impact:

Source of Funding: n/a

Current F/Y Cost: n/a

Budgeted in Current F/Y: N/A

Annual Recurring Cost: n/a

Supervisory District: District 5

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CEO Liaison: Janelle Rau, Deputy CEO

CEO Review: Yes

Comments: