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Humboldt County Community Development Services
Planning Division
3015 H Street
Eureka, CA

Dear Humboldt County Planning Commission,

I am writing to present testimony regarding the Humboldt County General Plan Update, and more specifically regarding the Preliminary Hearing Draft of Chapter 17, the Energy Element. This is my second submission regarding the Energy Element. I am a Senior Research Engineer at the Schatz Energy Research Center at Humboldt State University and was part of the local consulting team that helped draft a preliminary version of the Energy Element under the direction of the Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA).

I strongly encourage you to adopt the Energy Element. Long-term energy security has become a high profile issue on a local, national, and global scale. The Energy Element is an important document that establishes forward-looking energy policies to help Humboldt County develop a secure energy future.

There has been some public comment suggesting that the County General Plan update include only required elements, and that all the optional elements, of which the Energy Element is one, be dropped. I encourage you to adopt the Energy Element. We are fortunate that the RCEA was able to secure non-County funds to develop a draft Energy Element. Considerable effort has gone into the development of the draft Energy Element, and the resulting document offers the County tremendous value. This effort should not be wasted.

In my original submission I expressed support for Energy Element Alternative A. I still favor Alternative A; however, I realize that Alternative A is somewhat overwhelming. This is due in part to redundancies. County staff is recommending the adoption of Energy Element Alternative B. If Alternative B is adopted, I suggest that a few key policies, implementation measures and standards from Alternative A be streamlined and added to Alternative B. I recommend the following measures be added to Alternative B. These measures fall into four key categories: 1) energy efficiency in new construction, 2) energy efficiency in existing construction, 3) development of renewable energy resources, and 4) efficient transportation infrastructure.

- 1) Energy Efficiency in New Construction: Develop and adopt a County-wide green building program modeled after the Build It Green GreenPoint™ rating system in the residential sector and LEED Green Building Rating System™ in the commercial sector. This can be a voluntary program with incentives, such as fast-track permitting

and recognition awards. The County should also adopt a policy that requires all new County buildings to meet LEED standards.

- 2) **Energy Efficiency in Existing Construction:** Develop and adopt a time-of-sale program that requires energy audits of buildings (commercial and residential) at the time-of-sale to identify energy efficiency opportunities. Adoption of energy efficiency measures can be voluntary.
- 3) **Development of Renewable Energy Resources:** Remove barriers and, where possible, provide incentives to encourage the development of renewable energy resources in Humboldt County. As documented in the Energy Element Background Technical Report (of which I was the principal author), Humboldt County is blessed with an abundance of potential renewable energy resources, including wind, wave, and biomass. We should be preparing for the development of these resources. At the very least, the County should develop policies and standards for the development of renewable energy resources that are analogous to E-P56, E-S7, and E-S8, existing policies and standards that apply to oil and gas development in the County.
- 4) **Efficient Transportation Infrastructure:** The County must develop policies and standards in the Circulation, Housing and Community Design Elements of the General Plan Update that promote alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, bicycling, and the use of public transit. The County can achieve this by promoting compact, mixed-use development, bike and pedestrian infrastructure improvements, and programs such as vanpooling and carpooling.

In addition to these key items, it is critical that the County follow through on the implementation of Policy E-P1, recognizing the RCEA as the Regional Energy Authority and authorizing them to develop and administer the Comprehensive Action Plan for Energy that is identified in the draft Energy Element. In addition, the County must work to find funding to support RCEA in this effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the County's General Plan update. I look forward to working together with the County and others in our community to help secure a sustainable energy future for Humboldt County.

Sincerely,

James I. Zoellick