

DRAFT 2.0  
FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

**County of Humboldt  
Timberland Cooperative and Timberland Assistance Network  
Discussion Paper**

**Introduction**

This discussion paper proposes two incentive based approaches to promote continued use of timberlands for the growing and harvesting of trees. These initiatives are being sponsored by the Community Development Services Department of the County of Humboldt as compliments to forest resource policies under consideration in the General Plan Update.

The Timberland Cooperative (TC) is designed for large timberland owners, primarily forest product companies, which intend to maintain the bulk of their holdings in commercial timber production. The Timberland Assistance Network (TAN) is designed for medium and small timberland owners, primarily family owned operations, where in most cases the owners reside on the timberlands.

**Background**

There are 1.2 million acres of private forested land in Humboldt County covering more than 75% of the county's land area. Roughly 990,000 acres are zoned Timber Production Zone (TPZ). Despite a 50-year trend of reduced timber production, timberlands remain the cornerstone of the county's economy, providing critical export income and a significant number of high wage jobs.

Because of the importance of these lands to the future of Humboldt County, a primary goal of the General Plan Update is a stable forest land base managed for maximum economic and ecological benefits. To help preserve the productivity of timberlands, the Planning Commission is considering a range of policy alternatives which would reduce the potential for fragmentation and conversion of timberland to other uses.

Timberland owners can be classified into three main categories based on ownership size. Large timberland ownerships consists primarily of forest products companies which collectively own approximately half of the private timberlands in Humboldt County. Medium ownerships are primarily mixed timber and grazing ranch lands between 2,500 and 10,000 acres. Small ownerships of less than 2500 acres comprise almost a one third of private timberland. While all timberland owners share common interests, the characteristics and needs of each ownership category are also distinct.

Large Timberland Owners

The policy alternatives contained in Alternative A, which establish an "Industrial Timberland" land use designation and increased restrictions on subdivision and residential construction, have concerned commercial timberland owners because they believe the policies have the potential to diminish land values and the financial viability of continued timber management.

Discussions with large timberland owners about the potential financial impacts of these policies have raised the possibility of achieving policy objectives through alternative means. This has led to the alternative of a TC for large timberland owners outlined on page 3 of this discussion paper. The TC is intended to minimize timberland conversion through cooperative efforts between large forest landowners and the County.

DRAFT 2.0  
FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

The TC would be proposed to the Planning Commission and ultimately to the Board of Supervisors as a programmatic alternative to some of the regulatory alternatives under consideration in Alternative A.

Medium and Small Timberland Owners

Approximately 50% of TPZ zoned acres are in ownerships below 10,000 acres. More than half of this area is held in ownerships less than 640 acres. Medium and small timberland owners have expressed interest in incentive based programs that would help them manage their lands. This interest has led to the concept of working with the agencies and organizations that are currently assisting timberland owners to increase the level and variety of services provided. For planning purposes, the term Timberland Assistance Network has been coined to reflect and formalize this effort. There would be a natural crossover between the Timberland Cooperative and the Timberland Assistance Network but as envisioned they would be two distinct efforts tailored to the specific needs and concerns of the two ownership groups.

The proposed TAN will be defined after outreach to the organizations and agencies currently providing assistance to timberland landowners. A logical starting point for the TAN is close collaboration with landowners and service providers to confirm the demand for additional services followed by further development of the TAN concept. To initiate further discussions on the TAN concept, a preliminary outline of the TAN is included on pages 5 and 6 this paper.

DRAFT 2.0  
FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

**Preliminary Outline**

**Timberland Cooperative for Large Timberland Owners**

**Purpose and Intent**

The intent of the Timberland Cooperative (TC) is to move beyond regulatory-based approaches to achieve a stable timberland base through participation in voluntary projects and a declaration of mutual goals for continued timber production. The ultimate goal would be to maintain and improve the commercial viability of large contiguous timberlands for sustainable timber production and avoid conversion to competing uses, particularly residential uses which have the potential for timber production conflicts, increased demand for public services and increased environmental impacts. TC projects would be designed to improve the long-term financial viability of the county's timber resource lands and associated infrastructure. It is hoped this approach will strengthen the forest products industry and stabilize the industrial timberland base.

**Land Use and Zoning Classification**

The TC is intended to increase the productivity and sustainability of forest lands within large ownerships outside of Community Planning Areas that are zoned Timber Production Zone (TPZ).

**Participants**

Forest products companies and other private owners of large acreages of timberland zoned TPZ would be eligible to participate. Projects conducted under the auspices of the TC may involve numerous partners. A TC Steering Committee consisting of representatives of landowners, forest products industry, forest land management organizations, conservation organizations and the Board of Supervisors would meet periodically to guide the TC and develop timberland improvement and conservation projects for large timberland owners.

**Projects**

TC projects would be selected and designed cooperatively with participating landowners to promote sustained timber production as the primary land use for lands enrolled in the TC. Participation in TC projects would be voluntary. Projects would be authorized by the Board of Supervisors on an individual basis after review of project objectives, scope of work, participating entities and proposed funding. Funding of TC projects by participating landowners would be voluntary. It is anticipated that the majority of funding for TC projects would come from federal, state and foundation grant sources with a goal of having one or more projects active at all times during the life of the TC. Preliminary discussions have suggested candidate projects in the following areas:

- Market assessment of the production and use of forest bio-fuels.
- Evaluation of economic opportunities presented by carbon credit markets.
- Redwood region forest products market development and product branding.
- Increased regulatory efficiency and agency coordination under the Forest Practices Act.

DRAFT 2.0  
FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

**Land Owner Participation**

Entry into the TC would be voluntary. To join the TC, land owners would sign a statement of intent to participate in the TC and maintain enrolled lands for the growing and harvesting of trees, related improvement and restoration projects, compatible uses as defined in the Timber Yield Tax Law Government Code 51104(h)(1)-(6). Subdivision of enrolled lands for residential purposes and the construction of residences for non-employees would be considered contrary to this intent. Lands outside of Community Planning Areas zoned TPZ would be eligible for enrollment. The selection of properties enrolled in the TC would be at the sole discretion of the land owner. Land owners could withdraw enrolled lands from the TC with prior written notice to the Board of Supervisors.

**Monitoring and Reporting**

The County would monitor and report on land use development and activity within lands enrolled under the TC. The following data would be compiled and reported by County staff to the Board of Supervisors on an annual basis:

- Pending and Completed Subdivisions
- Issued Building Permits
- Increases in Assessor Valuation of Property Improvements
- Reported Code Violations
- Recorded Real Estate Transfers
- Executed Conservation Easements
- Cal Fire Permitting and Harvesting Data

**Evaluation, Review and Reauthorization**

Monitoring and reporting data would be evaluated annually by the Board of Supervisors to determine if the TC and the voluntary actions by participating land owners are meeting the avoided conversion goals of the General Plan. A comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the TC would be conducted in five-year cycles, coincident with the 5-year review of the General Plan. The TC must be reauthorized every five years, based on a finding that the TC is meeting the Forest Resource policy objectives of the General Plan. At any time during the life of the TC, the Board of Supervisors may elect to modify General Plan polices or land use ordinances within TPZ designated areas.

DRAFT 2.0  
FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

**Preliminary Outline**

**Timberland Assistance Network for Small Timberland Owners**

**Purpose and Intent**

The Timberland Assistance Network (TAN) would be a coordinated effort between organizations and agencies that provide land stewardship and management assistance to small non-industrial timberland owners to improve and increase the level of services provided. Through TAN, service providers would seek supplemental funding to coordinate and expand timberland assistance programs to help landowners maintain the productive potential and natural resource values of their ownerships. The goal will be to increase the economic and ecologic sustainability of timberlands in Humboldt County so these lands can continue to contribute to the quality of the County's economy and environment.

**Participants**

All owners of timberland would be eligible for services provided through the TAN. It is anticipated the TAN would primarily assist medium and small timberland owners living on lands zoned TPZ. Landowners' use of TAN services and participation in TAN by service providers would be strictly voluntary. A wide range of organizations and governmental agencies would be invited to participate in TAN, including but not limited to:

- Cal Fire
- College of the Redwoods
- County of Humboldt Forest Advisory Committee
- County of Humboldt Community Development Services
- Humboldt County Resource Conservation District
- Humboldt State University
- Institute for Sustainable Forestry
- Forest Products Industry Cluster Representatives
- Mattole Restoration Council
- North Coast Regional Land Trust
- Pacific Forest Trust
- Redwood Coast Rural Action
- Sanctuary Forest
- The Buckeye Conservancy
- University of California – Cooperative Extension Forest Advisor

**Program**

The County of Humboldt would initiate TAN with an invitation to existing service providers and small timberland landowners to attend an organizing meeting to solicit input and gauge interest in the formation of TAN. Assuming sufficient interest, founding TAN members would develop a working plan based on collective input and the consensus of the group. A Memorandum of Understanding would communicate the intent and involvement of participating organizations and agencies. The program would be implemented in parallel with the proposed Timberland Cooperative for large forestland owners.

DRAFT 2.0  
FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

### **Candidate Projects and Services to Landowners**

The majority of supplemental funding for TAN activities and supplemental services to landowners would come from federal, state and foundation grant sources. Funds would be sought for the formation of TAN, initial identification of landowner needs and the development of a plan to increase and coordinate assistance to landowners. The type of assistance provided to landowners through TAN would be dependent on the specific program and service provider providing the service. Services potentially coordinated and delivered by TAN members may include the following.

- Preparation of multi-resource land management plans
- Loan assistance for timber stand improvement and harvest permitting costs
- Regulatory compliance and permitting assistance
- Advocacy for permit streamlining
- Multi-landowner cooperative timber management, permitting and harvesting
- Multi-landowner environmental analysis, watershed assessment and restoration
- Access to restoration funding and expertise
- Preparation of business plans for forestland enterprises
- Education and assistance with best management practices for:
  - Tree planting
  - Timber stand management
  - Water conservation and storage
  - Erosion and sediment control
  - Road and drainage construction and maintenance
  - Salmon habitat improvement
  - Tax and estate management
  - Fire planning
- Access to wildfire hazard reduction programs
- Assistance with forest products business development, marketing and sales
- Obtaining forestland certification
- Dedicating conservation easements
- Registering and marketing carbon sequestration credits
- Applied research
- Referrals to licensed professionals and contractors

All of these services are being provided to varying degree currently. TAN would likely focus on coordination and marketing of existing services and increasing the level of service in areas where the demand from landowners is greater than the supply offered by existing service providers.

### **Evaluation and Review**

Development, modification, evaluation and review of TAN efforts would be conducted by TAN members under the general guidance of the Memorandum of Understanding.