

FINAL PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT  
ON  
GRAVEL REMOVAL FROM THE LOWER EEL RIVER  
JULY 1992

INTRODUCTION

This document is a Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) which will cover 13 gravel extraction and related processing operations that are located close to one another in the lower part of the Eel River watershed. This type of document is described in detail in Section 15168 of the guidelines for implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970. The planning department believes this type of document will provide a good overview of the cumulative effects of the removal of gravel from the lower part of the Eel River watershed.

Another benefit of a Program EIR is to provide a basis for an Initial Study for determining whether other gravel removal projects in this area would have significant effects. It may also be incorporated by reference into future environmental documents prepared on specific gravel removal projects within the same area so that document can deal with regional influences, secondary effects, and cumulative impacts.

PROJECT LOCATION

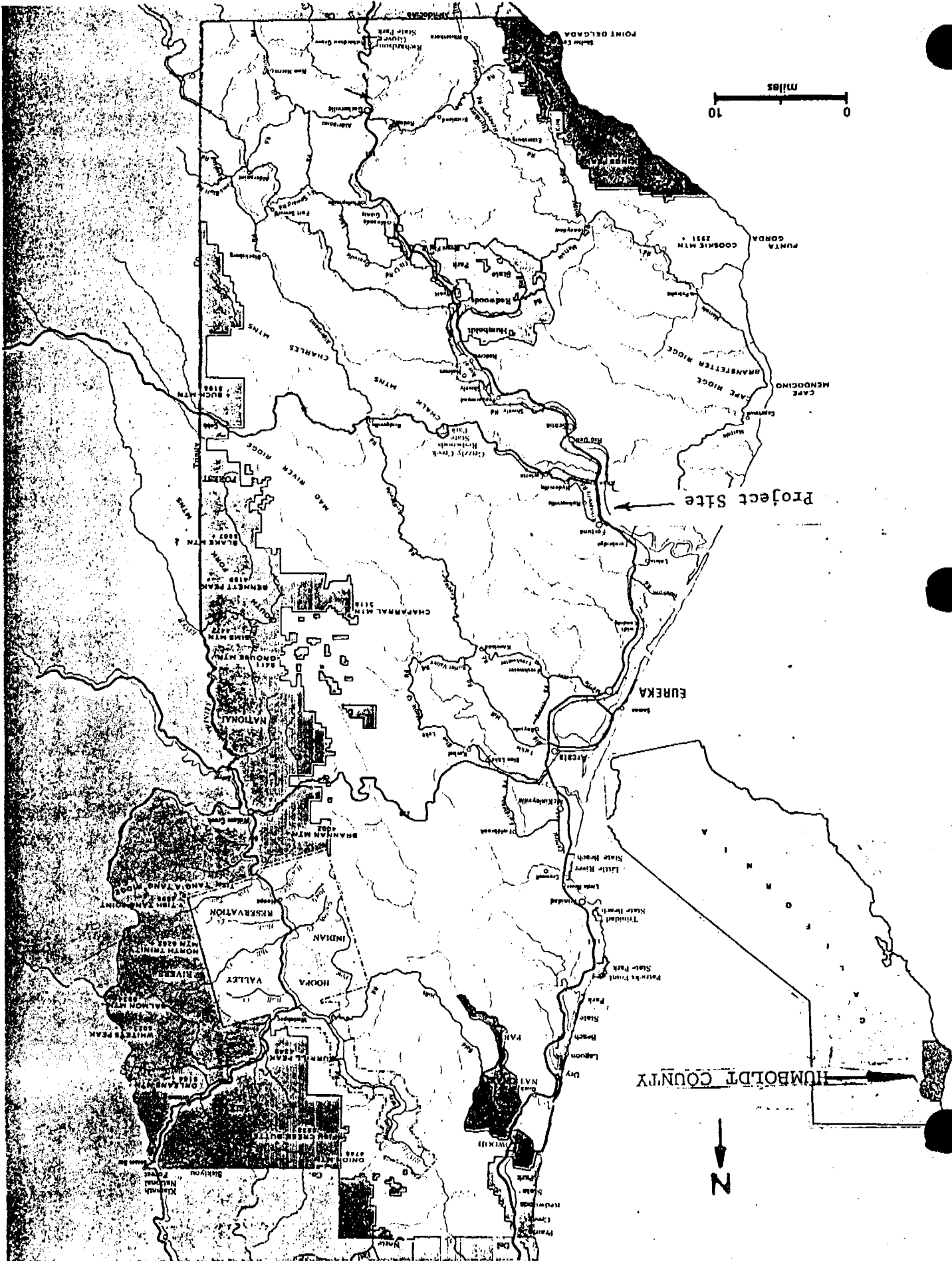
The area from which gravel is to be removed is located on the Lower Eel River and Lower Van Duzen River. On the Eel River 11 gravel operations are located along eight miles of the river between a mile below Fernbridge to the mouth of the Van Duzen River. Two operations on the lower Van Duzen River are located at river mile 5.0 and 6.0. River mile 5.0 is located near the mouth of Yager Creek. River mile 6.0 is near the end of Odd Fellows Park Road near the community of Carlotta. Maps 1 and 2 show these locations.

INDIVIDUAL PROJECT SITE DETAILS

A brief description of each project site follows. Some have existed for many years while a few new ones have been proposed. The gravel projects are presented geographically, in order by location, beginning at the downstream end. The individual gravel projects are numbered. The numerical order does not coincide with the geographic order.

Site No. 12 - Arcata Readimix

1. Location. The bar from which gravel will be removed extends approximately two miles downstream of Fernbridge as shown on Map No. 3 and Photograph No. 1. The initial extraction area is approximately one mile in length by a few hundred feet in width.

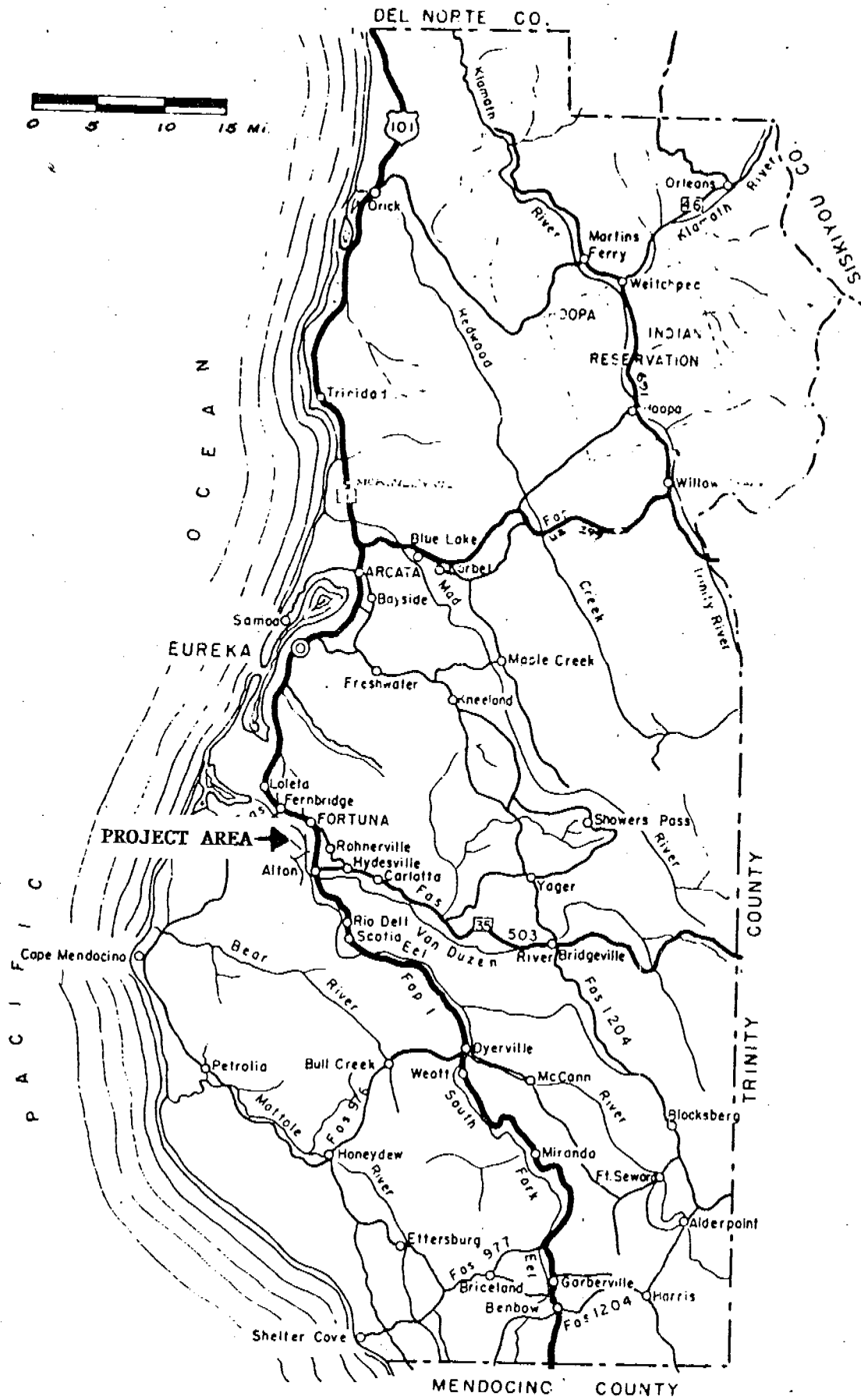


10 miles

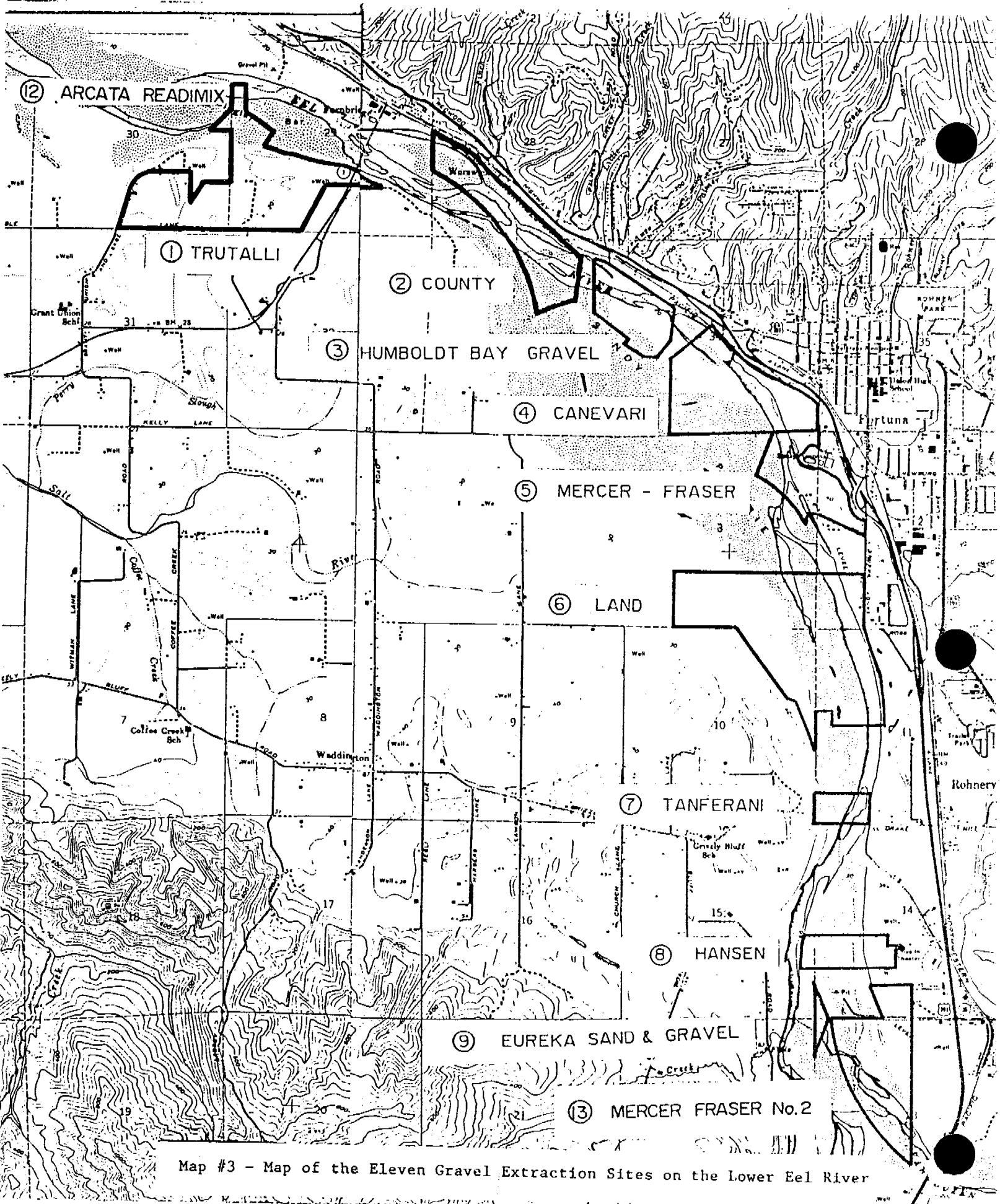
Project Site

HUMBOLDT COUNTY

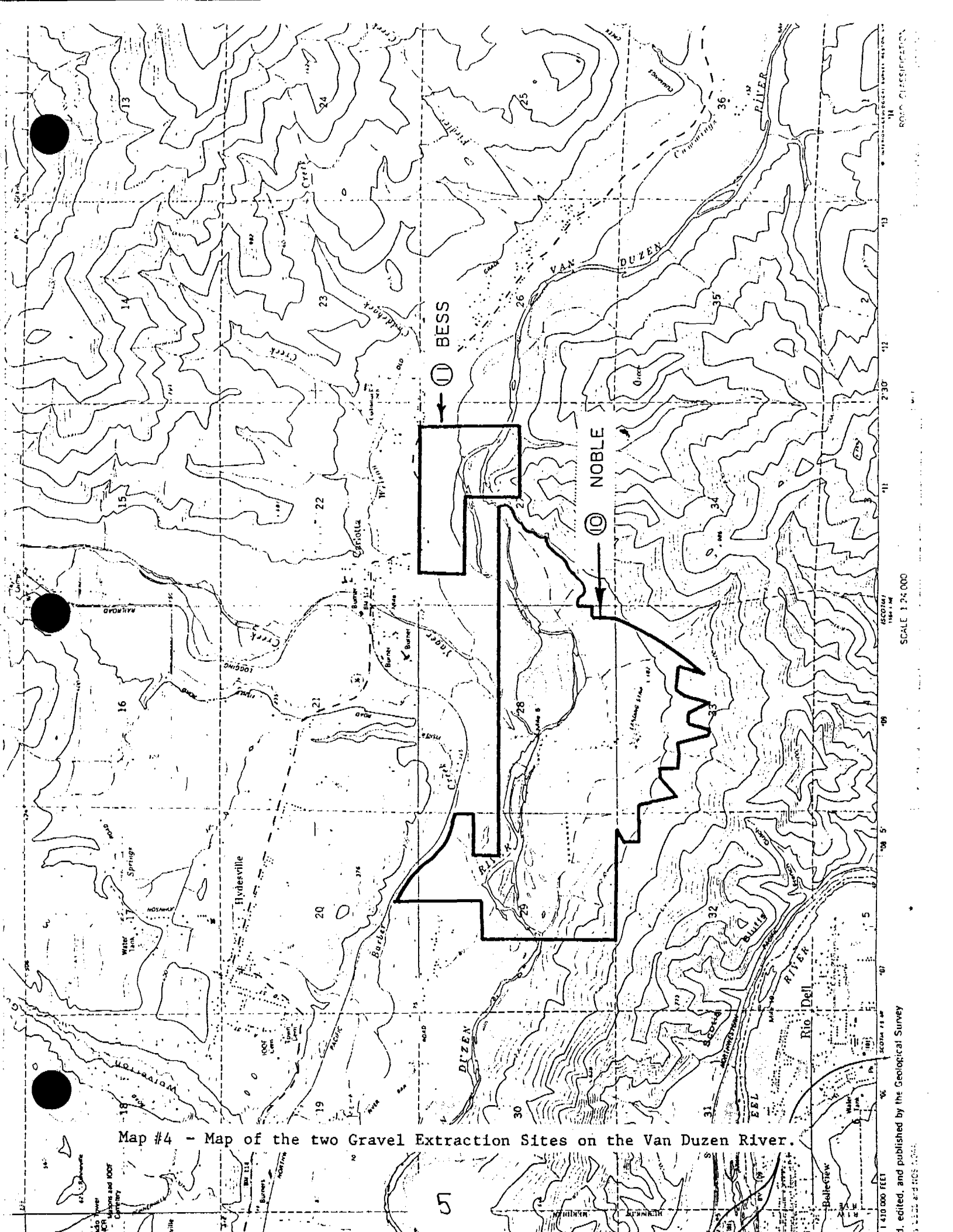
↑ N



Map #2 - Map of Humboldt County



Map #3 - Map of the Eleven Gravel Extraction Sites on the Lower Eel River



Map #4 - Map of the two Gravel Extraction Sites on the Van Duzen River.

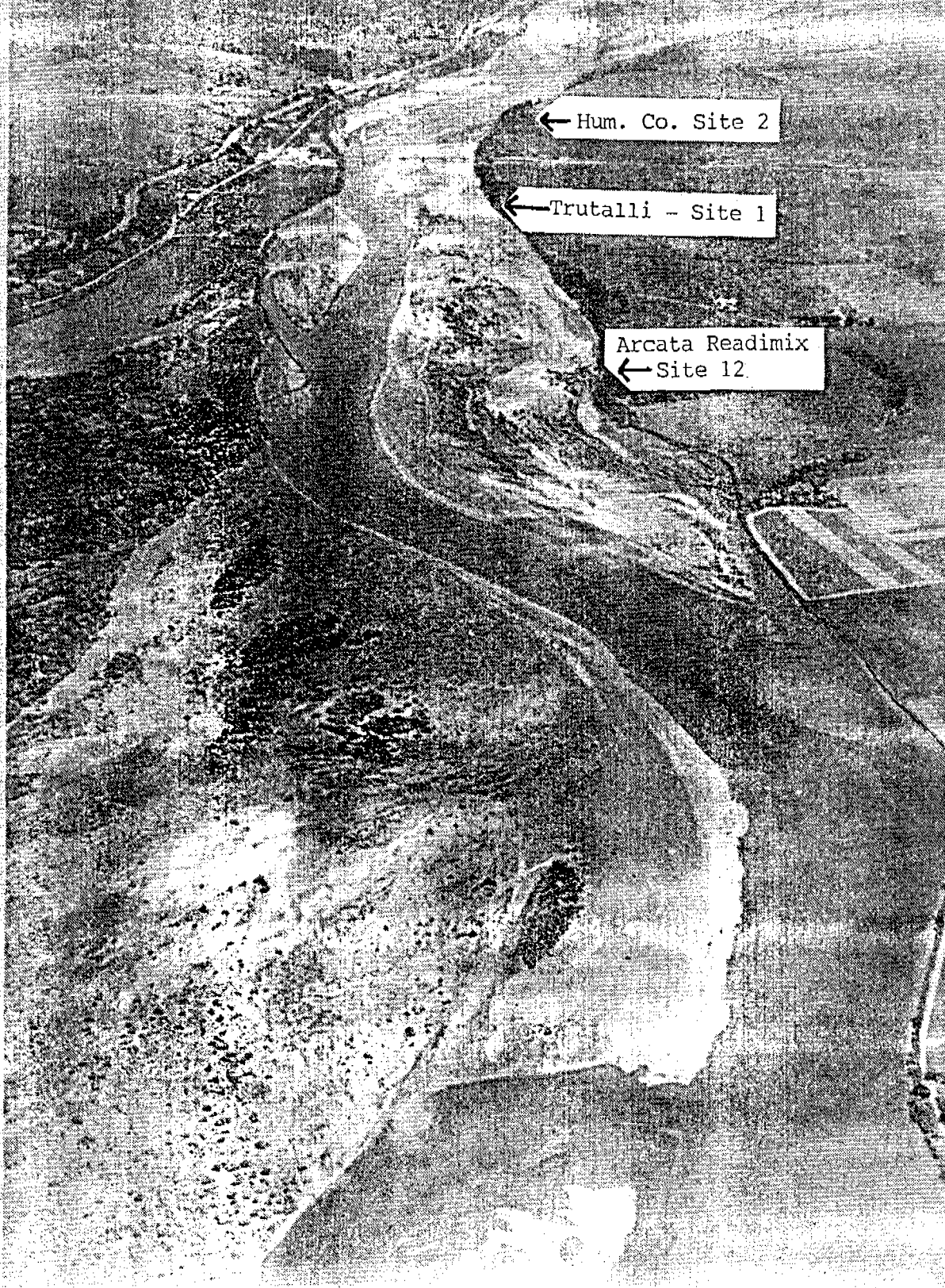


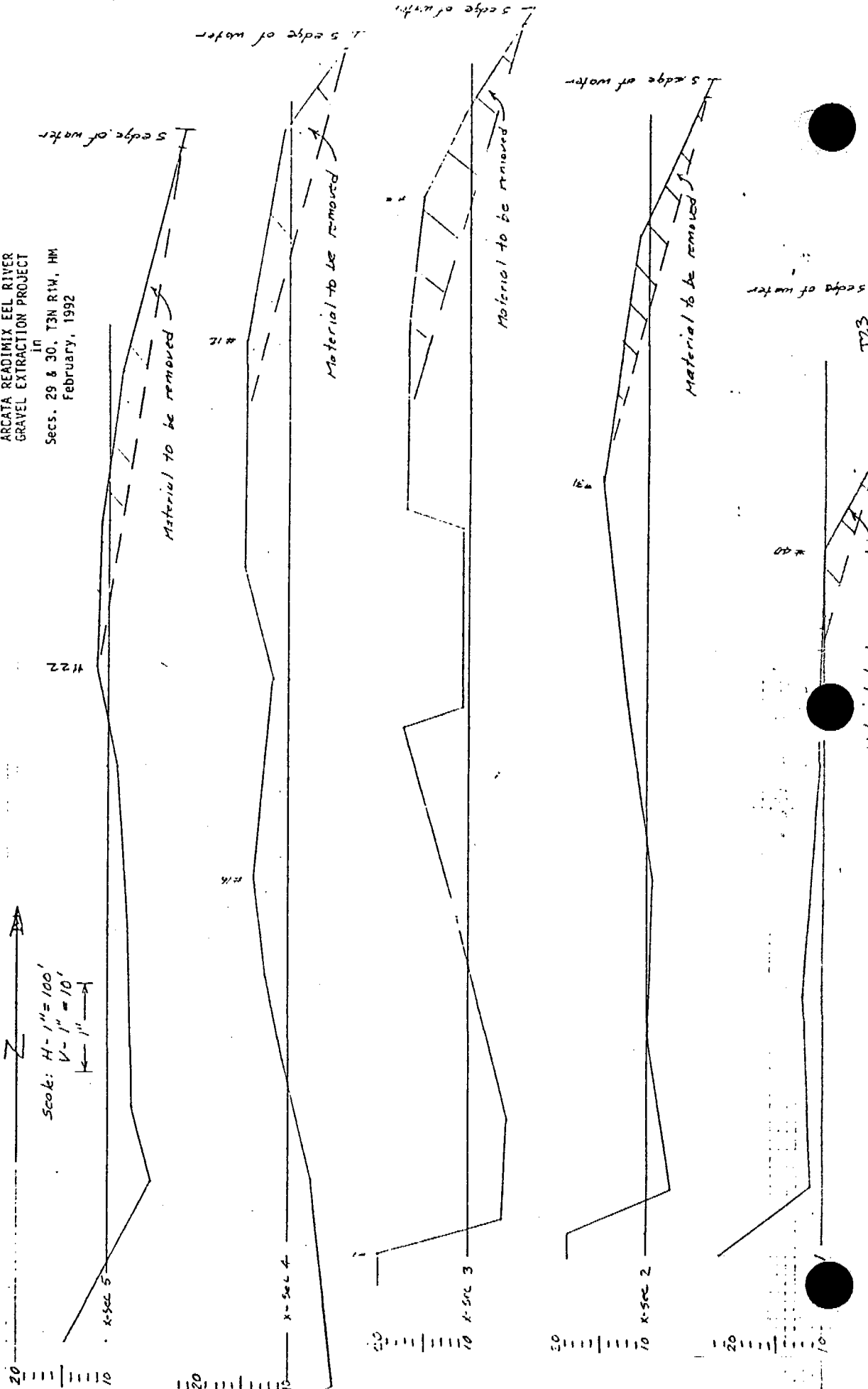
Photo #1. View east, looking upstream, of Eel River near Fernbridge, Showing sites 1, 2, and 12



**FIGURE # 1A**  
Cross-sections of Project Site  
of Proposed  
ARCATA READIMIX EEL RIVER  
GRAVEL EXTRACTION PROJECT

in  
Secs. 29 & 30, T3N R1W, MM  
February, 1992

Scale: H = 1" = 100'  
V = 1" = 10'



123

Material to be removed

2. Land owner. The bar and initial extraction area is located on portions of parcels owned by the following individuals: Raymond E. and Bertha Tedsen of Ferndale; Tony M. and Lucy Rocha of Ferndale; Patrick O'Dell of Fortuna; and Edward L. and Paula Nielson of Ferndale.

3. The operator will be Arcata Readimix located in Arcata at 4945 Boyd Road (707) 822-1795.

4. Description of Operation. This is a new project. Arcata Readimix has applied to the Humboldt County Planning Commission for permission to remove up to a maximum of 150,000 cubic yards per year for 15 years. The actual volume of sand and gravel removed in any year will be based on market conditions and annual evaluations of channel cross sections. An assessment of the appropriate amount to be removed and the method of removal will be developed prior to the beginning of each extraction season.

Initially the method of extraction will be by skimming. Extracted gravel will be loaded on trucks and removed from the bar prior to processing. Additional details are found in the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report dated April 8, 1992 on file with the Humboldt County Planning Department.

5. Environmental Setting. The gravel bar is located along the south bank of the Eel River and extends approximately two miles downstream of Fernbridge. The initial extraction area extends from 0.5 to 1.5 miles downstream from Fernbridge. Access to the bar begins with a turn east off of State Highway 211 onto Waddington Road. At the junction with Sub-Station Road one turns left and travels northeast to the southerly end of the Fernbridge where the road turns left; passes through a gate; and parallels the river along the top of the river bank, for approximately a half-mile, then descends to the river bar. The graveled road passes through riparian vegetation and trees. The bar is visible from vehicles utilizing Fernbridge.

Recreational use is limited to fishermen with four-wheel drive vehicles gaining access to the river bar utilizing Sub-Station Road and proceeding straight to the river bar along the east edge of the Fernbridge structure. They cannot utilize the gravel road that Arcata Readimix will use because that road has a locked gate just after the left turn under the bridge.

Noise levels on the gravel bar range from 40 to 50 dBA. A list of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants growing on the bar is contained on pages 18 and 19 in the Reclamation Plan dated February 7, 1992, and on file at the Humboldt County Planning Department.

The bank-to-bank width of the Eel River at this location is approximately 2,000 feet. The bar averages about 1,000 feet in width.

Site No. 1 - Trutalli & Saottini

1. Location. This site is located on the same bar as Site No. 12 and is immediately upstream of the extraction area proposed by Arcata Readimix. Trutalli removes gravel from an area that is about 1,000 to 3,500 feet downstream from Fernbridge on the bar. See Photo No. 1.

2. Land Owner. Marice Silva, Silva Estates, 1348 Lincoln, Ferndale, California 95536.

3. Operator. David Trutalli and Gene Saottini, both of Ferndale.

4. Description of Operation. This operation consists of an annual removal of up to 10,000 cubic yards of gravel from this site. The operation would continue as long as gravel is available. Gravel is removed with scrapers, excavators, and bulldozers and loaded into 5 and 10-yard dump trucks and hauled to the location of the client.

This operation has received a vested right from the Humboldt County Planning Commission.

5. Environmental Setting. The access route to this site is the same as that described above for Arcata Readimix. This site is visible from passengers in vehicles crossing Fernbridge over the Eel River. This site may also be accessible from time-to-time off the north end of Sage Road which runs north off State Highway 211 about two miles southwest of Fernbridge.

Recreational use of this portion of the bar is by fishermen with four-wheel drive vehicles. They can reach the bar either off the end of Sage Road or by utilizing Sub-Station Road and proceeding along the east edge of the Fernbridge structure to the river bar.

Noise levels most of the year on this bar range from 40 to 50 dBA.

Riparian vegetation grows along the south bank of the Eel River from Fernbridge west ranging in width from 100 to 300 feet along this particular bar area.



APN 106-011-24  
Approximate Property Lines  
(Based on Record of Survey Bk. 45, Pg. 100)

Extraction Area

Photo #2 Site #1. - Truttalli & Saottini showing extraction area and property lines.

Site No. 2 - Worswick

1. Location. One-half mile upstream of Fernbridge in the southwest quarter of Section 28, T3N, R1W.

2. Land Owner. Humboldt County.

3. Operator. Humboldt County Public Works Department, Road Division, and a contractor who will be awarded a lease by the Board of Supervisors.

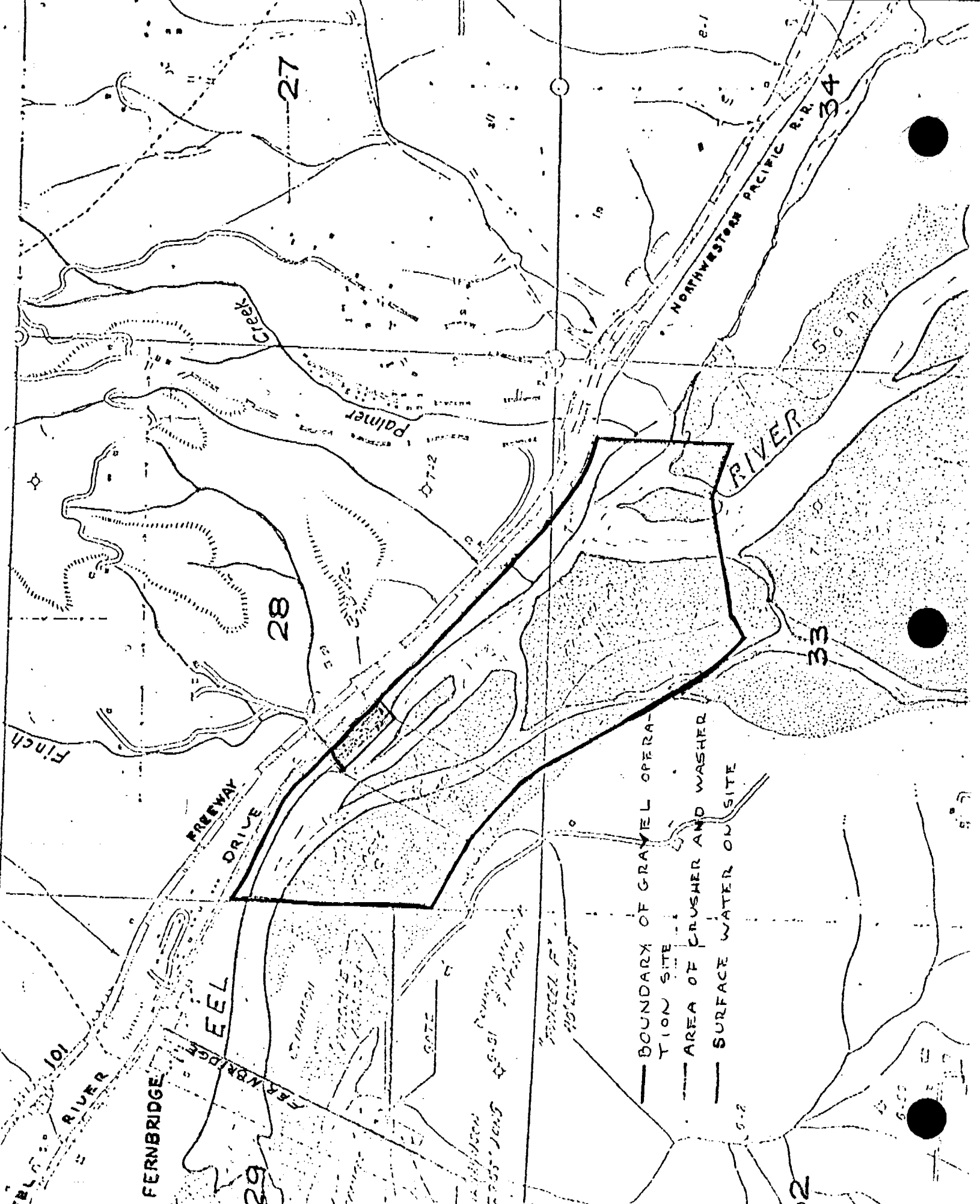
4. Description of Operation. The County proposes to lease this bar to a private operator. The lease permits the operator to remove up to 200,000 cubic yards per year. The gravel will be removed by skimming and a gravel processing plant may be erected on the County's processing yard adjacent to the site above the floodplain. If the low flow channel moves to the east side of the river, it would be necessary for the operator to utilize flatcar bridges for summer crossings. The gravel would be removed from the bar between June 1st and October 1st. The crushing operation could continue throughout the year.

Ten-yard dump trucks or larger may be used to remove the gravel from the bar area. Front-end loaders would probably skim the gravel off the surface and load it directly into the trucks.

The actual amount of gravel that could be removed in any one season would be dependant on the quantity available. That volume will be determined through analysis of cross-sections taken at the beginning of each season.

5. Environmental Setting. This bar is accessible from the north side of the river off Fernbridge Drive. Where the lease agreement requires that gravel removed from this bar by a contractor be sold out-of-County it is the County's understanding the gravel will be removed from the gravel processing yard by rail. Therefore, there should be no traffic impacts resulting from this operation.

Noise levels on the gravel bar when no operations are occurring range from 50 to 60 dBA depending on levels generated from the freeway and nearby processing plant. If a crushing operation is occurring in the processing yard, a level of 90 dBA at 50 feet is generated. This results in a 66 dBA level at the exterior wall of the nearest occupied residential structures, which is 800 feet away. The next nearest home is on the opposite side of the freeway 1,500 feet away and would receive 60 dBA. Two more houses, one 1,400 feet south and one 1,700 feet east up a canyon, would receive a level of 50 dBA at the exterior wall.



Map #7 Site #2 - County-owned bar at Worswick showing property lines and crusher site.

Along this portion of Eel River the river is bordered on the north side by a 200 foot wide riparian corridor for about one-quarter of a mile at the downstream end. At the gravel processing yard, the corridor is only 50 to 100 feet wide for the next quarter mile along this north side. The southern portion of the site is bordered by a wider corridor of 150 feet wide for the next 2,500 feet.

The south side of the river is bordered by a riparian area 1,400 feet long and about 200 feet wide. This tapers off to a zero width following the eroded bank of the Hackett Ranch for about 900 feet, then riparian vegetation is found for the next 400 feet ranging in width from 200 to 600 feet.

A small clump of willows has taken hold at the downstream end of the Worswick bar near Fernbridge. The bar itself is sparsely covered with several of the species listed on pages 18 and 19 in the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report of Arcata Readimix.

This site is visible from southbound lanes of Highway 101 and from Fernbridge.

Recreational use of the site is infrequent except during the fishing season. Currently there is a locked gate across the access point to the yard. During fishing season it has been a practice to leave this gate open to permit access to the river with four-wheel drive vehicles.

The bank to bank width in this area is 1,600 feet and the low flow channel ranges in width from 250 feet at the downstream end to 450 feet in the mid-stream end to 120 feet at the upstream end. The channel has moved to the south side of the bar and the bar contains 120 acres of gravel surface.

On April 28, 1992, six cross-sections were taken of this bar by the County Public Works Survey Crew. The width of the bar from the north bank to the edge of water of the low flow channel varied from 1,250 to 1,350 feet. The highest points of the bar tended to be 14 feet above low water about 600 feet away.

The County has a vested right for 200,000 cubic yards per year for this site received December 16, 1987 from the Planning Department. Permits required in order to remove 200,000 cubic yards per year are shown in Table 1.

### Site No. 3 - Ken Drake

1. Location. This site is located just upstream of the Humboldt County Fernbridge bar. The crusher and asphalt plant are located on the south side of Highway 101 across from

Palmer Boulevard and Hansen Drive. The crusher operation is accessible from the east end of the Palmer Boulevard off ramp off the southbound Highway 101 lane. See Photo No. 3.

2. Land Owner. George Beach of El Cajon, California.

3. Operator. Historically Humboldt Bay Gravel removed gravel from this bar. They have a conditional use permit to remove 250,000 cubic yards per year.

4. Description of Operation. There has been an ongoing operation for many years at this location. Currently Humboldt Bay Gravel has a permit for a maximum of 250,000 cubic yards per year. In the processing yard there is a gravel crushing operation and a concrete making operation.

Truck traffic was estimated by Wes Nally of Humboldt Bay Gravel to run three to four trucks per hour. He mentioned much of their material moves by rail. The concrete operation is run by Ken Drake who has a lease from George Beach. Photo No. 5 shows their crushing plant operation. Photo No. 4 shows Mr. Drake's concrete making plant.

This site has been leased to Fortuna Ready Mix of which Ken Drake is President. The bar contains 120 acres. Of the 120 acres, 24 acres are used for gravel production. Water is pumped from several existing wells and after it is used for processing, is sent to existing settling ponds.

This operation has utilized trenching for removal of gravel during the past few years.

5. Environmental Setting. This site is accessible from State Highway 101 utilizing the off and onramps at the Palmer Boulevard intersection. The haul route utilized by the trucks is Highway 101.

Noise levels at this site are fairly high. There are 64 houses across the freeway within 500 to 3,000 feet of the processing area. Many of the houses are in canyons and some are up on ridges. The noise levels at these houses could range from a high of 70 dBA down to 54 dBA.

Along the river bank at this site the riparian corridor narrows down to about 40 feet. The south side of the river is bordered by a large corridor ranging from 500 to 1,100 feet in width. One island 1,000 feet south of the processing yard contains a cluster of riparian vegetation growing on gravel that has been stored in place for approximately 18 years.