



July 28th, 2011

Humboldt County Planning Department
Community Development Services
Attn: Martha Spencer
3015 H Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Re: Appeals of Administrative Determination of Status by Barnum Timber Company (Case Nos DS-06-03A and DS-09-25A)

Dear Planning Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above referenced appeals. At issue today is Barnum Timber Company's assertion that they are entitled to have certain holdings recognized as legal parcels pursuant to the certificate of compliance process. Healthy Humboldt believes, and the record makes clear, that staff's decision to deny the subject certificates of compliance is justified. Healthy Humboldt believes that not only does the County have the authority to deny the subject appeals; it has the responsibility to do so.

Moreover, we urge this Commission to consider Barnum Timber Company's ongoing reliance on certificates of compliance in order to effectively subdivide their agricultural and TPZ holdings without assessing the potential environmental impacts associated with the recognition of parcels many times smaller than those previously recorded. Although recognition of patent parcels may not result in a direct conversion of resource lands, it can set the stage for conversion to other uses. Such conversion not only threatens the continued productivity and economic viability of these resource lands, it has the potential to result in substantial harm to the surrounding watersheds and communities.

The maps attached hereto show the currently recognized parcels associated with this appeal alongside the parcels Barnum suggests should be recognized pursuant to the certificate of compliance process. The difference in average parcel size and number of parcels is striking. Currently, there are 42 recognized parcels that are the subject of this appeal with an average parcel size of 195 acres. Through the certificate of compliance process, Barnum is requesting that the County recognize 135 parcels, averaging 60 acres in size.

To put this subject appeal in a larger context, according to a report prepared by the County's Department of Community Development Services in June 2005, "Resource Land Conversion in Humboldt County 1985 – 2005," more than 71,000 acres of agricultural properties and timberlands were divided through the Certificate of Compliance/Determination of Status process from 1985 to 2005, with an increase in recent years:

1985 to 2005: more than 18,000 acres with 179 lots created;

2001 to June 2005: more than 53,000 acres, with 447 lots created.

From 2000 to 2008, nearly 69,000 acres of agricultural and timberlands were divided through the Certificate of Compliance/ Determination of Status process (see map compiled by Humboldt County Community Development Services, Nov. 2009, Divisions and Determinations of Status on Resource Lands, 2000-2008).

According to a 2009 report by the Northcoast Regional Land Trust, "Effects of Timberland Parcelization and Regulatory Restriction on Annual Harvest Volumes, Humboldt County, California," a rough estimate of parcelization over the past 12 years is that approximately 35,000 acres from ownerships in the >2,500 acre range were broken into smaller parcels.

A growing population has placed significant development pressure in the Eel and Mattole River watersheds. Ever-rising prices for residential real estate, the scarcity of housing in towns, and the arrival of newcomers seeking to buy land are factors that have put economic pressure on Mattole and Eel River landowners to develop previously unbuilt parcels, or to subdivide larger properties to allow for new homesteads.

Interestingly, many of the documents Barnum is relying upon to make their case were produced during a period where our North Coast was seeing an upsurge of devastating logging practices that liquidated vast forested holdings and laid waste to this County's watersheds. To this day, impacts from industrial timber operations such as those enacted by the Barnum Timber Company continue to plague our streams and rivers and communities that depend upon them.

Tributaries of the Mattole and Eel Rivers that occur within the immediate vicinity of the project area are known to be key spawning and rearing grounds for native runs of coho, Chinook and steelhead salmonids. Yet this essential fisheries habitat, already suffering from the severe impacts of past logging practices, is now threatened by an emerging pattern of summer dewatering due water withdraws for domestic and agricultural use.

While the economic focus may have changed since the post-World War II logging boom, and though another actor may be playing the part of landowner, it is clear the chief objective remains *patently* clear. We strongly urge you to deny the subject appeals.

Thank you for your work and for your careful consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

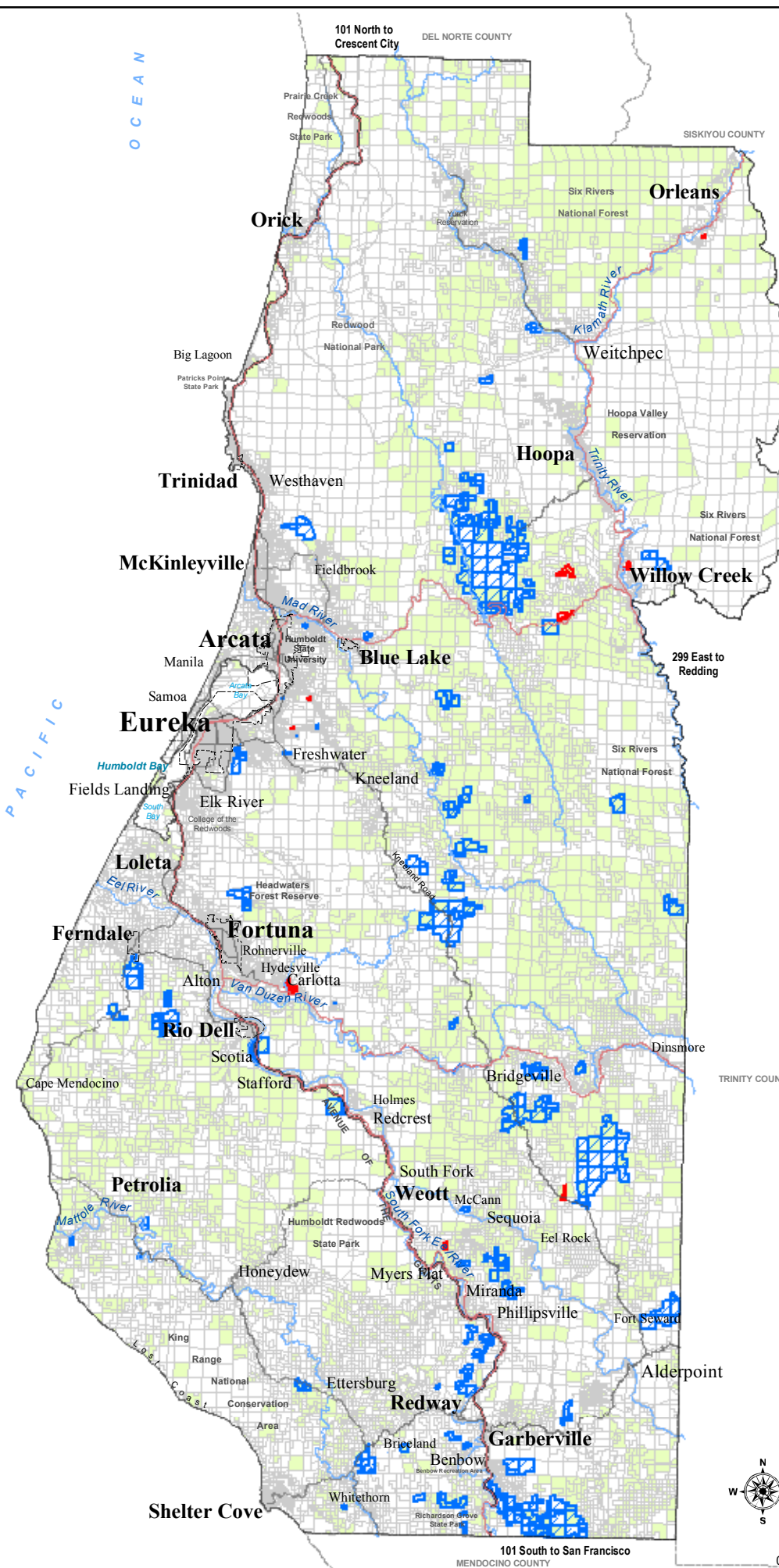
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Ehresman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dan Ehresman – Policy Analyst
Healthy Humboldt Coalition










HUMBOLDT COUNTY



Divisions and Determination of Status on Resource Lands 2000 - 2008

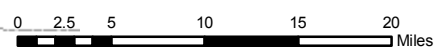


Legend

-  COC & DS (67,863.93 ac.)
-  PMS (1,093.70 ac.)
-  Zoned TPZ
-  Parcels
-  City Boundary
- Highways and Major Roads**
-  HWY 101
-  State HWY
-  HWY or Secondary Road
-  Local Road or Street

This map is intended for display purposes and should not be used for precise measurement or navigation.

Map compiled by Humboldt County Community Development Services (HCCDS), Nov. 2009.



101 North to Crescent City DEL NORTE COUNTY
101 South to San Francisco MENDOCINO COUNTY

