



NEWS RELEASE

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Planning Commission set to adopt Local Coastal Program on Feb. 13

San Rafael, CA - The future of Marin's coast will come into sharper focus next Monday when the County Planning Commission is scheduled to recommend a draft Local Coastal Program (LCP) Amendment to the Board of Supervisors.

"After almost three years of careful study, discussion and workshops with the full spectrum of interested groups and individuals, and eight formal public hearings with the County's Planning Commission, we're approaching a major milestone in renewing Marin's commitment to protect the coast," said Brian Crawford, Director of the Community Development Agency. "We look forward to the next big steps - consideration and public hearings by the Board of Supervisors this spring, and later the Coastal Commission itself."

Thirty years ago, Marin was one of the first local governments in California to adopt a Local Coastal Program (LCP) under the California Coastal Act. By all accounts, the LCP, and the careful stewardship of the thousands who love the area, have done an effective job of controlling development and kept Marin's coast a special place.

But since that time, new challenges have arisen, including the threats of global warming, sea level rise, polluted runoff, and the increasingly fragile economics of local agriculture. Such emerging trends led the County to examine what parts of the LCP may need to be amended. For example, polluted runoff - where rainfall washes contaminants like leaking or spilled car oil, sediment from construction sites, excess fertilizer, pesticide or herbicide applications - is now understood as a greater problem than the original LCP recognized. Global warming, virtually unmentioned 30 years ago, will increasingly affect life on the coast. Already sea level rise, more severe storms, and larger waves associated with climate change are accelerating coastal bluff erosion and putting shoreline development at greater risk. These are just some of the issues the draft LCP Amendment addresses.

The current LCP Amendment process began with community meetings around all of coastal Marin. It continued with the preparation and discussion of detailed "issue papers" examining each part of the existing LCP, followed by more than twenty Planning Commission workshops, and additional local meetings. In June 2011, a complete Public Review Draft of proposed LCP amendments was published and distributed. That Draft

served as the basis for eight formal hearings before the Planning Commission, culminating in the Final Draft, which the Commission will act upon this Monday.

One of the main features of the Amendment is to streamline processes to focus more effort on effectively protecting coastal resources and meeting the standards of the state Coastal Act. Some of the other provisions include:

- Environmental Hazards – Amendments would require that proposed developments in potentially hazardous areas demonstrate their long-term safety in the face of potential sea level rise and more intense storms associated with global warming.
- Protecting Agriculture - Amendments would make it easier for the current generation of farmers and ranchers to pass the reins to those in their family seeking to carry on the agricultural heritage. With the average age of the principal farmers and ranchers approaching 60, and with more than 85% of Marin farms having between one and four family members involved in the operation, the LCP Amendment proposes ways that farm families can continue farming and ranching, while allowing the senior generation to retire without having to leave the land. Other amendments address the need for agricultural worker housing, and allowing for farm diversification including farm stands, cheese processing and homestay accommodations
- Protecting Biological Resources - The original LCP was prepared in two parts: Unit 1 approved in 1980 for the area south of Olema, and Unit 2 adopted in 1981 for the area north of Olema to the Sonoma County line. Some of the policies of the two Units differed from one another, especially with regard to biological resources, such as streams, riparian areas, wetlands and habitats for protected species. The Amendment reconciles these differences, using new information that has become available and making them consistent throughout the coastal area.
- Energy – The LCP Amendment continues a critical existing policy banning major industrial and oil and gas energy plants in the coastal zone, while fulfilling the County's commitment to promoting renewable energy by streamlining approvals of solar energy systems and balancing wind power development with concerns for protecting the coast's scenic and rural character.
- Water Quality – New policies are included to address polluted runoff and apply site design and source control measures that have become available in recent years to minimize land development-related pollutants.
- Community Specific Policies – Through discussions with community groups, high priority policies specific to each community have been incorporated into the LCP Amendment to reinforce the development and design objectives of the coastal towns and villages.

- Keeping the best – The LCP Amendment also carries forward the best of the existing plan. Many policies have simply been edited for clarity and consistency. No major changes in the location or intensity of new residential and commercial development are proposed. Most new development would still be directed toward the existing villages in a way that maintains their distinctive character. Public access to Marin's coastline would continue to be available through coastal parks and accessways, and opportunities for both visitors and residents to enjoy the coast would continue to abound.

The Planning Commission will begin its hearing on the LCP Amendment Monday, Feb. 13 at 10 AM in their chambers at the Civic Center in San Rafael (Room 329).

Workshops and hearings before the Board of Supervisors are currently scheduled to begin March 20, 2012, and continue through the summer. If approved by the Board, the Amendment would be submitted to the Coastal Commission next year for hearings and action.

The draft Local Coastal Program Amendment, and much more background information are available online at: www.MarinLCP.org.

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