

# Notice of Availability

## Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report

**Applicant:** COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT, Department of Community Development Services

**Name of Project:** Draft Supplemental to the Program Environmental Impact Report on Gravel Removal from the Lower Mad River, Humboldt County, California

### **Project Description:**

The original description for the project was "Development of an enforceable in-stream mining regulatory program that will operate under the authority of the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA)... " (Programmatic Environmental Impact Report on Gravel Removal from the Lower Mad River, (PEIR) page 4.) The Supplemental project is a required review of the effectiveness of the Adaptive Management Strategy adopted as a part of the enforceable in-stream mining regulatory program.

**Background:** The Humboldt County Mad River in-stream gravel mining program is conducted pursuant to SMARA. In-stream mining is also governed by the California Department of Fish and the US Army Corps of Engineers. County of Humboldt Extraction Review Team (CHERT) review of in-stream gravel mining is authorized by SMARA and the Programmatic Environmental Impact Report on Gravel Removal from the Lower Mad River certified by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors on May 31, 1994. The 1994 PEIR is available online at: [www.co.humboldt.ca.us/planning](http://www.co.humboldt.ca.us/planning). A hard copy of the PEIR is available for review or copying at Humboldt County Department of Community Development Services, 3015 H Street, Eureka, CA 95501.

The Adaptive Management Program was adopted in the PEIR to enable on-going gravel mining operations, while restricting and monitoring gravel extraction volumes to minimize degradation of the affected environment. The lower Mad River contains multiple closely spaced mining sites. Gravel extraction from these sites in the lower Mad River reach has the potential for greater cumulative impacts than extraction at more isolated mining sites. The Adaptive Management Program was adopted to direct mining activities and allow intensive technical data collection and analyses of mining effects through the review of survey cross sections, air photos, hydrologic information, and biological surveys. Sufficient data have been obtained to assess the effectiveness of the Adaptive Management Program over time based on reach-wide technical analyses. These data and analyses can now support a thorough CHERT review of sustainable mining volumes and specific mining methods appropriate for the lower Mad River.

This review of the effectiveness of the Adaptive Management Program was a required mitigation measure of the PEIR. This review will consider: 1) CHERT analysis and review of extraction on the Mad River for the years 1993 to 2003; 2) the regulatory status of salmonids and their habitat within the project areas; 3) the NOAA-Fisheries 2003 biological opinion; and 4) the river's response to gravel mining over a substantial range of flows, including several flood events.

**CHERT Role:** The CHERT consists of four members appointed by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors with expertise in hydrology, fluvial geomorphology, fisheries, and river ecology. CHERT members serve as agents of the County for the purpose of providing technical expertise and reviews of mining proposals for in-stream gravel operations within the County. These reviews on the Mad River are a required component of the Adaptive Management Strategy.

All activities of CHERT are performed in accordance with the provisions of the California Government Code governing conflicts of interest, including Section 87000 et seq., and the Public Resources Code, Division 2, Chapter 9, Section 2774. CHERT prepares a post-extraction information report on the previous season's mining activities that is available to the public. Post-extraction reports are available electronically by email request to [mwheeler@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:mwheeler@co.humboldt.ca.us), and at the Humboldt County Department of Community Development Services, 3015 H Street, Eureka, CA.

CHERT provides recommendations for extraction quantities, extraction methods, disturbance minimization measures, and mitigations that tier to the PEIR's general project design features and mitigation measures. CHERT

is also concerned with possible adverse impacts to infrastructure such as levees, bridges, and the water district facilities. The Corp of Engineers and the Department of Fish and Game also makes use of the CHERT review process for assessing gravel extraction effects including impacts to listed salmonids and designated critical habitat.

**Lead Agency Action:** The County of Humboldt, Department of Community Development Services is the lead agency, and has prepared the review of the Adaptive Management Program as a Supplement to the adopted PEIR. This Supplement is intended to meet the PEIR mitigation requirement for a subsequent public review of the Adaptive Management Program. The Supplemental PEIR addresses potential significant effects related to the Adaptive Management Strategy identified in the 1994 PEIR. The purpose of this Notice of Availability is to inform the public and governmental agencies that a Draft Supplemental PEIR has been prepared and is available for public comment.

**Project Location:** The project is located in Humboldt County on the north coast of California approximately 275 miles north of San Francisco, California and 75 miles south of Crescent City, California. The mouth of the Mad River (river mile 0) is located at about latitude 40°58'30" North, longitude 124°07'30" West. The lower end of the project is located between the City of Arcata and the community of McKinleyville. The middle reach is just south of the City of Blue Lake. The upper reach, near the former Sweasey Dam, is privately-owned timber land. The geographic scope of the project is bank to bank along the Mad River from the former Sweasey Dam site, river mile 19.6, to the Hammond Trail Bridge, river mile 3.6. The project also includes adjacent upland aggregate processing sites but considers no expansion of these sites.

**List of Significant Environmental Effects:** The potential environmental effects of the original project are identified and listed in the 1994 Programmatic Environmental Impact Report on Gravel Removal from the Lower Mad River. The Supplemental PEIR addresses those potential environmental effects related to the Adaptive Management Program for which subsequent review was a required mitigation. A list of potential environmental effects addressed includes the following: 1) review of the Adaptive Management Strategy and the concept of mean annual recruitment with respect to geomorphic changes in river bar systems, and determination of whether this strategy is protective of the environment including in-stream structures and fish habitat; and 2) in-stream aggregate extraction effects on riparian habitat quality, and whether extraction activities could lead to impacts on acreage and maturation of riparian habitat. For the preferred alternative there were no significant impacts that cannot be avoided through mitigation

**Lead Agency:** Humboldt County Department of Community Development Services

**Direct Comments To:** Michael E. Wheeler, Senior Planner  
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**Review Period:** Comments on the DEIR will be accepted between January 21 and March 6, 2009

**Public Hearing:** Humboldt County Planning Commission  
To be scheduled, Humboldt County Courthouse  
Hearing date and time will be public noticed in the newspaper

**The Draft SEIR will be available for review at the following locations:**

- Humboldt County Community Development Services, Planning Division, 3015 H Street, Eureka, CA 95501. **Phone:** (707) 445-7541. **Hours:** 8am-Noon/1-5pm.
- Humboldt County Library, 1313 3rd Street, Eureka, CA 95501. **Phone:** (707) 269-1900
- Humboldt State University Library, 1 Harpst Street, Arcata CA **Phone:** (707) 826-3416



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DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAMMATIC  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR  
GRAVEL EXTRACTION ON THE LOWER MAD RIVER

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