

Mendocino Solid Waste Management Authority

A joint powers public agency

Michael E. Sweeney
General Manager
P.O. Box 123
Ukiah, CA 95482

(707) 468-9710
sweeney@pacific.net

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Proposed Work Plan for Site Selection of Central Coast Transfer Station

1. Introduction

The City of Fort Bragg and County of Mendocino commissioned a Solid Waste Transfer Station siting study from Winzler & Kelly in 2006. The study evaluated 25 potentially suitable sites and a Report of Findings was issued in June, 2007. Both the City Council and Board of Supervisors accepted the Findings and directed staff to conduct further investigations of the most promising sites identified in the Report of Findings. From 2007 through 2011, staff performed additional evaluation of the five sites and a considerable amount of effort was directed towards obtaining an option for the Jackson Demonstration State Forest site north of Highway 20. This was accomplished in August, 2011 with the approval of AB 384, which authorizes a 5-year option to the City and County to acquire the site in exchange for giving the State control over 35 acres at the Caspar Landfill property, either through a restrictive covenant on future use or through outright acquisition.

The City and County are now prepared to move forward with the environmental review process and it is necessary that a preferred site or sites be identified and alternatives also be identified for evaluation in an environmental impact report (EIR). This means narrowing the number of potentially suitable sites to a reasonable number of sites and conducting more detailed site-specific investigations to identify any fatal flaws and to provide more information so that a preferred site can be chosen for the EIR to analyze. Prior to that decision, at least one public hearing should be held to obtain additional public input regarding the potential sites.

2. Potential Sites for Analysis in the EIR

Using the Winzler & Kelly study as a starting point, and updating it to reflect current circumstances, the potentially suitable sites include:

- A. **JDSF Site - North side of Highway 20.** 17 acres. This site has a preferred location because it fronts on Highway 20, is located on the exit route that transfer trailers will take, has sufficient size, and has fewer conflicting neighboring land uses than other sites. Land acquisition cost is to be determined by an appraisal that will compare the JDSF site value to the 35 acres at Caspar Landfill that will be surrendered or deed restricted in exchange. City and County would be required to pay the State for any

deficiency in appraised value. This site should be evaluated with a “project level analysis” in the EIR.

- B. **JDSF Site – South side of Highway 20.** Approximately 9 useable acres. This site is long and narrow which limits flexibility in the layout and design of facilities. Hare Creek runs along its south boundary. From an environmental standpoint, the JDSF site on the north side of Highway 20 has less resource values than this parcel. JDSF agreed to provide the City and County with an option on acreage on the north side of Highway 20. Acquisition of the southern parcel would require significant additional negotiation and new legislation with no clear benefits. For this reason, this site should be considered an alternative that was rejected as infeasible.
- C. **Mendocino Coast Recreation & Parks District Regional Park Site,** Highway 20 at Summers Lane. This is a 173-acre ownership and is presently vacant land. The District has offered to sell a portion of the property for the transfer station. The District owes approximately \$2.3 million on the property and may not be able to continue to make payments on the debt. The property is currently listed for sale for \$2.9 million. Acquisition of a portion of the parcel might be complicated, and the cost is unknown but would likely be significant. This property should be looked at as a project alternative in the EIR.
- D. **Leisure Time Recreational Vehicle Park,** Highway 20. The property is 24 acres, and is currently in use as a trailer park. The owner offered to sell the property for \$1.5 million. This site has more intensive neighboring residential development than either (A) or (B) above. This property should be looked at as a project alternative in the EIR
- E. **Georgia-Pacific Wood Waste Site,** north of Highway 20. Approximately 20 acres available, property is currently vacant. The Winzler & Kelly study stated that the owner would be an unwilling seller and that between \$2 million and \$2.5 million would have to be spent to build an access road from the site to Highway 20. Given the property owner’s unwillingness to sell and the extraordinary cost of developing access to the property, this site should be considered an alternative that was rejected as infeasible.
- F. **Caspar Transfer Station Site,** Prairie Way. 40 acres available. This was the site of the region’s landfill from 1969 to 1992 and has been operated as a self-haul transfer station site since then. Land acquisition cost would be zero because it is already a City and County-owned property. This site should be evaluated with a project-level analysis in the EIR.

3. Cost considerations

It would be preferable to secure a site for no acquisition cost or only a small cost. There are no available City or County funds for site acquisition, and neither the City nor the County desires to incur an acquisition debt nor could either party easily obtain financing for a project that would not yield a revenue stream for years.

The two sites that could avoid any significant acquisition costs are the JDSF Site (North of Highway 20) and the Caspar Transfer Station Site.

4. Caspar Transfer Station's special status

Solid waste facilities are generally thought to be undesirable neighbors and are often opposed because of that belief. Inevitably, pressure exists to keep solid waste disposal where it is already located rather than face the political challenges of establishing a new facility in a new location.

Most of the vehicle trips caused by the proposed transfer station are already generated by the Caspar self-haul facility, along with the noise from outdoor operation of a loader and hauling trucks that periodically move bins and pods. Therefore, a large part of the proposed transfer station operation is already in place at Caspar.

There are two main disadvantages to the Caspar site: (1) limited turn lane length on Highway 1 at Road 409, and (2) neighbors who would like the site closed. Nevertheless, Caspar is a viable alternative whose important advantages are:

- Current and historic use for solid waste disposal,
- Already City-County owned,
- Ample acreage,
- Extensive site information already available.

For these reasons, and despite the organized vocal opposition by the Caspar site neighbors, the Caspar site should be considered at a project-level analysis in the EIR.

5. Recommended sites for analysis in EIR

It is important that a siting process avoid limiting itself to a single location before it is necessary to do so. Even when the process reaches the stage of an EIR, alternatives must be identified and studied. Accordingly, the recommendation is to identify JDSF and Caspar as preferred sites for analysis in the EIR.

6. Issues for additional study

The Winzler & Kelly study did not examine either of these sites closely enough to verify that no "fatal flaw" or significant technical obstacles exist. More needs to be known about:

- Soils
- Drainage
- Water supply
- Potential for on-site sewage disposal
- Conceptual site design
- Biological survey for rare/endangered species and habitat
- Acquisition cost (JDSF only)

7. Recommended studies

The following studies are necessary to help inform the decision regarding a preliminary preferred site for the transfer station: timing of scoping meeting?

- A. Civil engineering investigation of JDSF and Caspar sites on soils, drainage, water supply, and potential for on-site sewage disposal
- B. Biological survey for rare and endangered species and habitat
- C. Conceptual site design
- D. Comparative land appraisal: JDSF and Caspar 35 acres

Items A, B and C (above) would be conducted by professional consultants while C would be prepared by MSWMA staff. The funding source for the consultant studies would be the Caspar Transfer Station “rent surcharge” which yields approximately \$40,000/year.

8. Subsequent steps

- A. Upon approval of the work plan by the Caspar Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC), report work plan to City Council and Board of Supervisors for their consideration and acceptance
- B. Following acceptance, perform studies.
- C. When studies are completed, conduct a public hearing.
- D. Convene JCC to make a preliminary site selection.
- E. Refer preliminary site selection to City Council and Board of Supervisors.
- F. Prepare environmental impact report (EIR) on preferred site.
- G. Certify EIR and give final approval to site selection.
- H. Issue Request for Proposals for design, construction and operation of transfer station.
- I. Select contractor, build transfer station.

9. Project management

The work plan would be implemented under the direction of the Fort Bragg City Manager and County Solid Waste Director, reporting to the JCC and assisted as necessary by City and County staff.

11. Estimated schedule

The following schedule provides approximate timeframes for initiation and completion of the tasks needed to complete the preliminary review, environmental review, permitting, and construction phases of the project. The timeframes shown include time for consultant selection processes.

Selection of preferred alternative and alternative sites for purposes of environmental review

A. Staff Authorization to Proceed

A-1	JCC review and approval of work plan	September 2011
A-2	BOS and Council direct staff to proceed	November - December 2011

B. JDSF Site Tasks

B-1	Contract/prepare appraisal for JDSF site option agreement	January – March 2012
B-2	Submit appraisal to State for review and acceptance	April 2012
B-3	Exercise option/site acquisition (if necessary, following certification of EIR and final site selection)	January 2014 – September 2014

C. Preliminary Studies

C-1	Prepare preliminary civil engineering studies (consultant)	January - May 2012
C-2	Prepare biological surveys (consultant)	January - June 2012
C-3	Prepare conceptual site design (MSWMA)	April - June 2012

D. Environmental Review Process

D-1	Consultant Selection for EIR	July – September 2012
D-2	Prepare EIR (consultant)	October 2012 – January 2014
D-3	EIR Scoping Session	November 2012
D-4	Draft EIR – public review period	June 2013 - August 2013
D-5	Final EIR – certification	November 2013
D-6	Project approval/final site selection	November 2013

E. Project Construction

E-1	Contractor selection/project construction	2014
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