REDWOOD REGION AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 1054, EUREKA, CALIFORNIA 95502

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DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

15 January 2009

City of Eureka
Community Development Department
Attn: Sidnie L. Olson, AICP, Principal Planner
531 K Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Dear Sidnie Olson:

Redwood Region Audubon Society has a local membership of approximately 700 households. Our mission is to support the study and enhancement of wildlife and to support sustainable use of our natural resources. Almost anything would be an improvement over the blighted conditions of the balloon tract. A well planned project which benefits the community, looks and functions well, competes with but produces jobs without taking jobs from other businesses, would be a boon to the community.

We reviewed Volume I section IV of the Marina Center EIS and the Appendix G Table 2 Animal Species Observed on the Project Site or Expected to Utilize the Project Site.

We find the CNDDB list not useful due to the scale of the query, which includes all of Humboldt County. The NDDB lists are typically viewed as evidence of absence of particular species in a project area. Rather, the various government agency, CNPS, and other lists of species of concern should be utilized as a starting point, with input from various knowledgeable people and the literature, to determine which species should be considered.

We view these lists as not only species that could be negatively impacted by the project, but also those that could potentially benefit from the project as well. Because almost 12 acres of wetland and upland habitat are being restored, there are potential beneficial effects for species conservation. In review of plants to be included in plantings (Section III-4) on the proposed wetland and mitigation area of the project area we would encourage native shrubs and trees adapted to the local area which have wildlife values such as coyote bush, silk tassel, willows, alders, spruce, and grand fir. These plants provide food sources and habitat for birds. Other plants will seed in naturally or be introduced by birds. Unfortunately, we have a problem with human transients and homeless who may desire to inhabit densely vegetated areas. By providing judiciously placed trails in the restoration area the project may encourage diversity of plant species but discourage human habitation. Although no access is being proposed for the wetland reserve (III-14) viewing areas into the mitigation wetland could be included in the project proposal. This could provide some environmental education opportunities for the Discovery Museum.

On the List/Proposed Threatened and Endangered Species for the Eureka Quad, we would delete all species except the following list, since these are the only ones that would potentially be affected by the Marina Center project:

Tidewater goby
Coho salmon
Steelhead
Chinook salmon
Western snowy plover
Yellow-billed cuckoo
Bald eagle (although this species is no longer listed under the Endangered Species Act)
Brown pelican.

The NDDB query did not produce records of sandy beach tiger beetle, Indian Island rookery, and California clapper rail, but these are worthy of consideration and would have been identified if a good literature review of the area were done.

California Species of Special Concern (SSC) lists need to be consulted. I am not aware of any California SCC mammals that should be included. The following list of birds from the 2008 Bird SSC list should be addressed:

Brant	effects of the project on eelgrass in the bay
Redhead	likely not adversely affected
Northern harrier	potential beneficial foraging area
Yellow warbler	could benefit from riparian habitat
Bryant's savannah sparrow	could benefit with proper grasses and herbs

From the 1994 Amphibian and reptile SSC list red-legged frog should be included.

From the 1995 Fish SSC coastal cutthroat trout should be considered.

<u>Some shortcomings in the wildlife species analysis:</u>
The EIR cites the following herpetofauna species as seen during a survey on page IV. D-1. "Despite looking under boards and other objects, the only amphibian or reptile observed was the Pacific treefrog during the July 9, 2006, summer survey. Other reptiles that could potentially use the site include Western fence lizard, common garter snake, and gopher snake." I agree with the technique, however in my experience, I would not expect western fence lizard or gopher snake in our wet coastal climate, but have seen garter snakes in my yard. Southern and northern alligator lizards (*Elgaria multicarinatus* and *E. coerulea*) are much more common in local coastal areas. Was the site also checked during the wet season?

In surveys of similar ruderal areas immediately adjacent to Humboldt Bay in March 2003 I found rough-skinned newts (*Taricha granulosa*) under logs and boards on coastal levees in Arcata and northwestern salamanders (*Ambystoma gracile*). I have wandering salamanders (*Aneides vagrans*) and California slender salamanders (*Batrachoseps californicus*) in my woodpile, which is within 1/2 mile of Humboldt Bay and within 2 miles of the project site.

In the DEIR Appendix G Attachment 2 Table 2 mammals observed include Townsend's vole (*Microtus townsendii*). I doubt the identification as *M. townsendii*; they are quite uncommon to rare locally. I have analyzed 4000 spotted owl pellets from northwestern California and southwestern Oregon for diet analysis and looked at owl and raptor pellets from Fay Slough Wildlife Area and Mad River Slough Wildlife Area. I have trapped in ruderal areas such as the

area known as "Mount Trashmore" on Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary, at Lanphere Dunes unit Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, in the redwood dominated forest adjacent to Humboldt State University and Redwood Sciences Laboratory. The majority of voles encountered locally were identified as California vole (*Microtus californicus*) in openings and creeping or Oregon voles (*M. oregona*) under the tree canopy. On January 27, 2009, I visited the Humboldt State University Museum of Vertebrate Zoology and looked at their collection of local voles. They had full museum specimen trays probably measuring 24 inches by 48 inches each of *M. californicus* and *M. longicaudus*, long-tailed vole, probably 40 to 50 specimens of each. The tray of the same size holding *M. townsendii* held about a half dozen specimens, one of which was indicated as doubtful for that species. I don't know the trapping plan used at the marina site, but any live trapping of vole specimens should be expected to capture the most common species instead of a rare species. In a discussion with the curator at the MVZ, he expressed the same surprise as me that a Townsend's vole, the most rare and least expected vole in our area, was captured. Hall and Kelson (1981) * indicate a marginal record specimen of *M. townsendii townsendii* from Humboldt Bay near Eureka, but a range map indicates that Little River or perhaps the north end of Clam Beach, both north of McKinleyville, as the southern extent of their range. California vole extends north to Little River on the coast, The range map of California vole in Hall and Kelson (1981) extends north in Humboldt County to Little River. Long-tailed vole range extends from western Canada south to Mendocino, CA, so could reasonably be expected here. In any case none of these voles are considered species of concern, rather my concern is with the accuracy of the field identification done in conjunction with the project.

Aleutian cackling geese (*Branta hutchinsii leucopareia*) are noticeably absent from the list of observed species. This species was recently taken off the endangered species list. Currently there are tens of thousands of cackling geese flying in skeins of 25 to over 100 birds over the project site each morning and evening. On Audubon led trips at Eureka (Palco) Marsh we ocassionally see tundra swans.

Light pollution impacts on migrating birds. Section IV.A-3 and Impact A-4 in EIR. Although already addressed in visual impacts as viewed by humans, we would like to see the light signature into the skies and laterally onto the adjacent area reduced to the maximum extent possible. Studies have shown that artificial lights can draw migrating birds to buildings where fatalities occur when the light-blinded birds fly into buildings and other objects.

Effects of hazardous materials. (IV.G-1) Hazardous materials should be cleaned up to the most reasonable extent possible. We realize that soil microbes will over long periods of time digest and dissolve some toxic materials. Because this project is imminent we don't have decades to wait for natural cleanup. From some reports I am aware of, the major hazardous materials onsite are diesel spills and lead contamination mainly from batteries but also from paints. It is hard to guess what chemical contaminants might have been introduced to the site in fill materials brought into the site. As the wetland mitigation is initiated and either old channels of Clark Slough are reestablished or as new channels are created, there comes a chance on either uncovering contaminants in old fill materials or in exposing the site to contaminants from upstream.

Stormwater Drainage Table IV.1-2 Policy 4 D-4 states "The City shall consider recreational opportunities and aesthetics in the design of stormwater detention/retention and conveyance facilities." Project Compliance Discussion states that it is NOT RELAVANT. Here is an

* ER Hall, KR Kelson (1981) **The mammals of North America**. Two volumes - John Wiley and Sons, New York, NY,

opportunity to direct stormwater runoff from buildings and parking lots into aesthetically created ponds. The created wetland pond properly vegetated could be used to mitigate some of the runoff from the project site and provide birdwatching, a recreational opportunity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the project. We are active observers of wildlife in the area and are concerned about the health of natural and man-made habitats and each year lead over 80 field trips and docent led events in the local area. We would welcome working to help the project with the environmental information and interpretive signs (Section III-14) to insure that the information is accurate. (Sea otters do not occur on Humboldt Bay as a sign at the foot of "F" Street implies.)

Respectfully,

Chet Ogan

Chet Ogan, chair
with John Hunter
Redwood Region Audubon Society
Conservation Committee