

## 2.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN THIS ASSESSMENT

### 2.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE HUMBOLDT BAY MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The objectives of the Humboldt Bay Management Plan were established by the Management Plan Task Force, as recounted in Section I, Volume I of the Plan. The Management Plan was developed on the basis of a prior planning effort, the Strategic Plan, and the Management Plan's objectives therefore also incorporate the directions provided in the Strategic Plan.

#### 2.1.1 General Humboldt Bay Management Plan Objectives

The current **Mission Statement** for the Humboldt Bay Management Plan is:

*Provide a comprehensive framework for balancing and integrating conservation goals and economic opportunities in a cooperative manner for the management of Humboldt Bay's resources.*

The mission statement resulted from substantial discussion among members of the District's advisory committees during the development of the Strategic Plan and the HBMP. The following general objectives were identified in the Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup> to expand upon the mission statement. The objectives provide a more detailed description of the services and competencies that the District must develop and deliver in order to fulfill its mission:

- To represent the various constituencies equally and fairly within the responsibilities as stated in the enabling legislation
- To coordinate and provide leadership to federal, state and local entities on issues relevant to the District mission
- To promote regulatory and legislative action favorable to the District
- To expand and promote the economic and entrepreneurial activities of Humboldt Bay that are compatible with the District's adopted Management Plan and/or other related documents
- To generate adequate revenues to fund on-going District programs
- To manage all tide and submerged lands within the District's jurisdiction
- To promote and create recreational opportunities within the District's jurisdiction that are compatible with the District's adopted Management Plan and/or related documents
- To promote the protection of the bay and other tidelands
- To promote public knowledge of the bay

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<sup>1</sup> The Strategic Plan, updated by the District at five-year intervals, provides programmatic recommendations for District actions, but the Strategic Plan does not include specific policy directives. The Strategic Plan development process is an internal District planning process, incorporating substantial public involvement, but the recommendations developed in the process are implemented following their incorporation in the Humboldt Bay Management Plan.

- To improve public awareness of and confidence in the District, its Commissioners and its staff
- To attain a high level of competency and efficiency in the operation of the District
- To regularly update the District's operating and long range plans

### **2.1.2 Strategic Plan Vision Statement**

As part of the development of the District's current Strategic Plan a vision statement was adopted by the task force. The Strategic Plan's **Vision Statement** is that the District should provide:

*Bay leadership for the benefit of all*

### **2.1.3 Strategic Plan Direction**

#### 2.1.3.1 Harbor

The directions for the "Harbor" element of the HBMP established in the Strategic Plan are:

- Identify the need for permit process streamlining of historic uses of the bay and its margins with the overall goal of maintaining historic uses that are compatible with the findings of the Humboldt Bay Management Plan and Harbor Revitalization Plan.
- Identify and implement those elements of the Harbor Revitalization Plan, which would be needed to build the foundation for a real increase in the cargo handling capacity of the bay.

#### 2.1.3.2 Recreation

The direction for the "Recreation" element of the HBMP established in the Strategic Plan is:

- Facilitate a substantial increase in recreational facilities available throughout the District.

#### 2.1.3.3 Conservation

The direction for the "Conservation" element of the HBMP established in the Strategic Plan is:

- Provide leadership in enhancing and protecting the bay environment.

## **2.2 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The "proposed project" covered by this EIR is the Humboldt Bay Management Plan. In general the District is not contemplating an alternative plan. However, there is one specific alternative to the adoption of the proposed plan, namely the "No Project" alternative of continued reliance on the recommendations in the Humboldt Bay Master Plan (Koebig and Koebig 1975) and the District's implementing Ordinance No. 7, which functions as a "use control" ordinance that implements some elements of the 1975 Master Plan.

### **2.2.1 "No Project" (Existing Management Plan)**

Since its formation the District has operated under an informal plan developed by a professional planning consultant, implemented by a set of ad hoc ordinances covering the

management actions that the District needed to take. The Humboldt Bay Master Plan<sup>2</sup> is substantially less explicit in virtually all respects than is the proposed Management Plan. The Master Plan identified two broad categories of water use in Humboldt Bay:

- “**Conservation Water**,” addressing a set of interrelated uses, including:
  - Natural Resources/Habitats
  - Wildlife Refuge
  - Recreational Uses
  - Public Access
  - Mariculture
  - Scenic Vistas
- “**Development Water**,” covering
  - Bay Access
  - Channel

The water use areas identified in the Master Plan approximately correspond to the primary water use areas identified in the proposed Management Plan. Most of Arcata Bay and South Bay were designated as *Conservation Water*; in addition this designation covers the part of Entrance Bay opposite the bay entrance, up to and including the mouth of Elk River, as well as the waters on both sides of Indian Island. The majority of the central part of the bay was designated as *Development Water*, including the primary channel, the Samoa Channel, the inner and outer reaches of the Eureka Channel, and the Fields Landing/Hookton Channel.

The Master Plan also addressed land uses outside of the actual perimeter of the bay, in several areas, primarily west of Highway 101 and the adjacent railroad on the eastern margin of the bay; and the general area between the bay and the Pacific Ocean on the western side of the bay. For most of these upland areas in the middle part of the bay the Master Plan designated the uplands near the bay as “industrial” in one of several senses. The upland areas on the South Spit, on Indian Island, and on most of the Samoa Peninsula (excluding the industrial areas) were designated as “*Public Open Space*,” with several identified “conservation” uses. Under current jurisdictional limits, these upland areas do not fall under the District’s jurisdiction, the designations in the Master Plan have no effect, and these designations are not considered further in this EIR.

In general the Master Plan did not present a “water use diagram” for Humboldt Bay. Instead the Master Plan discussed specific areas of the bay and identified potentially compatible or desirable uses. In addition, the Master Plan did not identify general operating or maintenance practices (or policies, in the context of this EIR) for the bay’s waters), although the Master Plan did identify proposed operating or maintenance proposals for specific areas in the bay. To the extent that these designations affect the comparison of the “no project” alternative and the proposed Plan’s effects, they will be considered in this EIR.

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<sup>2</sup> This plan may be reviewed in the District’s offices, by prior arrangement. Owing to the age and fragility of the remaining Master Plan copies, the District does not expect that copies of the Master Plan will be lent to readers for off-premises use.

The Master Plan included an environmental assessment of its potential effects. In general, the scope and depth of the assessment in the Master Plan are inadequate to meet the current obligations created for the District by the California Environmental Quality Act.

### **2.2.2 Proposed Management Plan**

The primary discussion in this EIR is a programmatic assessment of the potential effects of the proposed Plan on the “environmental resources” in the Humboldt Bay region that could be affected by the policies in the Plan. As noted in Chapter 1.0, this EIR is focused on the policy content of the Plan rather than on any specific project or action that may be proposed to carry out the Plan’s policies. Subsequent implementing actions will be subject to the requirements of CEQA, and the implementing actions will receive CEQA reviews (and, when necessary in carrying out the District’s operating procedures, public hearings), but not as part of this EIR.

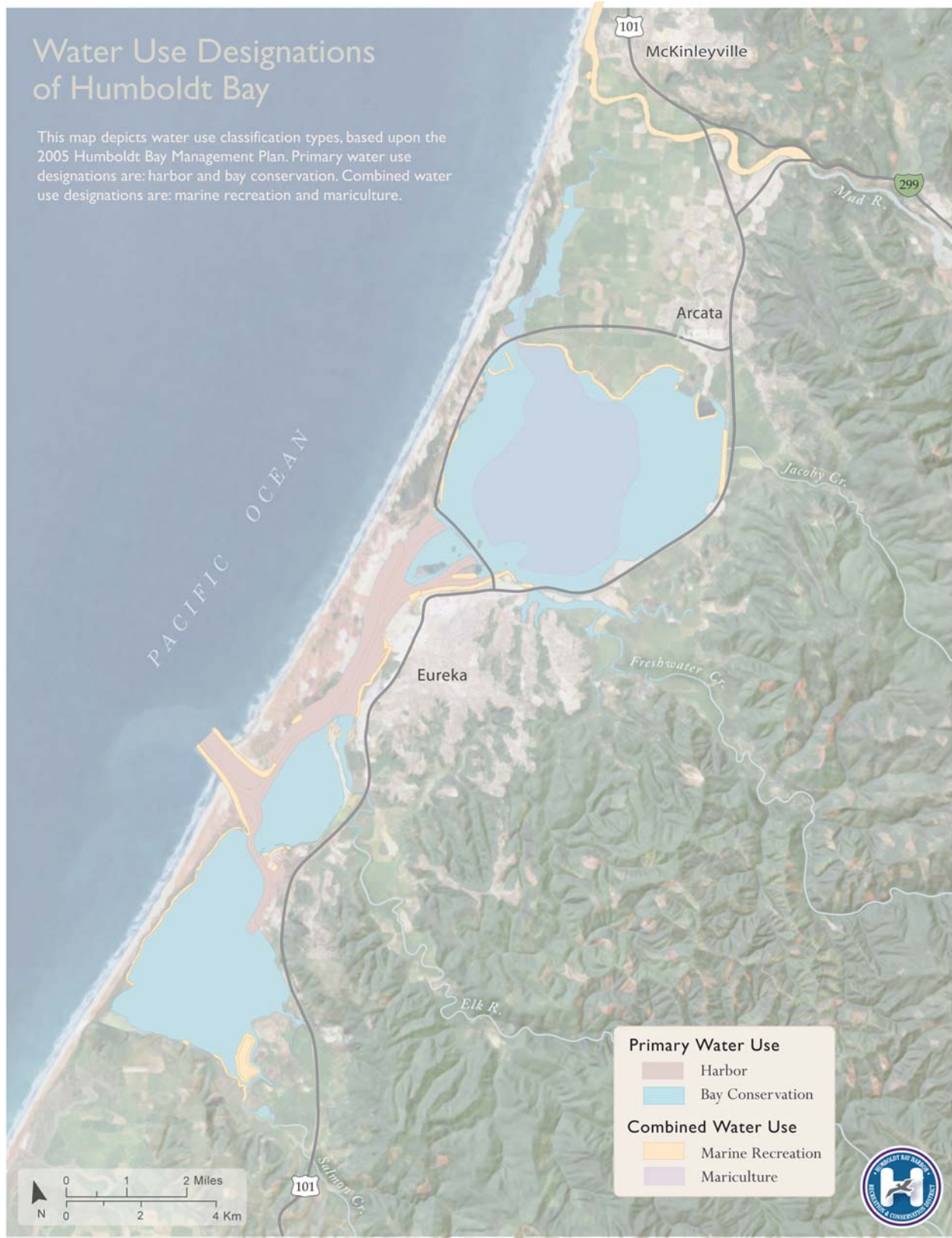
The Management Plan reflects a policy balance that recognizes the District’s legislatively directed obligations to manage harbor-related, recreation-related, and conservation-related management goals for Humboldt Bay. The specificity of the policies in the Draft Plan allows this EIR to consider potential “trade-offs” among policy goals and potential implementation constraints, and that is the primary focus of the EIR: to identify conceptually both the environmental effects that would result from implementing the Plan and the potential trade-offs that could be associated with balancing the policies identified in the Plan.

The “EIR-draft” Humboldt Bay Management Plan is incorporated into this EIR by reference and made a part of this EIR. In general, the Plan incorporates three sets of management policies for Humboldt Bay: (1) policies for managing “harbor” functions, (2) policies for managing “recreation” functions, and (3) policies for managing “conservation” functions in Humboldt Bay. The Plan also includes a “water use diagram” (EIR Figure 2-1) that specifies generally preferred kinds of uses in the various sections of the bay. Before reading this EIR, readers should assure themselves a working familiarity with the Draft Management Plan. Generally the Management Plan identifies a geographical region of coverage for the Plan, which reflects the District’s interests in the Public Trust lands in and near Humboldt Bay. The District’s interests, however, are not uniform throughout this broadly defined region.

The Plan Boundary – “Primary” Area of Concern. The legislation that created the District also established the District’s authority to act within a specified area of the Humboldt Bay watershed. Generally this area includes the region of Humboldt Bay that is wetted by the tides. This region includes the bay itself, most of Mad River Slough, the region of Eureka Slough (including Freshwater Slough and Ryan Slough) approximately to the limit of tidal action (which is generally identified as the location of Myrtle Avenue), Elk River to approximately the vicinity of Pine Hill Road, and the tidally influenced parts of Hookton Slough and Salmon Creek in South Bay. This area (shown in EIR Figure 2-2) may be considered the District’s “primary” area of concern under this Plan.

# Water Use Designations of Humboldt Bay

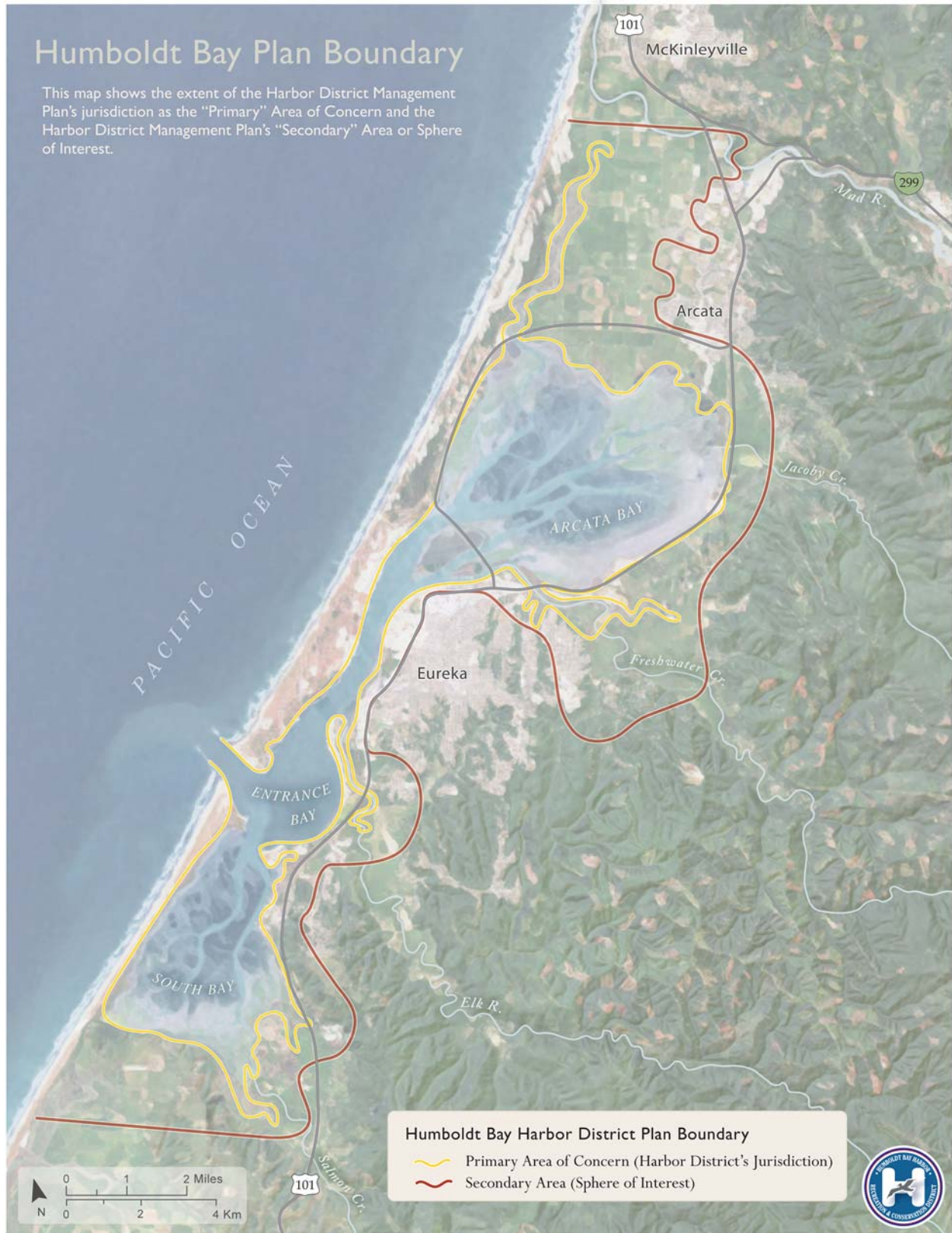
This map depicts water use classification types, based upon the 2005 Humboldt Bay Management Plan. Primary water use designations are: harbor and bay conservation. Combined water use designations are: marine recreation and mariculture.



EIR Figure 2-1. Primary and Combined Water Use Designations in Draft Management Plan. See the Plan for additional information.

# Humboldt Bay Plan Boundary

This map shows the extent of the Harbor District Management Plan's jurisdiction as the "Primary" Area of Concern and the Harbor District Management Plan's "Secondary" Area or Sphere of Interest.



EIR Figure 2-2. Areas of "Primary" (District Jurisdiction) and "Secondary" (Sphere of Interest) Management Plan Concern. See the Plan for additional information.

The District has principal decision-making responsibility for this region pursuant to the state's Constitution (shared with, or under the review authority of, the State Lands Commission). The policy framework in the Management Plan specifically applies to, and constitutes the basis for, the decisions that the District will make in this area.

The District's authority also covers several District-owned parcels (EIR Figure 2-3a and EIR Figure 2-3b). Most of the land in these parcels is upland, including Woodley Island, the Park Street mitigation site, the Fields Landing Boat Repair Facility (Kramer Dock) site, the Redwood Dock parcel on the Samoa Peninsula, and a restoration area at Buhne Point in King Salmon. The District also holds title to a parcel of submerged land within Elk River. The Draft Management Plan does not explicitly identify proposed uses or "designations" for these parcels; indeed, the majority of these upland areas are included within the lands covered by the land use plans of the County of Humboldt or the City of Eureka. The Draft Plan proposes that the District develop site-specific use plans for these parcels, which will follow the policy framework laid out in the Draft Plan.

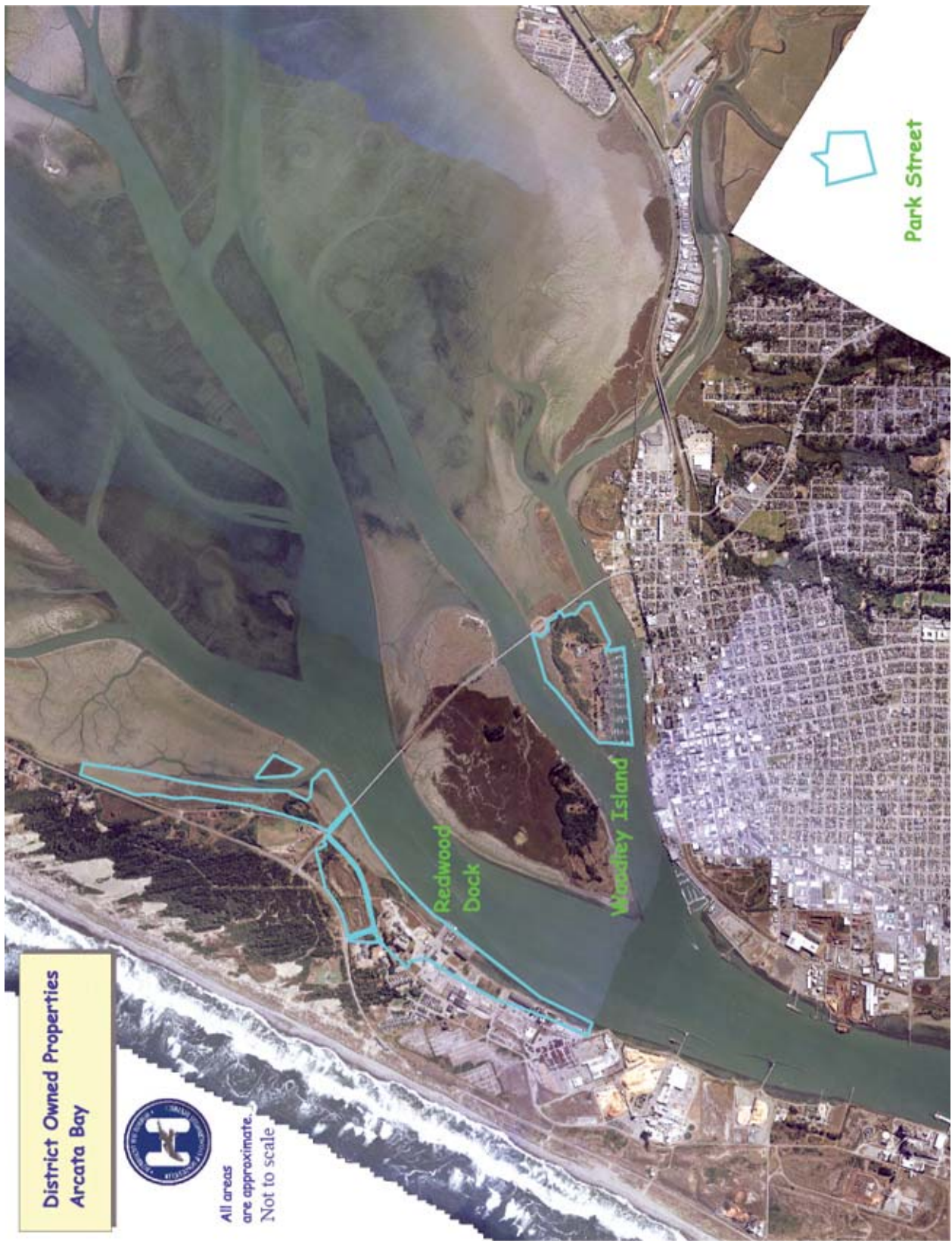
The Sphere of Interest – "Secondary" Area. As discussed further in the Plan, focusing on only a portion of the Humboldt Bay ecosystem on the basis of a "political" boundary, based on the locations of levees that separate tidelands and diked former tidelands, does not sufficiently encompass the ecological dynamics that affect District concerns within the bay's ecosystem. In consequence, the District has also identified an area of "secondary" concern for the District's planning considerations, the "Sphere of Interest" (also shown in EIR Figure 2-2).

The "secondary" area encompasses the remainder of the Public Trust lands. This area generally includes the region that was subject to tidal action when California became a state; conceptually, this is the area behind levees and tidegates that would be subject to District jurisdiction if the levees were not present. The Plan includes policy elements that express the District's interests within the "secondary" area, reflecting the District's relationships with other local governments and, to some extent, with state and federal agencies regarding management in the "secondary" area of concern.

The Watershed – "Tertiary" Area. Activities and land uses that take place in the larger Humboldt Bay watershed, a larger geographical region that includes the District's "primary" and "secondary" areas of concern, may also directly or indirectly affect the subjects addressed in the Plan; such activities are, however, outside of both the District's area of direct or "primary" jurisdiction and the Public Trust lands that constitute the District's "secondary" area of concern. Accordingly, the District has identified the remainder of the Humboldt Bay watershed as a "tertiary" area of concern. See the Introduction to Volume I of the Plan for additional information.

The Management Plan divides Humboldt Bay into three "bays" for discussion purposes (EIR Figure 2-2): Arcata Bay (sometimes also called "North Bay"), Entrance Bay, and South Bay.

Arcata Bay. The northern part of Humboldt Bay is generally identified as Arcata Bay. The generally recognized southern boundary of Arcata Bay is the Highway 255 bridges between Eureka and the Samoa Peninsula, owing to the extension of maintained dredged Eureka and Samoa channels in Entrance Bay to the vicinity of the bridges.



EIR Figure 2-3a. District-owned Parcels in Arcata Bay and the Northern Part of Entrance Bay. (Note: North is to left. Source: District GIS.)



EIR Figure 2-3b. District-owned Parcels in South Bay and the Southern Part of Entrance Bay. (Note: North is to left. Source: District GIS.)

The Harbor District's Management Plan Task Force ordained that the Management Plan identify the generalized uses that would be preferred in Arcata Bay to be: (1) a continued or heightened protection of Arcata Bay's environmental resources, as well as (2) the continued use of Arcata Bay for aquaculture or mariculture, and (3) the continuance and enhancement of recreational opportunities.

Entrance Bay. The central part of Humboldt Bay is often identified as "Entrance Bay." Generally this region extends from approximately the Highway 255 bridges through the narrow central part of the Bay. The southern margin of Entrance Bay may be thought of most effectively as including the deeper waters inside the Bay opposite the mouth, extending to the vicinity of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) plant. Entrance Bay includes the dredged channel to King Salmon and to the southern extent of the Fields Landing Channel.

The Management Plan Task Force determined that management in Entrance Bay should be focused on: (1) harbor-related uses, (2) maintenance or enhancement of Entrance Bay's environmental resources, and (3) maintenance and enhancement of recreational opportunities.

South Bay. The remaining part of the Bay, South Bay, includes extensive tidal flats and eelgrass meadows. South Bay generally is considered to include the shallows and tidal channels south of the deeper Entrance Bay.

The Management Plan Task Force identified the predominant preferred uses in South Bay as: (1) protection and enhancement of South Bay's environmental resources; and (2) port-related uses, in terms of the dredged channel to King Salmon and Fields Landing and the associated harbor-related facilities. Since the latter are identified in the Plan as included in Entrance Bay, the predominant preferred uses in South Bay are: (1) the protection and enhancement of the South Bay's environmental resources, and (2) maintenance and enhancement of recreational opportunities.

The Management Plan also included draft "water use designations" (EIR Figure 2-1; see Chapter 2.0 of Section III of the Plan for complete descriptions). These uses were placed into two broad categories, "primary" designations and "secondary" ("combining" or "overlay") designations. The primary designation areas are (1) *Harbor* and (2) *Bay Conservation*. The two combining designations, which overlay portions of the areas covered by the primary designations, are (1) *Marine Recreation* and (2) *Mariculture*; the additional purposes and prescriptions of the combining designation areas are meant to supplement those of the underlying primary areas, as explained below.

Both the primary and combining areas identify geographical areas of the Bay where certain uses will generally be treated preferentially by the District, in accordance with the Plan (EIR Figure 2-1). The designations are meant to assist in guiding the discretionary uses of Humboldt Bay in ways that promote public safety and welfare, protect the environment, stimulate commerce and desired economic activities, and fulfill other aspects of the District's public trust responsibilities. Consistency with the water use designations will be considered by the District as a positive indication of general consistency with the requirements in this Management Plan.

Some uses of the water areas within Humboldt Bay are allowed in each designated area without specific authorization. Navigational uses, fish and wildlife habitat management or scientific study that does not involve direct environmental modification, many types of recreational activities, and similar activities do not require District approval. Other uses may be authorized by the Harbor District through the District's permit process (Ordinance 14), which will also include environmental reviews pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act. Some kinds of activities that are considered characteristic of the various water use designations are identified in the text of Chapter 2.0 of Section III of the Plan (the Policy Document).

The policy document of the Plan includes major sections that address the District's legislatively directed responsibilities: *Harbor* (in Chapter 3.0, Section III), *Recreation* (in Chapter 4.0, Section III), and *Conservation* (in Chapter 5.0, Section III). These policies provide guidance for decision-making, allowing the District's staff and decision-makers, other agencies, and members of the public to gain understanding of the District's intended implementation of its legislatively directed responsibilities. These policies, technically, are the Plan, and are the subject of this programmatic environmental document.

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