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Mendocino Partnership for the Precautionary Principle

June 27, 2006

Mendocino Supervisors Adopt Precautionary Principle

On June 27, 2006, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors (3-0) adopted the County's first-ever environmental policy—the Mendocino County Precautionary Principle Policy.

The Precautionary Principle is a guiding framework for decision-making that anticipates how actions will affect the environment and the health of future generations. The newly adopted policy will provide an innovative structure for decision-making. This structure includes the value of public input, transparency, full-cost and benefit accounting, and guidance towards alternatives with the least potential impact on human health and the environment. The Director of Public Health, Carol Mordhorst, stated "The Precautionary Principle provides a good opportunity for guidelines for county departments to make decisions that produce the least harm."

The Precautionary Principle was brought before the County by the "Mendocino Partnership for the Precautionary Principle," a civic group assembled in 2005. The first steps included requesting the County study the Principle's possible implementation. The study period resulted in the formation of a new policy. According to Environmental Commons' Director, Britt Bailey, "I am very proud of today's decision. For the past eight months we have been involved in the study of this Principle in concert with county officials. We all knew we liked the ideas behind the Principle but were unsure how the values could be placed into daily decision-making. In the end, we have built a relationship with our government—and this relationship has allowed for thoughtful discussion and an increased understanding of the ways in which we can work together to protect the beauty and ecology of our county as well as the values of its residents."

5th District Supervisor, David Colfax, has been supportive of the County's adoption of this policy from the beginning stages. "I believe we can do a better job of protecting our environment and human health. The Precautionary Principle Policy will provide us with a tool to protect our beautiful County and its future generations," he said.

Implementation of this policy will begin with a pilot project utilizing two (2) County Departments to be selected by the Executive Office.

In addition to becoming Mendocino's first environmental policy, the adoption of the Precautionary Principle marks just the second instance where a county government has decided to adopt the Principle. San Francisco County adopted the Precautionary Principle in 2003.

Information and the text of the Policy is available at www.mendoprecaution.org

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