

MENDOCINO PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

Precautionary Principle Procedure

The Precautionary Principle was passed as a Mendocino County Administrative Policy by the Board of Supervisors on June 27, 2006. It is a tool to help make decisions that will have the best long-term effect on the health, well-being and environment of Mendocino County. The Precautionary Principle seeks to ask questions that will help prevent harm and unforeseen costs. It facilitates taking action to prevent harm even if full scientific certainty has not been established. It requires decision makers to choose the alternative that presents the least overall harm, not simply the lowest priced option.

This form is designed to lead you through the decision-making process of the Precautionary Principle. You may not be able to fill it out at one time, and may need to revisit it during the decision-making process in order to be sure to cover all aspects. Please refer to the included Precautionary Principle Timeline to be reminded of the steps to take into account as you proceed.

Project/Action: _____

Date Began: _____ County Department: _____

Staff involved: _____ Phone _____

I. DESCRIPTION OF SITUATION/PROPOSED ACTION/POTENTIAL HARM

1. Describe the situation that needs to be addressed.

2. What is the current practice, if any?

3. What is the action the County proposes to take to address this situation, if different from the current practice?

4. Describe why action is necessary or preferred.

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5. Evaluate, to the best of your ability and current knowledge, the potential impact or risk of the current practice or proposed action, checking appropriate boxes in the **Impact/Risk Matrix** below (See Appendix A for more information on Level of Impact).

Impact/Risk Matrix

Potential	LEVEL OF IMPACT/RISK			
IMPACT ON	None	Low	Moderate	High
Environment (such as air quality, water quality, geology)				
Community (such as noise, traffic, aesthetics, public services)				
Human Health (possible long-term health problems or injury)				
Land Use				
Wildlife				
Housing				
Energy Use				
Cost to Society (such as disposal of waste, labor, clean up, transportation, raw materials)				

6. If all check are in the "none" or "low" columns, please briefly explain why:

If any checks in the matrix above are moderate or high, please continue with this procedure. If all checks are none or low, you may go to page 7.

7. What are the short and long-term potential benefits of the current practice or proposed action? (Include financial benefits, job creation, energy, health, safety, impacts to the local economy, social and economic equity, etc.)_____

II. PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS (for moderate or high risk projects only)

1. How will the people affected receive information about this situation or proposed action, suggest possible alternatives and provide input into decision-making? (Refer to Public Participation Guidelines for ideas.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Meeting/Hearing | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Advisory Board |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Workshop | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website Posting | <input type="checkbox"/> Flyers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interactive Website that Accepts Comments | <input type="checkbox"/> Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Email Updates to community | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Calls to Decision-Makers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email Comments to Decision-Makers | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper Articles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notification by US Mail | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio Shows/Announcements |

Comments:

2. What specific outreach will be conducted to seek input from affected minority, low-income and non-English speaking people?

III. ASSESSMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

1. What uncertainties or gaps in information regarding the current situation or proposed action remain after input from the public?

2. After consulting affected people and considering gaps in information, how have you reconsidered the problem or situation to describe the underlying interest or what needs to be done? For example, in the case of pesticides, reconsidering the big picture leads to the more important issue of managing pests rather than spraying pesticides.

3. List the alternatives to this current practice or proposed action. (Include the alternative of doing nothing.) _____

4. Evaluate, to the best of your ability, the potential impact or risk of each alternative using the **Impact/Risk Matrix** below.

Please copy the next page, complete the matrix and answer the potential benefits question for each alternative listed in III-3.

Evaluation of Alternative: (please specify) _____

Impact/Risk Matrix (See Appendix A for more information on Level of Impact).

Potential	LEVEL OF IMPACT/RISK			
IMPACT ON	None	Low	Moderate	High
Environment (such as air quality, water quality, geology)				
Community (such as noise, traffic, aesthetics, public services)				
Human Health (possible long-term health problems or injury)				
Land Use				
Wildlife				
Housing				
Energy Use				
Cost to Society (such as disposal of waste, labor, clean up, transportation, raw materials)				

If any checks in the matrix above are moderate or high, please continue.

What are the short and long-term potential **benefits** of this alternative to the action? (Include financial benefits, job creation, energy, health, safety, impacts to the local economy, social and economic equity, etc.)

Short-term _____

Long-term _____

IV. DETERMINE COURSE OF ACTION

1. Evaluating all alternatives and considering all potential costs and benefits, public input and taking into account the severity or uncertainty of the potential harm and the economic feasibility of all courses of action, **what is the best action to take, and why?**

2. Report to the stakeholders using agreed upon method.

Date this was done: _____

V. MONITORING AND FOLLOW-UP

1. What is the anticipated outcome of this decision? _____

2. When, how and by whom will this decision or action be monitored and evaluated?
(Refer to Timeline on page 7)

After 3 months: _____

After 6 months: _____

After one year: _____

PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE TIMELINE

	Date Begun	Date Completed
Initial Description of Situation		
Public Input Process		
Assessment of Alternatives		
Determine Course of Action		
Monitoring and Follow-up		

Comments about this process: _____

Call Paul Cayler at 463-4441 for help, information or questions.

When this process is complete, please send a copy of these forms to Paul Cayler at Mendocino County Admin Office, 501 Low gap Rd, Ukiah 95482

Appendix A

Questions to Ask when Deciding Level of Impact/Risk of a Current Practice or Proposed Action.

- What is the potential level of harm (mild to catastrophic)?
- What is the potential size of harm, or number of people, plants or animals affected?
- Are there secondary or long-term risks?
- Are there incremental impacts of repeated actions?
- Could the action have both beneficial and harmful aspects and on balance be beneficial, but still carry a moderate to high risk?
- To what degree are impacts likely to be highly controversial?
- To what degree are the potential impacts highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks?
- Could the action establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects?
- Does the action have the potential to impact future generations?
- Is the action related to other actions that may have individual low risks but cumulatively higher risks?
- Could this action solve one problem but create or worsen another?
- What is the potential spatial scale of the risk - local, statewide, regional, national, global?
- Might some populations (human or ecosystems) be disproportionately affected?
- How reversible is the potential harm? If the harm were to occur would it be easy to fix or last for generations?
- What is the temporal scale of the threat? There are two issues to consider:
 - The time lapse between a threat and possible harm (immediate, near future, future generations). The further in the future harm might occur, the less likely that impacts can be predicted, the harder it will be to identify and halt a problem, and the more likely that future generations will be impacted.
 - Persistence of impacts (immediate, short term, mid term, long term, inter-generational).

(Some material taken from THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE IN ACTION: A HANDBOOK, First Edition, by Joel Tickner, Carolyn Raffensperger and Nancy Myers. Available at <http://www.mindfully.org/Precaution/Precaution-In-Action-Handbook.htm>)