

Public Records Access Guidelines

GEN-003

Purpose: To provide guidelines for reviewing and obtaining public records at the Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD).

Generally, PRMD records are available upon request regardless of whether the request specifically invokes the California Public Records Act (PRA). The PRA allows the public to inspect and request copies of qualifying public records prepared or retained by any public agency.

Anyone may choose to invoke the PRA to obtain electronic copies of records or copies of documents not otherwise available at the Records Counter. Such requests must be made in writing. PRMD staff will respond to the written request within 10 days, in accordance with established procedures in the PRA.

Records: Records can be reviewed by the public during PRMD's regular business hours. Simply complete a request form at the File Counter and the records will be gathered and provided for viewing in either paper or microfiche form. If a requested record is stored in an off-site facility, Records Counter staff will make arrangements to retrieve the record. The requesting party will be contacted when the records are available.

In most cases, documents can be copied. However, there are exceptions:

- Some records are held in confidence and are not given to the public (e.g., well logs, attorney-client communication, preliminary drafts, etc.).

Note: Documents or materials submitted by the public to PRMD regarding a project are not considered confidential unless they are confidential as defined by Government Code. If a staff member receives a document marked "confidential" that does not meet the requirements of Government Code, PRMD staff will advise the sender that the material must be considered public record or discarded.

- Per Government Code Sections 6253, 6254, 6255, certain records can be viewed but not copied (i.e., engineered drawings or documents).

Records Counter staff are available to discuss the specifics of the exceptions in more detail. You may also be referred to the PRMD's Administrative Policy #1-0-5 *Public Record Availability*, which covers applicable Government Codes and procedures concerning these exceptions.

Copying costs are established by the current PRMD fee ordinance, payable at the File Counter or the Cashier Station. However, if a request for electronic records either 1) is for a standard report generated periodically, or 2) requires data compilation, extraction or programming, there may be additional costs for the staff time to provide the service. The requesting party may make paper and microfiche copies at the copy/microfiche printers available in the file counter area. Requests for oversize maps/drawings and large amounts of copies require a special order and will be copied by staff or an outside bonded copy service (usually available in 4-5 days).

Subpoenas: Subpoenas for records are accepted at the File Counter. They must be complete and accompanied by appropriate fees.

Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department

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