

# Minor Timberland Conversion

PJR-087

❖ **Purpose:** The purpose of this form is to identify the information and materials required for a zoning permit for a Minor Timberland Conversion. ❖

Sonoma County regulates the conversion of timberland to a non-timber growing use on less than three (3) acres (Section 26-88-140d of the Sonoma County Zoning Code). A Minor Timberland Conversion zoning permit is not required for the conversion of less than three (3) acres of timberland for the purpose of constructing a structure with a valid building permit, provided the conversion is limited to the cutting and removal of the minimum number of trees necessary to accommodate the structure and related improvements. Minor Timberland Conversions are allowed on properties zoned LIA (Land Intensive Agriculture), LEA (Land Extensive Agriculture), DA (Diverse Agriculture), RRD (Resources and Rural Development), RRDWA (Resources and Rural Development/Agricultural Preserve, and AR (Agriculture and Residential). Minor Timberland Conversions are only allowed in the RR (Rural Residential) zones if the parcel is five (5) acres in size or larger. The County has no authority to regulate Minor Timberland Conversions in the TP (Timber Production) zones, as they are regulated by the California Department of Forestry (CDF). Minor Timberland Conversions are not permitted within the Coastal Zone which includes all parcels with "Coastal Combining", or "CC", on County zoning maps (Section 30243 of the California Coastal Act).

**Procedure:** After a complete application is submitted, a project planner in the Project Review Division of the Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) is assigned to the project. Project applications are sent on referral to various PRMD divisions, County departments, and State agencies for review, comment(s), and condition(s). Environmental review is required in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Additional information or studies may be required to complete processing of the application. The project planner will prepare an initial study under CEQA. This is an assessment of potential environmental impacts and identification of mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level. If the project planner determines that no significant environmental impact will result from the proposed project, a Negative Declaration, or Mitigated Negative Declaration, will be prepared.

After environmental review is completed, notices are then posted and mailed to all property owners within 300 feet of the subject parcel boundaries. After a posting period of 30 days, the zoning permit is approved unless there is an appeal. Appeals are heard before the Board of Zoning Adjustments. For approved zoning permits, the applicant has 24 months to comply with the conditions of approval, complete the removal of timber, and complete the new non-timber use. The applicant may apply for a one year extension of time prior to the expiration of this 24 month period.

**Required Application Materials** A complete application must include all of the following:

1. **Applications.** Submit a completed Planning Application form [PJR-004](#) and Indemnification Agreement form [PJR-011](#), signed by all property owners. Also submit a State Minor Timber Conversion Exemption Form completed and signed by a Registered Professional Forester. This form is available from the California Department of Forestry (CDF), located at 135 Ridgeway Avenue, P.O. Box 670, Santa Rosa, CA 95401, (707) 576-2275.
2. **Proposal Statement.** Submit a written description clearly describing bona fide intent to convert to a permitted use, the approximate number, size, species, age, and condition of trees to be removed, equipment to be used, method of cleanup, and schedule of operations. Indicate if any new roads will be constructed to implement the minor timber conversion.

Provide a statement by the owner(s) of subject property certifying that the Minor Timberland Conversion is a one-time conversion to a non-timber growing use, that there is a bona fide intent to undertake and complete the conversion in conformance with the provisions in of Section 26-88-140d of the Sonoma

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County Zoning Code, and specifying what the new non-timber growing use will be after the conversion. Such evidence shall include, but not limited to, a valid use permit, building permit, or septic permit, approved grading plans for road construction, or an agricultural management plan or soil capability study demonstrating the feasibility of the new non-timber growing use.

3. **Site Plan.** Provide three full-sized site plans (either 24 in. X 36 in. or 11 in. X 17 in.). All plans must be legible, drawn to scale and folded to 8 1/2 in. x 11 in. Site plans must include, at a minimum, the information required on the Minimum Standard Site Plan, Form [CSS-019](#). The site plan shall depict the Minor Timberland Conversion area showing each area of trees to be removed, and which individual trees that will be removed. The site plan shall include property boundaries, existing improvements, watercourses and other natural features.
4. **Reduced Site Plan.** Provide one reduced-sized site plan (8 1/2 in. X 11 in.). This reduced site plan must clearly depict the information shown on the full-sized site plan.
5. **Archaeological Report.** The report must use the survey protocols established by the Sonoma State University Northwest Information Center.
6. **Biotic Report and Habitat Assessment.** A survey must be completed pursuant to survey protocols, to determine if sensitive species are present and if mitigation measures need to be included in development plans.
7. **Spotted Owl/Raptor Survey.** The survey must be completed using the most current survey protocols.
8. **Preliminary Site Grading and Drainage Plan.** (Same size and scale as site plan above.) Provide three, full-sized copies and one legible, reduced size (8 1/2 in. X 12 in.) copy of the preliminary site grading and drainage plan. An erosion control plan shall be included with the preliminary grading and drainage plan.
9. **Location/Vicinity Map.** Provide one 8 1/2 in. X 11 in. location/vicinity map (locator map or road map) showing where the project is located in relation to nearby lots, streets, and highways.
10. **Assessor's Parcel Map.** Provide a current Assessor's Parcel Map with the subject property highlighted (available at the County Assessor's Office).
11. **USGS Map.** A copy of the USGS quad map (8 1/2 in. x 11 in.) with the site identified. Maps may be obtained from PRMD.
12. **Filing Fee.** See the current PRMD Project Review Fee Schedule.