



# County of Mendocino Planning Division

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## Coastal Zone Frequently Asked Questions

\*excludes the Town of Mendocino

### Where is the Coastal Zone?

The Coastal Zone is a legislatively-defined geographic region that establishes the area regulated under the Coastal Act, encompassing both land and water areas along the length of the California coastline from the Oregon border to the Mexico border.

The Coastal Zone varies in distance from the shoreline in both urban and rural areas and extends offshore to the 3-mile limit of state waters. Find out if your property is within the Coastal Zone:

[Coastal Zone Map](#)

### If developed, how do I find out which agency permitted my property?

If developed after 1972, contact the California Coastal Commission North Coast district office for jurisdictional determination.

Phone: 707-826-8950

Email: [NorthCoast@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:NorthCoast@coastal.ca.gov)

### What is a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) and what is the timeline?

Coastal Development Permits are discretionary planning projects that require a higher level of review and judgment by the County, other public agencies and stakeholders. CDPs require a public hearing, environmental review, public input, conditions of approval, and final approval. It takes approximately six to twelve months to process and approve a Coastal Development Permit application. [View and fill out the CDP form here.](#)

### What types of projects can be excluded from a CDP?

Pursuant to [MCC 20.532.020](#) certain types of projects are exempt from a CDP. Here are some examples:

- Repair and maintenance activities which do not result in an addition or expansion of the structure, except as otherwise specified in Subchapter 7, Title 14, California Administrative Code.

Printed July 2024

- Improvements to single-family residences except as otherwise specified in Subchapter 6, Title 14, California Administrative Code
- Disaster Replacements: replacing structures destroyed by disasters. The new structure must be constructed in the same footprint on the property. The floor area, height, or bulk of the replacement structure cannot exceed that of the destroyed structure by more than ten percent.

## **Do I need a CDP?**

A CDP is required when development is proposed. Development means any significant changes or additions to land or water. Here are some examples:

- Building: construction of structures or solid materials.
- Land modifications: grading, removing, dredging, mining, or extracting materials.
- Water Use: changing how water is used or accessed. (e.g., drilling wells, installing water tanks.)
- Construction Work: building, remodeling, demolishing, or altering structures, including utility facilities.
- Vegetation Removal: removing major vegetation, except for farming, kelp harvesting, and timber operations with an approved timber harvesting plan.

In short, “development” covers a wide range of activities that modify the land, water, or structures in significant ways.

Contact the Planning Division for project specific questions and to find out what permits your project requires.

## **How do I get water supply?**

Pursuant to [MCC Chapter 20.532](#), prior to new development, the landowner must demonstrate there is an adequate supply of water. Reach out to the several local water districts that serve your area. If your property is not served by a public water district, you will need to hire a licensed well driller to drill a private well and obtain either a Coastal Development Permit or a Coastal Development Permit Exclusion.

For more information regarding water supply and additional permits, contact the Division of Environmental Health.

Phone: 707- 961-2714.

Email: [enviroh@mendocinocounty.gov](mailto:enviroh@mendocinocounty.gov)

## **CAL FIRE Requirements**

Many areas of the County are at risk from wildland fires. If your property is within the State Responsibility Area, you may need to obtain prior clearance from CAL FIRE.

Contact CAL FIRE for more information regarding fire safe regulations in Mendocino County.

Phone: 707-459-7414

Email: [Mendocino4290@fire.ca.gov](mailto:Mendocino4290@fire.ca.gov)

## **Can I build a pool or an ADU?**

Pursuant to MCC Chapter 20.456, yes you can build a pool and other accessory uses that are appropriate, incidental, and subordinate to the single-family residence or other principal permitted uses.

Pursuant to MCC Chapter 20.458, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are allowed in the Coastal Zone. More information on ADUs can be accessed [here](#).

## **Can I rebuild a nonconforming structure?**

Pursuant to MCC Chapter 20.480, legal nonconforming structures may be remodeled, rehabilitated, or reconstructed if their exterior dimensions remain unchanged. If a nonconforming structure is abandoned, discontinued, or changed to a conforming use for one year, it cannot be re-established, and the property must comply with current zoning regulations.

If such a structure is destroyed or partially destroyed by natural disasters, it can be rebuilt to its original dimensions and used as before, provided that reconstruction begins within one year and is diligently completed.