



COUNTY OF LAKE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
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Item #6b
9:10 AM
November 17, 2025

STAFF REPORT

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Mireya G. Turner, Director
Prepared by: Max Stockton, Associate Planner

DATE: November 17, 2025

SUBJECT: Consideration of Proposed Major Use Permit and Categorical Exemption (PL-25-15), for The Derna Group to change the use of an existing 55-foot-tall tower for use as telecommunications tower. Project location: 1135 Watertrough Road, Clearlake Oaks (APN: 628-120-04).

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Site Plans, Elevations
2. Draft Conditions of Approval
3. Agency Comments
4. Public Comments

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

Project Summary

Consideration of proposed Major Use Permit and Categorical Exemption (PL-25-15), for The Derna Group, for an existing 35-foot-tall lattice style wireless communication tower with existing equipment as tall as 55 feet. The proposed equipment is being requested to be installed below the 35-foot height of the lattice tower within the leased area containing a 35-foot by 40-foot support equipment building. The project site is enclosed by an approximately 8-foot-tall chain-link fence. Construction is expected to last up to three months, occurring Monday through Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The proposed project involves co-locating wireless communication equipment and includes necessary site work to establish equipment as outlined in the provided plans, re-establish PG&E power, and improve the building to support operations. This project minimizes environmental impacts by utilizing an existing structure, thereby avoiding the need for a new tower in a previously undisturbed location. Approval of this Major Use Permit will allow the facility to operate as a wireless communication hub, improving cellular service to address coverage gaps between Clearlake Oaks and Williams.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Title: The Derna Group

Project Numbers: PL-25-15

Applicant Information The Derna Group / Attn: Rachel Bruin
22431 Antonio Parkway, Suite B160-234
Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688

Property Owner: Reimer George Gary & Meidel Martina Trust

Project Location: 1135 Watertrough Road, Clearlake Oaks

Parcel Number: 628-120-04

<u>Parcel Size:</u>	2.01 acres
<u>General Plan:</u>	Rural Lands RL
<u>Zoning:</u>	"RL", Rural Lands
<u>Flood Zone:</u>	D - Not located in a mapped flood plain
<u>Fire Protection:</u>	Northshore Fire Protection District
<u>Soli Stability:</u>	Severe erosion
<u>Fire Severity:</u>	High Fire Hazard Severity Zone

Project details:

Energy Usage

The tower's energy demand will be minimal and will rely on PG&E power. Following reconnection to PG&E, there are no anticipated power grid capacity issues at this location.

Solid Waste

The un-manned wireless communication facility will generate negligible solid waste during operation. Approximately 200 to 300 pounds of waste is expected during site development, which can easily be accommodated by South Lake Disposal (land fill), which is not near capacity.

Wastewater

The wireless communication facility is unmanned; no septic systems are required or proposed.

Stormwater

The site is located on a hilltop. The approximate 114-foot x 94-foot fenced area (approximately 10,716 square feet(sf)) encloses a 35-foot x 40-foot building (1,400 sf) that is too small to generate significant runoff, and no stormwater mitigation measures are necessary.

Water Usage

The tower is unmanned and does not require water for operations.

PROJECT SETTING

The sizes, zones, and status of neighboring properties are as follows:

- North: "RL-WW", Rural Lands – Waterway; the parcels are undeveloped.
- East: "RL", Rural Lands; parcels are undeveloped.
- West: "RL", Rural Lands; parcels are undeveloped.
- South: "RL-WW", Rural Lands – Waterway; parcels are undeveloped.

II. PROJECT ANALYSIS

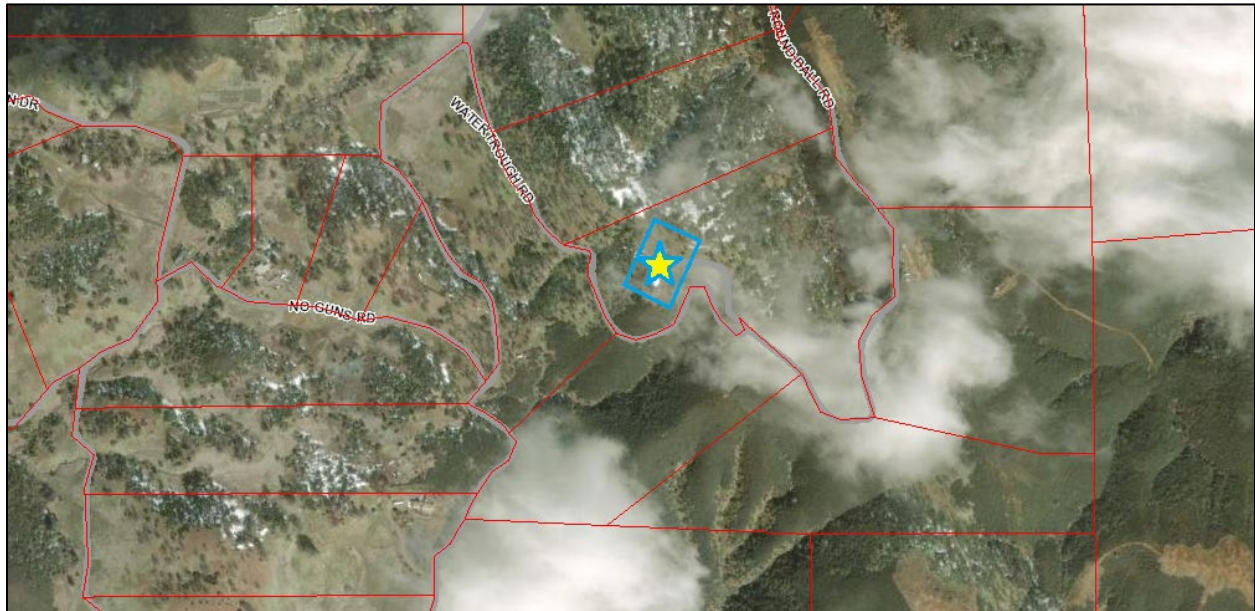
General Plan Conformity

The Lake County General Plan land use designation for the subject site is Rural Lands. This Lake County General Plan designation allows cell towers with a major use permit; according to Article 27, Table B of the Zoning Ordinance. The Rural Lands land use designation is intended for larger lots as a resource retention area; the proposed project will occupy approximately 10,716 sf of area and will use existing facilities.

Chapter 3 - Land Use

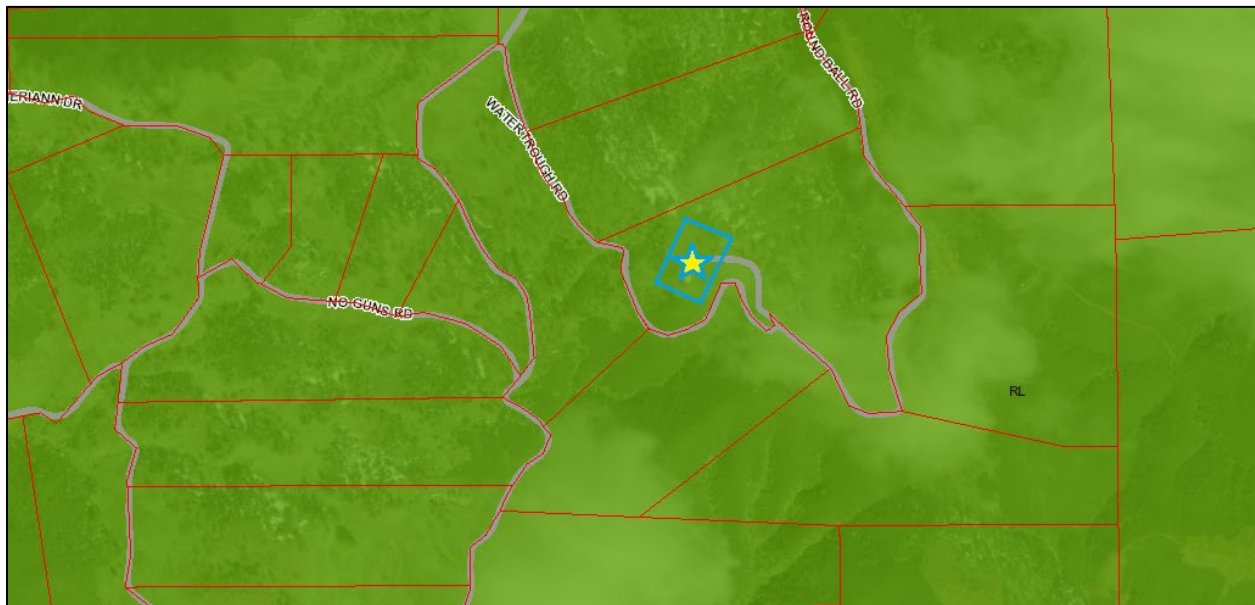
- Goal LU-2: To clearly differentiate between areas within Lake County appropriate for higher intensity urban services and land uses from areas where rural or resource use should be emphasized.

FIGURE 1 – AERIAL PHOTO OF LOT AND SURROUNDING AREA



Source: Lake County GIS Mapping 2024

FIGURE 2 – ZONING OF SITE AND VICINITY



Source: Lake County GIS Mapping 2024

- Policy LU-1.3 Prevent Incompatible Uses: The County shall prevent the intrusion of new incompatible land uses into existing community areas.

Response: The wireless communication facility is conditionally permitted use in the Rural Lands zoning district; therefore, a variety of characteristics are evaluated in these Staff Reports, with an emphasis on permitted use. With a few full-time residents in the Double Eagle subdivision that also uses Watertrough Road to access their homes, there has been consideration of intrusion on these residents and the road that they may jointly use. Watertrough Road is a mixed, deteriorated asphalt and dirt road off State Highway 20. Watertrough Road is approximately two and a half miles in length to the access gate for this tower, which borders the Double Eagle Ranch without being included in the community and its CCR's. According to the deeded legal description, "A 100' Non-exclusive Access Easement (is) shown on the Lake County Assessors Plat of Double Eagle Ranch..." leads to "A 20' Existing Road Easement shown on the Lake County Assessors Plat of Double Eagle..." showing that the applicants lease does allow them access to the property, even when it borders the Double Eagle Ranch community, as a utility easement, but the applicants would not be responsible for maintaining any portion that is not on their property, as a utility, so this will lead to the Double Eagle Ranch community remaining responsible for their road. The easements aside, there are no other active cellular towers in this valley and for this applicant to resurrect and update this existing, nearly abandoned tower may open the cellular connections and opportunities for communications in emergency situations for the residents of Double Eagle Ranch among the many people traveling the highway each year. Similarly, the facility is not new and the updated technology being installed on this tower and all maintenance may impact the road, but the facility exists already and should be an incredible asset to the southern portions of Clearlake Oaks, potentially to the Lake County Line and beyond and this Major Use Permit will allow for the colocation of other supporting companies.

- Goal LU-4: To maintain economic vitality and promote the development of commercial uses that are compatible with surrounding land uses and meet the present and future needs of Lake County residents, the regional community, and visitors.
- Goal LU-5: To designate adequate land for, and promote development of, industrial uses to meet the present and future needs of Lake County residents for jobs and to maintain economic vitality.

Response: The site is zoned "RL", Rural Lands. Wireless communication facilities are permitted use in this zone per Article 27, Table B, with an approved major use permit. The wireless communication facility will improve cell coverage in the Clearlake Oaks area.

- Policy LU-5.4 Compatibility with Surrounding Land Use: The County shall ensure that appropriate industrial/heavy commercial sites will not result in significant harmful impacts to adjacent land uses. In addition, sites should be designed to prevent the intrusion of incompatible Land Use uses into industrial areas. Infilling existing industrial areas is highly desirable where feasible.

Response: The site and surrounding area are comprised of large, mostly undeveloped lots. The proposed wireless communication facility involves modification to the existing tower and facility to accommodate current and future co-location purposes. The tower site is located on a flat portion of a relatively steep lot, with no water courses or riparian areas in close proximity.

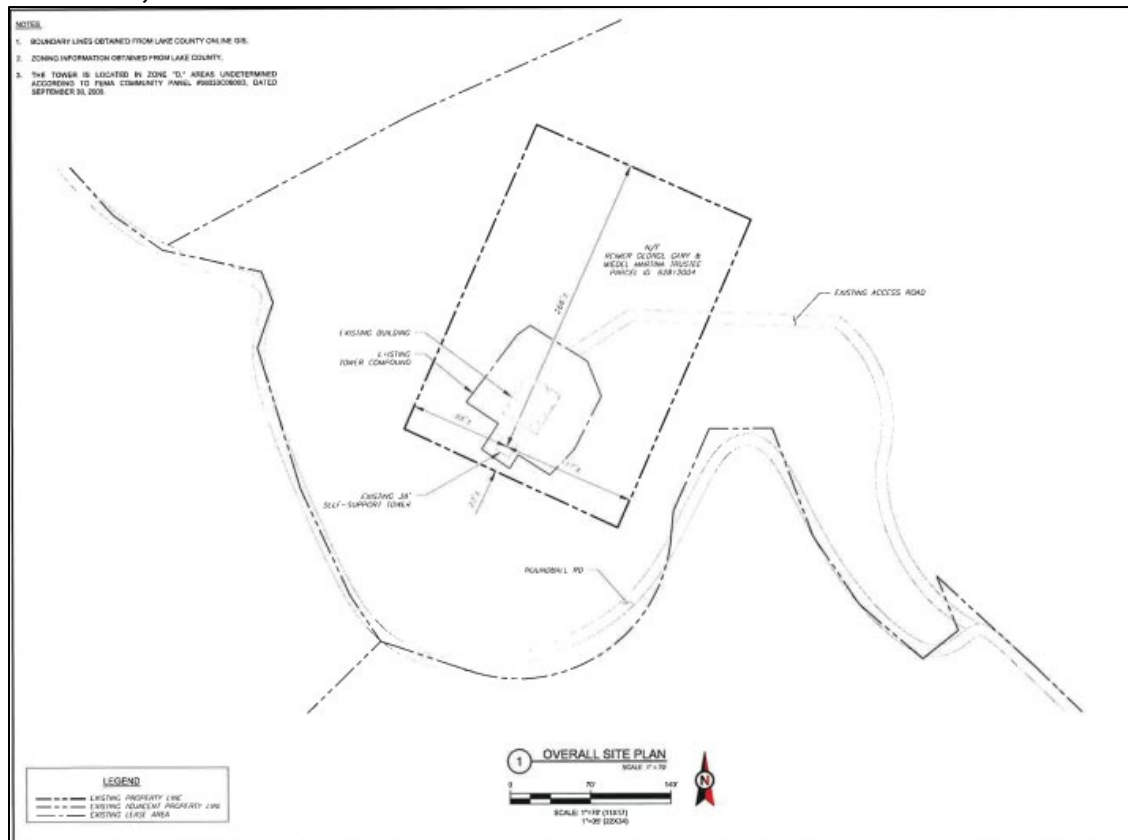
Chapter 5 – Public Facilities and Services

- Goal PFS-7: To expand the use of information technology in order to increase the County's economic competitiveness, develop a more informed citizenry, and improve personal convenience for residents and businesses in the County.

- Policy PFS-7.1 Telecommunications Services: The County shall work with telecommunication providers to ensure that all residents and businesses will have access to telecommunications services, including broadband internet service. To maximize access to inexpensive telecommunications services, the County shall encourage marketplace competition from multiple service providers.
- Policy PFS-7.3 Siting of Telecommunications Infrastructure: To minimize the visual impact of wireless communications facilities, the County shall encourage the siting of telecommunications infrastructure to meet the following conditions:
 - Located away from residential and open space areas;
 - When possible, are located on existing buildings, existing poles, or other existing support structures; and,
 - Painted, camouflaged, textured, or otherwise designed to better integrate into existing conditions adjacent to the installation site.

Response: The wireless communication facility is located in a rural portion of Clearlake Oaks, on a hilltop surrounded by large, mostly vacant lands.

FIGURE 3, 4 – SITE PLAN



Response: The proposed site is an old Microwave Tower from the 1960's. The site has been updated in more recent years to accommodate two different unknown satellite dishes and more recently accommodating fire watch cameras. The property access easement has been improved by PG&E along the utility easement, from the access gate to the site with a gravel road that meets the current development standards at approximately 20 feet in width. These improvements to the driveway enable emergency service vehicles to more easily navigate the site in the event of an emergency, such as wildfire.

- Policy 4.3.1c Require that locked gates on private roads be accessible to emergency personnel.
- Policy 4.3.1c The County shall establish emergency management plans for the planning area and encourage a program of collection and dissemination of basic data concerning natural hazards and emergency management plans.

Response: The communications tower will increase connectivity for both the public and emergency responders, daily and in times of emergency. The driveway improvements stated above enable emergency service providers to access the property. Any locked gates must have Knox-boxes installed to the specifications of the Northshore Fire Protection.

- Objective 5.4.5 Ensure the orderly development of communication and energy systems in order to increase economic competitiveness, keep the public informed, and improve personal convenience for both residences and businesses.
 - Policy 5.4.5a Provide reliable and cost-effective telecommunications services within the planning area.

Response: The proposed tower will enhance cell phone coverage in the Clearlake Oaks area and nearby regions. The lattice tower design allows multiple carriers to potentially utilize this tower. Currently, there is equipment from two other providers located on the tower, with one identified as California Cellular and the other yet to be determined.

Zoning Ordinance Conformance

The site is zoned "RL", Rural Land; therefore, the Articles addressing each zoning districts potentially apply to this application review.

Article 7 – "RL" Rural Lands Zoning District

Wireless communication facilities are a permitted use in the "RL" Rural Lands Zoning District upon issuance of a Major Use Permit pursuant to Article 27, Table B of the Lake County Zoning Ordinance. The applicant is under review for a major use permit with this application. Article 7 also requires that projects be reviewed under applicable portions of Article 41, "Performance Standards."

Article 27 - Use Permits

The purpose of Article 27 is for those uses possessing characteristics of unique and special form that make their use acceptable upon the issuance of a major use permit in addition to any required building or other permits. Table B in Article 27 lists Wireless Communication Facilities, New or Replacement as a conditionally permitted use in the "RL" zoning district. Subsection (ar) states *Wireless Communication Facilities, New or Replacement: Refer to Section 71.7 of the Zoning Ordinance*. Findings for approval of the Major Use Permit are listed in Article 51.4 (and discussed later in this staff report).

Article 41, Performance Standards. The project complies with all applicable performance standards included in Article 41 related to air quality, erosion control, electromagnetic interference, fire and explosion hazards, glare and heat, landscaping, noise, vibration, etc. intended to reduce hazards to the public and environment.

Article 71, Regulations for the Placement of Communications Towers and Antennae

Section 71.3, General Regulations

- a) *Wireless communication facilities shall comply with all applicable goals, objectives and policies of the general plan, area plans, zoning regulations and development standards.*

This report evaluates consistency with all applicable plans, goals, objectives, policies, standards, and criteria associated with wireless communication facilities in the “RL” Rural Lands zoning district.

- b) *Wireless communication facilities shall comply with all Federal Communications Commission “FCC” rules, regulations, and standards.*

Wireless communication facilities are partially regulated by the FCC; the applicant has the burden of assuring compliance with all Federal and local regulations. The applicant is not proposing to host equipment at the height greater than the current equipment, which is situated on top of the 38-foot-tall tower and extends up to 55 feet above the ground without interference.

- c) *Wireless communication facilities shall comply with all applicable criteria from the Lake County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUP) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).*

The County’s Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan primarily relates to Lampson Field; a public airport located about 22 miles from the project site. The wireless communication facility would not conflict with the ALUP given its location in Clearlake Oaks.

- d) *Wireless communication facilities shall be sited in the least visually obtrusive location possible as determined by the Community Development Director. Facility towers, antennas, buildings and other structures and equipment visible from adjacent residences or public vantage points, shall be designed, located, constructed, painted, screened, fenced, landscaped or otherwise architecturally treated to minimize their appearance and visually blend with the surroundings.*

The wireless communication facility site is located in a remote property above the community of Double Eagle Ranch, in Clearlake Oaks. The tower is located in a facility that was established over 50 years ago as a microwave station, for communications. This site is not new and shall not be more intrusive than the existing equipment.

- e) *Where a wireless communication facility exists on the proposed site location, collocation shall be pursued to the maximum extent feasible. If a co-location agreement cannot be reached, documentation of the effort and the reasons why co-location was not possible shall be submitted and reviewed by the Director of Community Development.*

The applicant has met these requirements as there are no other tower locations in the area to co-locate on and the applicant originally was understanding that they would be co-locating until the site was determined to be mostly abandoned.

- f) Other regulations enacted pursuant to the General Plan and Area Plans, may be applied to the proposed wireless communication facility, depending on the location and type of facility.*

All applicable local regulations are evaluated in this report for compliance.

- g) Antennas and antenna towers shall be inspected, following significant storm or seismic events, by a structural engineer licensed in the state of California to assess their structural integrity, and a report of the engineer of the engineer's findings shall be submitted to the Community Development Department. Costs of inspection and reporting shall be borne by the permit holder.*

This will be added as a condition of approval, along with a requirement for the applicant paying an inspection fee to cover staff time for non-building permit-related inspections.

71.8 General Development Standards for all Wireless Telecommunication Facilities: (a) Site Location:

- 1. Facility towers, antennas, buildings and other structures and equipment visible from adjacent residences or public vantage points, shall be designed, located, constructed, painted, screened, fenced, landscaped or otherwise architecturally treated to minimize their appearance and visually blend with the surroundings.*

The tower and site are approximately 50 years old, and this requirement was not in place to be enforced. The facility is approximately 1,490 feet from the closest residence to the Southwest. There is a residence approximately 1,800 feet to the West and another 1,900 feet to the South.

- 2. Co-location is required when feasible and when it minimizes adverse effects related to land use compatibility, visual resources, public safety and other environmental factors. Co-location is not required when it creates or increases such effects and/or technical evidence demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director that it is not feasible due to physical, spatial, or technological limitations. Fiscal constraints or competitive conflicts are not considered justifiable reason for not co-locating a new facility where opportunity for co-location exists.*

As stated above, this is the only tower available in the area, so others will be encouraged to co-locate on this tower after once the permit is approval.

- 3. Wireless communication facilities shall not be sited in a way which will create visual clutter or negatively affect view from communities, highways and major collector roads, from Clear Lake or from highly used public areas, such as but not limited to parks and resorts.*

The existing facility is located on top of a hilltop above the Double Eagle Ranch community North of State Highway 20. The existing lattice tower will not be extended in height or width to further impact visual clutter.

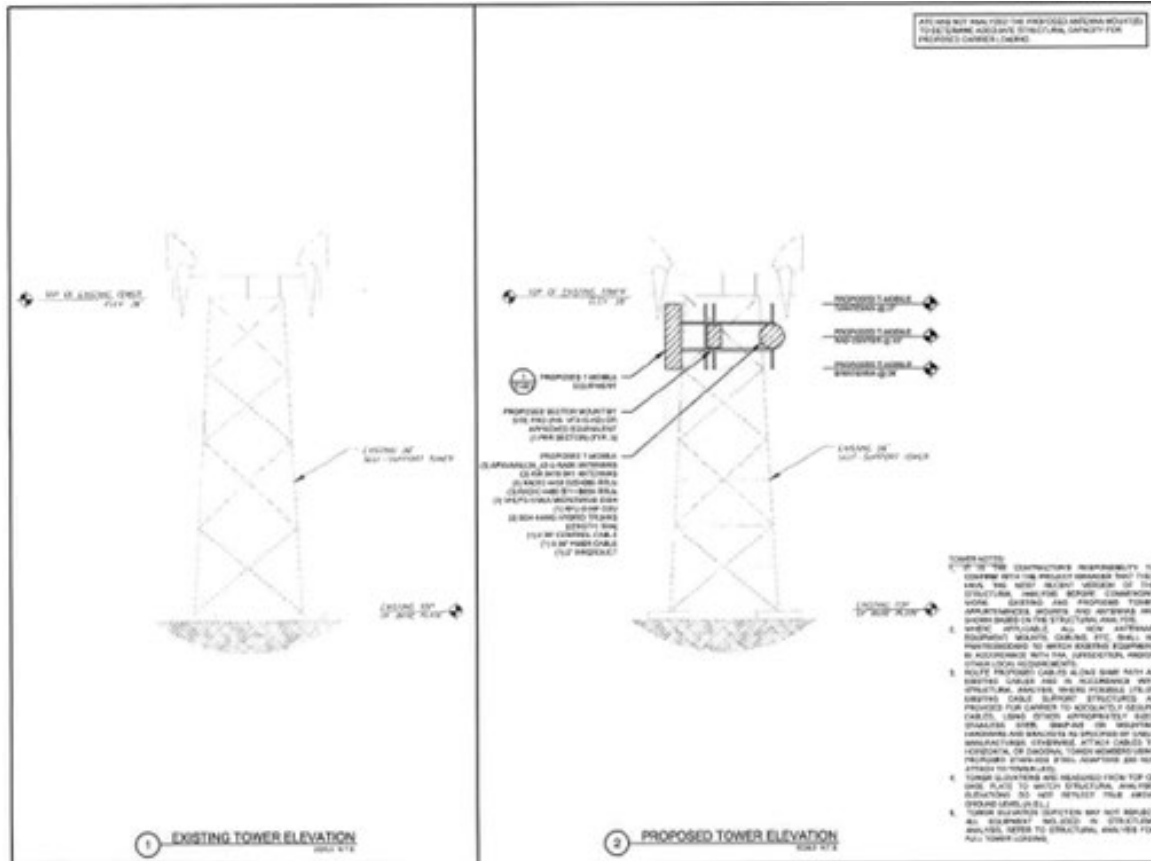
- 4. New communication facilities shall be discouraged on ridge top sites where they will be silhouetted against the sky from communities, highways and major collector roads or from highly used public areas, such as but not limited to parks and resorts.*

The facility is approximately 50 years old, and the site is not zoned 'Scenic Combining'.

- 5. Wireless communications facilities shall be screened from any public viewing areas to the maximum extent feasible.*

The existing site is located on a hilltop and viewable from State Highway 20, but it has been there for approximately 50 years, and the proposed equipment is not proposed to exceed the height of the existing tower as seen in the elevations (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5 - ELEVATION



Source: Material Submitted by Applicant

6. Disturbance of existing topography and on-site vegetation shall be minimized, unless such disturbance would substantially reduce the visual impacts of the facility.

Complies: The facility exists already, and the immediate access road has already been improved, so there is no proposed further disturbance to the site.

7. Any exterior lighting, except as required for FAA regulations for airport safety, shall be manually operated and used only during night maintenance checks or in emergencies. The lighting shall be constructed or located so that only the intended area is illuminated, and off-site glare is fully controlled.

All lighting for the sight shall be downcast and height increase has been requested to require lighting per the FAA regulations.

8. No telecommunication facility shall be installed at a location where special painting or lighting will be required by the FAA regulations unless the applicant has demonstrated to the Director of Community Development that the proposed location is the most feasible location for the provision of services as required by the FCC

The project site is not located in an area that might require special painting or lighting.

9. No telecommunication facility shall be installed within the safety zone of any airport within Lake County unless the airport owner/operator indicates that it will not adversely affect the operation of the airport, and the proposal is reviewed and approved by the Airport Land Use Commission.

The project site is located about 22 miles from Lampson Field, the nearest airport.

10. No telecommunication facility shall be located in an environmentally sensitive habitat, such as but not limited to, wetlands, vernal pools, or special study areas containing rare and endangered plants and animals.

The facility has been established atop the hill for approximately 50 years, and no environmentally sensitive habitats shall be impacted. Furthermore, any future construction is proposed to occur above the ground, on the existing tower, or inside the existing building, which was previously used for a similar purpose. The footprint of this facility is not proposed to change, and this applicant has provided plans that show their intentions with updating the technology.

11. In instances where the wireless telecommunication facility is located near or in a residential area or located within a Community Growth Boundary or within one mile of said Boundary, photos shall be submitted of the proposed facility from the nearest residential neighbors. In instances where the wireless communication facility would be visible from a State Highway or County Collector or Arterial Road or from Clear Lake a detailed visual analysis of the facility shall be submitted.

The site is located in a remote portion of land above the Double Eagle Ranch community, outside of any Community Growth Boundary. The site is within approximately three miles from the highway; however, approximately seven homes may be seen from the site, the overall impact of the tower will be minimal as seen from Double Eagle.

12. Anti-climb devices or fencing and safety signage shall be installed to prevent unauthorized access to equipment.

An eight-foot-tall chain-link screening fence already exists at the site. The lattice tower is surrounded by another eight-foot-tall fence. The wireless communication facility lattice tower is protected by no-climb guards over the ladders. The location of the tower on a hilltop with gated / locked access road making the wireless communication facility difficult to access.

13. Access shall be provided to the communications tower and communications equipment building by means of a public street or easement to a public street. The easement shall be a minimum of 20 feet in width and shall be improved to a width of at least 10 feet with a dust-free, all-weather surface for its entire length.

The site is accessed by Watertrough Road, a road that connects to a private deeded access point that has previously been widened and graveled to approximately 20 feet wide and widened further at the tower site to allow easy turnaround. The applicant is not proposing further improvements to the driveway. From the deeds legal description, there is "A 100' Non-exclusive Access Easement (is) shown on the Lake County Assessors Plat of Double Eagle Ranch..." leads to "A 20' Existing Road Easement shown on the Lake County Assessors Plat of Double Eagle..." showing that the applicants lease does allow them access to the property, even when it borders the Double Eagle Ranch community, as a utility easement, but the applicants would not be responsible for maintaining any portion that is not on their property, as a utility, so this will lead to the Double Eagle Ranch community remaining responsible for Watertrough Road.

14. A communications tower may be located on a lot occupied by other principal structures and may occupy a leased parcel within a lot which meets the minimum lot size requirement for the Zoning District.

The property contains the communications facility on its own.

15. A subdivision pursuant to the State Subdivision Map Act shall not be required for a lease parcel on which a communications tower is proposed to be constructed, provided the communications equipment building is unmanned.

Complies: The wireless communication facility and its support equipment area will be unmanned.

16. The maximum height of any communications tower shall be 150 feet.

Complies: The wireless communication facility is 55 feet in height with the current equipment. The lattice tower is 38 feet in height, and the proposed equipment is proposed to not exceed 35 feet. The proposed equipment was designed to be installed below the existing Microwave antennas.

17. The foundation and base of any communications tower shall be setback from a property line (not lease line) located in any Residential District at least 100 feet and shall be set back from any other property line (not lease line) at least 50 feet.

The existing communication facility is set back to approximately 20 feet from the property lines, and the proposed equipment is not proposed to exceed this setback.

18. Existing trees and other vegetation which will provide screening for the proposed facility and associated access roads shall be protected from damage during construction. Additional landscaping or visual screening shall be installed and maintained where it would mitigate visual impacts of a communication facility. Introduced vegetation shall be native, drought-tolerant species compatible with the predominant natural setting of the project area and shall be maintained throughout the life of the project. Communication facility sites, whether leased or purchased, shall be of sufficient size to include vegetative screening if landscaping would provide a useful reduction to visual impacts. No trees that provide visual screening of the communication facility shall be removed except to comply with fire safety regulations or to eliminate safety hazards. Tree trimming shall be limited to the minimum necessary for operation of the facility. 19. The communications equipment building shall comply with the required yards and height requirements of the applicable zoning district for an accessory structure.

The facility is existing atop the hill, but the proposed use will not be more intrusive visually. No landscaping or vegetation has been proposed to make this facility ready for co-location, the property has already been covered in gravel.

19. The communications equipment building shall comply with the required yards and height requirements of the applicable zoning district for an accessory structure.

Although the facility has existed for approximately 50 years, the building is in compliance with the applicable zoning at approximately 50 feet from the nearest property line and 20 feet in height.

(b) Design Review and Frequency Emission Compliance

1. Towers and monopoles shall be constructed of metal or other non-flammable material, unless specifically conditioned by the County to be otherwise.

Complies: The base of the wireless communication facility is made of metal.

2. Support facilities (i.e., vaults, equipment rooms, utilities and equipment enclosures) shall be constructed of non-flammable, no-reflective materials and shall not exceed a height of twenty (20) feet.

Complies: The existing concrete equipment building, within the eight-foot tall, fenced enclosure, is 20 feet tall.

3. All ancillary buildings, poles, towers, antenna supports, antennas, and other components or telecommunication facilities shall be of a color or combination of colors approved by the Appropriate Authority. If the facility is conditioned to require paint, it shall initially be painted with a flat paint color approved by the Appropriate Authority and thereafter repainted as necessary with a flat paint color. Components of the telecommunication facility which will be viewed against soils, trees, or grasslands shall be of a color matching these landscapes.

This is consistent as the existing tower and existing building are both of a gray color and blend with the sky well.

4. A visual simulation of the wireless telecommunication facility shall be provided. Visual simulation shall consist of either a physical mock-up of the facility, a balloon simulation with a balloon tethered at the height of the proposed tower and of a diameter matching the maximum width of the proposed antenna, a computer simulation or other reasonable and comparable means.

The facility already exists, and no height modifications are proposed.

5. Special design of the wireless telecommunication facilities may be required to mitigate potentially significant adverse visual impacts.

The facility already exists, and the applicant would like to occupy what is already in existence.

6. All guy wires associated with guyed communications towers shall be clearly marked so as to be visible at all times and shall be located within a fenced enclosure.

No guy wires are shown on the drawings submitted.

7. The site of a communications tower shall be secured by a fence with a maximum height of 8 feet to limit accessibility by the general public.

Complies: The proposed fence is 8-foot tall and gated / locked.

8. No signs or lights shall be mounted on a communications tower, except as may be required by the Federal Communications Commission, Federal Aviation Administration or other governmental agency that has jurisdiction.

Complies: No lighting is proposed. A top light may be required by the FAA; if required, this is a federal requirement that is beyond the control of the County.

9. Communications Towers shall be protected and maintained in accordance with the requirements of the County's Building Code.

The tower has already been established for approximately 50 years, and all proposed equipment will be subject to a building permit that will be inspected upon approval.

10. One off street parking space shall be provided within the fenced area.

The site plans submitted show adequate area for a vehicle to park on site.

11. Written documentation shall be submitted to the Community Development Department annually by permit holders, prepared by Radio Frequency Engineers or other qualified professionals, that verify compliance with FCC regulations if any change in facility conditions justify said documentation. Written affirmation shall be submitted to the Community Development Department annually by permit holders that verifies continuing compliance with FCC regulations.

Complies: The material submitted was prepared by American Tower who specialize in designing cellphone towers and telecommunication facilities.

FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL

The Review Authority shall only approve or conditionally approve a Major Use Permit (LCZO Section 51.4, Major Use Permits) if all of the following findings are made:

- 1. That the establishment, maintenance, or operation of the use applied for will not, under the circumstances of the particular case, be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort, and general welfare of the persons residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use or be detrimental to property and improvements in the neighborhood or the general welfare of the County.*

The use of the site for a wireless communication facility is permitted by Article 27, Table B, subject to review and approval of a major use permit and development review. The immediate area is characterized by larger, undeveloped lots to the north, east and south, and by substandard subdivision lots to the south, which are likely to remain undeveloped due to the remoteness and larger sizes.

- 2. That the site for the project is adequate in size, shape, location, and physical characteristics to accommodate the type of use and level of development proposed.*

The communications facility has been in place for approximately 50 years and the proposed co-location of cellular equipment does not require a large infrastructure.

- 3. That the streets, highways, and pedestrian facilities are reasonably adequate to safely accommodate the specific proposed use.*

The site is accessed via Watertrough Road, a private asphalt and dirt road, which then proceeds through a gated entry that has been widened and graveled to comply with California Public Resource 4290 regulations, measuring approximately 20 feet in width. The total distance to the tower location is approximately three miles.

- 4. There are adequate public or private services, including but not limited to fire protection, water supply, sewage disposal, and police protection to serve the project.*

The only public service needed for this unmanned wireless communication facility is power. The site is served by PG&E on-grid power, and wireless communication facilities generally do not use significant amounts of power to operate.

The application was routed to all affected public and private service providers, including Public Works, Environmental Health, Cal Fire, Building Division and PG&E. All agency comments are provided below in the Agency Comments section. No adverse comments were received.

1. *That the project is in conformance with the applicable provisions and policies of this Code, the General Plan and any approved zoning or land use plan.*

The project was evaluated against Chapters 3 and 5 of the General Plan, the Shoreline Communities Area Plan, and various articles within the Lake County Zoning Ordinance. This report identifies compliance within each of the respective documents required for the review of this wireless communication facility.

5. *That no violation of Chapters 5, 17, 21, 23 or 26 of the Lake County Code currently exists on the property, unless the purpose of the permit is to correct the violation, or the permit relates to a portion of the property which is sufficiently separate and apart from the portion of the property in violation so as not to be affected by the violation from a public health, safety or general welfare basis.*

There are no documented violations of Chapters 5, 17, 21, 23 or 26 of the Lake County Code on the subject property.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires agencies to evaluate the environmental implications of land use actions. CEQA sections 15301(b)(d) and 15302 (c) allow for a Categorical Exemption, Class 1, when the facility is pre-existing, involving negligible or no expansion of use and Class 2, when replacing or reconstructing an existing facility for modern needs.

15301. EXISTING FACILITIES

Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. The type of “existing facilities” itemized below are not intended to be all-inclusive of the types of projects which might fall within Class 1. The key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of use. Examples of this exemption include, but are not limited to:

(b) Existing facilities of both investor and publicly owned utilities used to provide electric power, natural gas, sewerage, or other public utility services.

The proposed use is for the co-location of up to three cellular companies to occupy this tower facility, which was originally designed for microwave communications and currently being used as a fire watch camera location. The cellular facility is intended to improve service in the existing coverage gap between Clearlake Oaks and Williams, providing customers with better service.

(d) Restoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated or damaged structures, facilities, or mechanical equipment to meet current standards of public health and safety, unless it is determined that the damage was substantial and resulted from an environmental hazard such as earthquake, landslide, or flood.

The existing facility has not been commercially used for some time, so approving this Major Use Permit for cellular companies to occupy the facility will eliminate the need to develop a

new site for the same purpose of establishing a cellular utility. The facility currently includes a tower and building to support the operation of the equipment once installed.

15302. REPLACEMENT OR RECONSTRUCTION

Class 2 consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structures will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced, including but not limited to:

(c) Replacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity.

Due to the existing facility, minimal reconstruction will be required to bring the tower and operations building back into service and update the equipment to current standards.

Tribal Comments

A consultation notice ("AB 52" Notice) was sent to all 11 area tribes on September 19, 2024, as a courtesy to the local Tribal Nations, to bring awareness to the proposed development of this parcel. Notified tribes included Big Valley Rancheria, Cortina Rancheria, Elem Colony, Hopland Band of Pomo, Koi Nation, Mishewal-Wappo, Middletown Rancheria, Redwood Valley, Robinson Rancheria, Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians, Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake Tribe, and the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation. On October 28, 2024, the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation requested consultation, and Consultation ended on January 8, 2025. There were no adverse comments by the tribe, but they did verify the Conditions of Approval, section Cultural (Attachment 2).

Agency Comments

Staff received comments from the following agencies:

1. Lake County Community Development Department - Building Safety Division
2. Lake County Health Services – Environmental Health
3. Lake County Public Works – Surveyor
4. Pacific Gas and Electric Company

Comments requiring applicant actions were received from the local agencies and their comments have been included in the Draft Conditions of Approval.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission take the following actions:

A. Adopt Categorical Exemption (PL-25-15) with the following findings:

1. This project will not result in significant environmental impacts as the proposed use involves existing buildings that have historically been used for communications, and no new development is proposed.
2. Any changes to the project will require either an amended Use Permit and/or a new Use Permit unless the Community Development Director determines that any changes have no potential increased environmental impacts.

B. Approve Major Use Permit (PL-25-15) with the following findings:

1. That the establishment, maintenance, or operation of the use applied for with the change to the license type described herein will not under the circumstances of the particular case, be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the persons residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use, or be detrimental to property and improvements in the neighborhood or the general welfare of the County.
2. The site is adequate in size, shape, locations, and physical characteristics to accommodate the type of use and level of development proposed.
3. The streets, highways and pedestrian facilities can be mitigated to be reasonably adequate to safely accommodate the proposed use.
4. There are adequate public or private services, including but not limited to fire protection, water supply, sewage disposal, and police protection to serve the project.
5. That the project is in conformance with the applicable provisions and policies of this Code, the General Plan and the Shoreline Area Plan.
6. That no violation of Chapters 5, 17, 21, 23 or 26 of the Lake County Code currently exists on the property.

Sample Motions:

Categorical Exemption

I move that the Planning Commission find that the Categorical Exemption (PL-25-15) applied for by The Derna Group on property located at 1135 Watertrough Road, Clearlake Oaks (APN: 628-120-04), will not have a significant effect on the environment and therefore a categorical exemption shall be approved with the findings listed in the staff report dated November 17, 2025.

Major Use Permit (PL-25-15)

I move that the Planning Commission approve Major Use Permit (PL-25-15) for The Derna Group on property located at 1135 Watertrough Road, Clearlake Oaks (APN: 628-120-04) based on the findings and subject to the conditions in the Staff Report dated November 17, 2025.

NOTE: *The applicant or any interested person is reminded that the Zoning Ordinance provides for a seven (7) calendar day appeal period. If there is a disagreement with the Planning Commission's decision, an appeal to the Board of Supervisors may be filed. The appropriate forms and applicable fee must be submitted prior to 5:00 p.m. on or before the seventh calendar day following the Planning Commission's final determination.*