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Exploratory Study for Indoor Turf Field Facilities on the North Coast

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INTRODUCTION

This study was chosen out of personal experience growing up in Humboldt County where organized sports and outdoor recreation activities either come to a halt or increase risk of injury during poor weather conditions, which on average, occurs at least 114 days per year. My experience led to an interest in seeking out solutions for underserved communities in the Humboldt and Del Norte counties. These counties have some of the highest percentages of people living in poverty in California. Humboldt County is ranked 8th at 20.3% and Del Norte is 7th with 20.4%. For comparison, Mendocino County is 17.5%, Sonoma county is 9.9.%, and Marin at 6.6% (IndexMundi, 2023).

This study aims to look at options for providing more access to year-round recreation space for our community. Recreation space that is not limited to a specific organization or team, but available to the whole community. By talking to local individuals involved in recreational facilities development and maintenance, the hope of this study is to raise awareness of the need for such a space.

This study explored whether there is a need for an enclosed turf field sports facility and if community members believe it is a feasible plan for both counties.

METHODS

Four participants were interviewed either via Zoom platform or phone call. Each participant answered a seven open ended questions. Participants were selected from multiple city recreation departments and local sports leagues for their knowledge of sports and recreational facilities in the Humboldt and Del Norte counties.

Questions

1. What is your role in relation to sports and recreation facilities?
2. In your experience have you been made aware, by the community, of a need for a facility that is indoor, turf, and accessible year-round?
3. Are you aware of any plans to build an indoor turf field or similar facility, and if so, what are they?
4. Would you be aware of what the barriers are to constructing and running these facilities on the North Coast?
5. Based on your knowledge, what do you think it would take to create a facility?
6. What location in Humboldt and/or Del Norte county(s) might be most feasible to house an indoor turf field facility?
7. Do you believe that there is a preexisting company, organization, or government agency on the North Coast that would be best equipped to build and maintain such a facility? Do you think it would require a new group to form, specifically for this purpose?

FINDINGS

Most participants reported a need in this community for an enclosed turf facility. Participants believed that a lack of finances and land were the main barriers to establishing a facility. Over half of the interviewed participants said that for such a facility to be successful, it would require a dedicated, passionate, and caring group of individuals.

Interview Highlights & Common Themes	
1.	League President, Facility Manager, Sports Director, Parks & Rec Supervisor, Coach
2.	$\frac{3}{4}$ Yes need new facility. High school, college, sports, wet fields, hazardous conditions, injuries, $\frac{1}{4}$ No need for new facility. Summer/Fall youth sports not needed.
3.	4/4 No plans to build, Bear River outdoor has turf field, Eureka has plans of outdoor turf at Cooper Gulch
4.	Lack of land/space, expensive, no funding, high construction cost, maintenance costs, environmental regulations
5.	Funding partnership, Humboldt Area Foundation, proper turf & drainage, grants, buildable property, Danco Group construction, facility rental agreements, consistent income, dedicated caring staff
6.	Cooper Gulch, Cal Poly Humboldt, Bear River Rancheria, Old Scotia Mill lot in Fortuna, College of the Redwoods, Old Kmart property
7.	Mix of new and existing organizations, Cal Poly Humboldt, College of the Redwoods Bear River Recreation, City Parks & Rec Departments

DISCUSSION

Benefits of this Study:

- Support a future facility that houses sports, brings individuals together, and drives social justice
- Create more equitable athletic opportunities for disadvantaged members of Humboldt and Del Norte counties.

Challenges of this study:

- Out of the 10 individuals contacted only 4 agreed to participate in study.
- Unable to contact and interview a bigger sample due to time constraints.

Recommendations:

- A larger participant study is recommended for future research.
- Future studies should include participants from Del Norte
- Future research should include more participants from Del Norte, Fortuna, Orick, and Scotia areas.
- A variety of perspective from different occupations and ages in sport may improve diversity of data gathered.

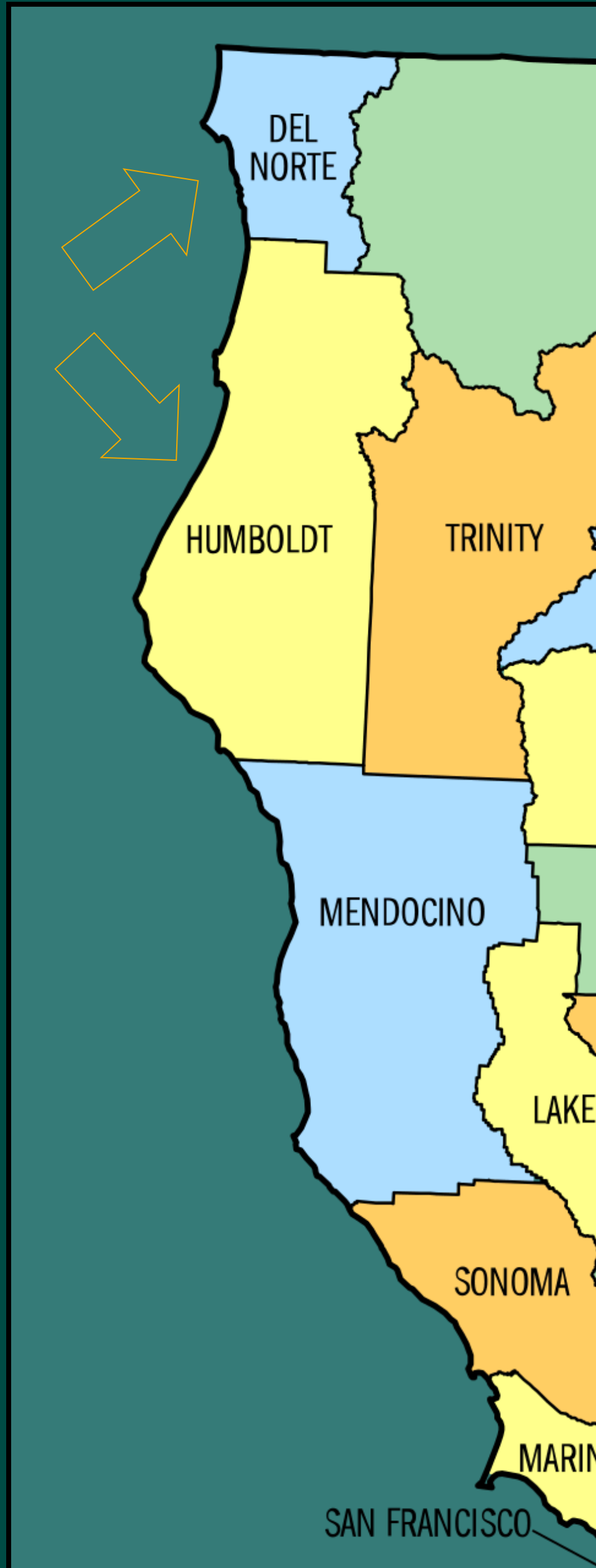


Figure 1 Above. Interior of a fully enclosed indoor turf facility.
Credits: City of Brooklyn Park Sports Dome

Figure 2 On Left. Outside of a fully enclosed indoor turf facility.
Credits: City of Brooklyn Park Sports Dome