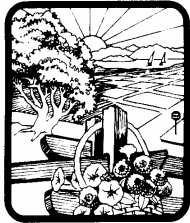




Friends
of the
Santa Clara
River

660 Randy Drive
Newbury Park, CA 91320
(805) 498-4323



SCOPE
Santa Clarita
Organization for
Planning and the
Environment

TO PROMOTE, PROTECT
AND PRESERVE THE
ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY
AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN
THE SANTA CLARITA
VALLEY

POST OFFICE
BOX 1182,
SANTA CLARITA, CA
91386

Homeowners
for
Neighborhood
Preservation

Canyon Country, CA
91387

May 13th, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Court Rules in Favor of Environmental Groups, Sets
Aside Vista Ranch Approval**

Contacts: Ron Bottorff, Friends of the Santa Clara River
Lynne Plambeck, Santa Clarita Organization for Planning
and the Environment (SCOPE) 661 255-6899

In a long-awaited decision the Los Angeles County Superior Court ruled that environmental documents submitted for the Vista Canyon Ranch in Canyon Country, California, were inadequate and set aside both the Environmental Impact Report and the project approvals. The ruling was made in a lawsuit brought by three environmental and neighborhood preservation groups - Friends of the Santa Clara River, Santa Clarita Organization for Planning and the Environment (SCOPE) and Homeowners for Neighborhood Preservation. The lawsuit claimed that the EIR for the project did not comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements in several respects.

Background –Proposed for the rural Sand Canyon area, the 1050 unit Vista Canyon Ranch also includes 800,000 square feet of commercial and retail space and a 200 room hotel. It is located almost entirely in the floodplain of the Santa Clara River, Los Angeles County's last free-flowing River and will require some 500,000 cubic yards of dirt to fill the floodplain area in order to raise the level of the construction area to meet Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) safety standards. It also calls for 7500' linear feet of channelization of the Santa Clara River in the project area.

The project was approved with disregard to the fact that this area is designated a "Significant Ecological Area" by both the City of Santa Clarita and the County of Los Angeles.

Vista Canyon was touted as transportation oriented, to be built around a non-existent MetroLink Station. It proposed to move the existing Via Princessa Station to this new outlying location, even though that station's centralized location on Via Princessa is currently servicing many commuters that would lose their easy access point if the station is moved. Questions remain as to who

will pay to have this station closed and moved away from existing riders - the developer or the taxpayers.

In his finding, Judge Goodman ruled that the EIR could *not* use the full 1620 square miles of the water shed to determine that the project had no effect on the environment, but rather that it must focus on the effect of the construction in the vicinity of the project.

“We are gratified that this Judge recognized the on going problem of cumulative effects to the river. 7500’ of linear banking and massive filling of the river in this area is significant, and cumulatively leads to the loss of natural river function”, said Ron Bottorff, Friends of the Santa Clara River.

“At a time when we face reduced rainfall and loss of imported water from Northern California, we must not pave over water recharge areas as this project does by filling the floodplain. It is imperative that we safeguard these areas to ensure the future viability of regional ground water sources”, said Lynne Plambeck, President of SCOPE.

“As long time homeowners in the Sand Canyon area, many residents feel that the size, height and density of this project is not in keeping with the character of this semi-rural community”, said Susan Carey. “The amount of traffic generated by the commercial parts of this project was never adequately addressed, meaning that our neighborhood would have to deal with thousands of additional vehicle trips per day on local roads and freeways. I am glad that the City will have the opportunity to take another look at these neighborhood concerns”.

The uncertainty over the proposed route of the bullet train, currently designated to pass through this project is yet another issue deserving a hard look.

The Judge also ruled that the Environmental Impact Report must summarize the reports submitted to substantiate its findings. Community groups throughout California have long raised concerns about the thousands of pages that they must read to understand the typical environmental impact report. This ruling will aid both Planning Commissions and the community members in their efforts to ensure environmentally sustainable projects in their communities.

#####

END