

I-237 Brigitte F. Kuester

Comment Letter I-237



County of San Diego

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NEWLAND SIERRA

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JULY 18, 2017, SAN MARCOS COMMUNITY HALL

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR) PUBLIC REVIEW MEETING COMMENT SHEET

Hi! We attended your meeting in San Marcos. It was very interesting but my husband and I cannot help asking ourselves why it is that you even allow a new developer to open up this whole can of worms again after spending 18 Million \$ for a new general plan which was adopted only six years ago. It is a terrible fire/evacuation danger to us here in Hidden Meadows. My husband and I were stuck on I-15 North in 2007. What saved us is that we were able to turn around and escape thru a ~~hole~~ hole in the fence and head back South and thru some back roads, got to Anza. For those still stuck on I-15 going north, we heard later that the fire was raging on either side of I-15. Now how would any of you like to

I-237-1

I-237-2

Mail to: Ashley Smith, Project Manager  
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Brigitte F. Kuester 8/8/17  
Signature, Date

BRIGITTE F. KUESTER  
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City, State, Zip Code

be in that position! And that is after getting out of Hidden Meadows! Please keep the old plan with 99 homes!!!

I-237-3

4 | HIDDEN MEADOWS NEWS | AUGUST 2017



Craig Cook, Chair of the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council, introducing presenters at evacuation exercise.



Residents completely filled the room for evacuation exercise on July 15.

#### EVACUATION from 1

engineer Joe Burcham addressed the possible exit routes during an official evacuation.

**Mountain Meadows Road will be the major egress route.** Deputies and California Highway Patrol officers will staff roadblocks at Champagne Boulevard, moving people through the intersection and directing them where to go.

During an official evacuation, the gate through Rimrock on Meadow Glen Way West will likely be open, Menzies said. If it isn't, call 9-1-1 and it will be opened.

**Cougar Pass Road, a dirt road connecting Meadow Glen Way East with North Broadway in Escondido, may serve as an evacuation route, but not in the scenario presented because the fire would block the road. Not all cars can negotiate Cougar Pass to Escondido because the road is heavily rutted, and it narrows and dips to cross a creek.** Cougar Pass Road in the opposite direction, north and then east to Valley Center, is gated. Menzies said that this gate would likely be open if people's lives were in danger, but it also was unsafe in the scenario.

**Mass, three-lane-a-stub road where Meadow Glen Way West makes a right-angle turn just west of the Hidden Meadows community center, should not be used as an evacuation route because it is unsafe,** said Burcham.

Presenters advised that the sooner you can get out of the neighborhood, the better.

"If you wait till the last minute, that's when traffic jams happen," Menzies said.

"You can be trying to get out as 20 or 30 fire engines are coming up the hill," Burcham said.

Residents were engaged in the exercise and offered suggestions based on their past experiences. They acknowledged that in the event of an evacuation, they need to be self-reliant and not expect the Sheriff's Department to

send a bus to get them out. Among the questions was what to do if a teen-age child is at home while parents are at work and unable to get into the neighborhood.

Menzies and Burcham said that the emergency responders' hands will be full with so many tasks, and staffing stretched to the limit, that they may not be able to handle individual evacuation cases. Menzies encouraged preplanning a cooperative effort with neighbors to address individual specific needs beforehand.

"If you talk with your neighbors about your special needs, you'll most likely find out they have special needs, too," he said.

Presenters included Lorton, a member of the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council and the Champagne Village Emergency Planning Committee; Cook; and Burcham, who serves the Deer Springs Fire Protection District. Menzies represented the Sheriff's Department and answered questions about evacuations, along with California Highway Patrol Sgt. Dave Morenberg.

CAL FIRE Battalion Chief Nick Brown, who also serves as the Deer Springs fire chief, was a scheduled presenter but was unable to attend because he was fighting a wildfire in San Bernardino County.

The Fire Safe Council prepared the exercise with the Deer Springs Fire Protection District and the Champagne Village Disaster Committee. Future presentations will be held in other Deer Springs Fire District neighborhoods, including Jesmond Dene/North Broadway, the Treasures, and West Li-lac.

A version of this article appears in Fire Safety News, a monthly e-newsletter published by the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council. To subscribe go to [www.DeerSpringsFireSafeCouncil.com](http://www.DeerSpringsFireSafeCouncil.com) and click on the "SUBSCRIBE" link.

## Hidden Meadows residents pack the house for evacuation exercise

By THE DEER SPRINGS FIRE SAFE COUNCIL

A standing-room-only gathering of about 150 people packed the Pavilion at the Hidden Meadows community center on July 15 for an exercise designed to help residents prepare to evacuate in the event of a wildfire.

The exercise presented a scenario — a fire breaking out on the east side of Hidden Meadows during a Santa Ana — and asked attendees: What do you do now? How much time do you have to get out? Should you wait for an evacuation order or just go? What should you pack?

Presenter Gregory Lorton said such a scenario could push fire toward Turner Lake and Alps Way in a half hour, and within two hours the fire could reach the golf course and threaten the fire station, burning some homes along the way.

With the fire advancing at such a rate, residents need to use situational awareness and be alert to where the fire is and where it may be going, said Deer Springs Fire Safe Council President Craig Cook.

"You don't want to drive toward smoke," Cook said.

Lorton advised residents to keep tabs on the fire by calling the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council hot line, 949-472-1407. Fire Safe Council volunteers contact CAL FIRE officials to get the latest available information and continually update the hotline during an event. CAL FIRE San Diego operates a twitter account that it updates regularly with fire information. Television news and the *Union-Tribune* website are also good sources for more regional information.

Some Hidden Meadows residents recalled the evacuation of 2007 and the confusion that ensued as vehicles were backed up into the Meadows. Many had questions about possible ways out should authorities issue an evacuation order.

"You guys don't have a lot of ways in and out," Lorton observed.

San Diego County Sheriff's Lt. Kevin Menzies and CAL FIRE firefighter

see EVACUATION ▶ 4

*I hope you to read this article.*

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# HIDDEN MEADOWS NEWS

The Hometown Monthly Newspaper of Hidden Meadows and Rimrock, California

## Citizens urged to speak out on Newland Sierra Project

By WAYNE DAUBER, Hidden Meadows Sponsor Group

A proposal to build a huge planned community in the hills northwest of the Deer Springs exit is now working its way through the governmental approval process. The proposal is a dramatic departure from land use guidelines in the General Plan for the County of San Diego and would bring dramatic changes to Hidden Meadows and neighboring areas. A number of citizen groups, including the Hidden Meadows Sponsor Group, are urging residents to learn more about the project and make their opinions about the project known to our County officials.

Known as the Newland Sierra Project, the proposed development would include 2,135 residential units on a undeveloped piece of property that is currently zoned for 99 homes. It would also include commercial space and other amenities. A previous developer proposed a 2,600 home development called Merriam Mountain in the same general area. That project was denied by the county supervisors in a 3-2 vote.

In order to get this new project approved, the development company is asking the County for several amendments and revisions to the County's General Plan. Adopted just six years ago, the General Plan took a decade and roughly \$18 million to develop. A major purpose of the plan was to discourage urban sprawl by focusing new housing and infrastructure to areas closer to employment and mass transportation and away from more rural spaces.

A draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) regarding the Newland Sierra Project was released on June 17, 2017 by the County of San Diego's Department of Planning and Development. The document — which is over 8,000 pages long — provides information about potential detrimental impacts of the project and possible steps that could be taken to lessen those impacts. To find it online, do a web search for Newland Sierra EIR.

The County has given the public 45 days to submit comments or questions about the report to the Planning Department, which will take them into consideration before issuing a final report. The updated document will then go to the Planning Commission, which will submit its recommendations to the County Board of Supervisors. No date has yet been set for the Supervisors to vote on the project proposal, but it is expected sometime in the second quarter of 2018.

A public hearing on the draft EIR was held on July 18 at the Civic Center in San Marcos. An estimated 350 individuals turned out, hailing from neighborhoods on both sides of I-15.

The County staff made a very brief presentation, before opening the meeting up for public comment. They did, however, state that the environmental review process revealed "significant and unavoidable" impacts in six areas:

- Aesthetics, air quality, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, and transportation and traffic. According to the EIR, "feasible mitigation would not reduce such impacts to less-than-significant levels."
- Seventy or so individuals signed up to comment at the hearing. Each was given two minutes to speak. Many of the comments centered around the same issues: "community members have about their."
- Huge increases in traffic which would compound major problems that already exist on the I-15, Deer Springs Mountain Meadow exits, and surrounding surface streets.
- Lack of adequate emergency evacuation routes on both sides of the freeway.
- Air and noise pollution that would be produced during the expected 10 years of construction.
- Disruption to wildlife habitat and movement patterns.
- Impact on local schools and the area's water supply, which are already overstretched.
- Public funding that would be required to pay for necessary infrastructure improvements.
- Cumulative impact of other planned and proposed developments in the region.

Speakers also expressed frustration that:

- The General Plan, which was designed to protect rural areas, was being ignored, and that exceptions to the Plan were becoming too common.
- The project creates the same problems as the previously-rejected Merriam Mountain project.
- Some of the EIR's assumptions about the impacts and possible mitigation strategies seemed flawed or unrealistic.
- The length and organization of the EIR document made it difficult to find information that was needed to have a clear picture of the overall impact of the project.

Although the meeting on the 16th was promoted as an opportunity for public comment on the draft EIR, the County staff told the speakers at the beginning that their statements were not being recorded. In order for the community's concerns to be addressed in the next iteration of the EIR, the process requires written statements to be submitted.

The Hidden Meadows Community Sponsor Group is therefore urging all residents to make their opinions known in written form. We ask that you send your questions and concerns about the Newland Sierra Project to the County by email or letter before the end of the public comment period. The deadline is August 14 at 4:00 p.m.

Emails are to be sent to Ashley Smith2@sdcounty.ca.gov. Letters are to be addressed to:

Ashley Smith, Department of Planning and Development, 5510 Overland Ave., Suite 310, San Diego, CA 92123.

The Sponsor group will continue to keep you posted about this important issue through articles in the Hidden Meadows News and postings on NextDoor. If you have questions, feel free to contact Wayne Dauber at hmdaub@cox.net or (760) 809-6898.



The auditorium at San Marcos Civic Center fills up as residents wait for public meeting on the Newland Sierra Project.

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