

## O-12 Hidden Meadows Community Sponsor Group

Comment Letter O-12

### HIDDEN MEADOWS COMMUNITY SPONSOR GROUP

"Community Representation to the County of San Diego"

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August 6, 2017

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Attn:

The Hidden Meadows Community Sponsor Group has reviewed the Newland Sierra Draft Environmental Impact Report in June 2017.

There are significant effects or conditions which specifically affect the areas encompassed by the Hidden Meadows Community Sponsor Group and which we feel must be addressed as described below.

**Issue 1: The project is not in compliance with the San Diego County General Plan, which has been in effect for less time than the approximately ten years of work to compile.** The General Plan lists ten "Guiding Principles". Principle number two is provided here in its entirety:

2. Promote health and sustainability by locating new growth near existing and planned infrastructure, services, and jobs in a compact pattern of development.

Following the list of Guiding Principles in the General Plan are expanded descriptions of them. We include the final paragraph of the Guiding Principle 1 description here:

As growth continues in the region, the County will accommodate a reasonable share in the unincorporated County in a manner that sustains the natural setting, characteristics, and qualities that distinguish the County, its communities, and rural places as special places to live. The County will implement this guiding principle by planning and facilitating housing in and adjacent to existing and planned villages.

The project described in the Newland Sierra DEIR is clearly contrary to the overall intent and specific statements which are the basis of the General Plan. The existing infrastructure is inadequate based on County data, the DEIR, and experience related by local resident. The DEIR indicates this will continue to be the case after completion of improvements specified in the DEIR.

It is our understanding that the General Plan reduced the allowable dwellings in that area from 300 to 99. Clearly it was the intent of the General Plan to keep the area rural. If the County devotes the time, effort, and expense over a period of ten years to craft a plan we believe that plan should be followed. This project is not a minor correction to any kind of oversight in the plan. It is a radical and complete change to the character of the I-15 corridor as it leaves the urban San Diego metro area and would represent a total abrogation of the County's responsibility to follow its own detailed long-term plan.

**The Hidden Meadows Community Sponsor Group believes the Newland Sierra Draft EIR should be rejected because it is grossly non-compliant with the San Diego County General Plan.**

**Issue 2: Traffic.** There would be extreme impacts that this project, because of its immediate proximity to Deer Springs Road and its associated I-15 interchange, together with numerous other planned or projected projects along or near the I-15 traffic corridor from Escondido north or the Twin Oaks Valley/Deer Springs Road corridors from the CSU San Marcos area north to the Riverside County line. There are 191 development projects listed in Table 1-10 "Cumulative Projects", beginning on page 1-43

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of the Newland Sierra Draft Environmental Impact Report which lists a total of at least 12,500 dwelling units potentially being added. Some listed projects lack sufficient information for evaluation and so are not included in these totals.

**Issue 2a:** The Deer Springs/I-15 interchange itself. It is basically inadequate to handle the morning and evening traffic flows currently. In fact for traffic transitioning from Center City Parkway, Mountain Meadow Road, or Champagne Blvd to Deer Springs Road at some times of the day, it is impossible to take advantage of a green light at that intersection because the traffic is backed up from the traffic light at the I-15 northbound ramps. This also occurs, but somewhat less frequently in the stretch between the I-15 northbound and southbound ramps in both directions, and between Mesa Rock Road and the I-15 southbound ramps. The probability is that it would frequently reach gridlock conditions during normal daily traffic peaks if Newland Sierra Project homes were to be occupied before the interchange construction is complete. We believe any approval of the Newland Sierra EIR should be contingent on approval of an EIR by CALTRANS for the Deer Springs/I-15 interchange accompanied by a proposed and approved construction schedule. **We do not believe any portion of the Newland Project should be allowed to be occupied until the affected road and interchange improvements specified here are ready to be used.** If this project goes forward the Deer Springs/I-15 interchange must be improved to a clover leaf or more innovative configuration capable of effectively handling the projected vehicle traffic. This would probably cause the closing or relocation of existing and planned businesses.

**Issue 3:** Fire evacuation concerns. Hidden Meadows is, and is expected to continue to be, an essentially single available exit community. That exit being Mountain Meadow Road emptying directly into the noted severely impacted Deer Springs/Center City Parkway, Champagne Blvd intersection, the I-15 interchange, and Deer Springs Road, all of which already deliver LOS-F performance under normal daily operations. **The Hidden Meadows Community Sponsor Group requests an evaluation of the cumulative impact of development along the I-15 and Deer Springs related corridors during a nearly simultaneous emergency evacuation of the entire area.**

Regarding this subject the Hidden Meadows Sponsor Group prefers the Deer Springs Road option "B" (4 lane) over option "A" (2 lane with a continuous left turn lane over a relatively short section) because of the needless congestion and delay the merge from four lanes to three, or an effective two lanes, would cause in the only available westbound escape route from the communities along the east side of the I-15 corridor. It is reasonable to anticipate that in a "Santa Ana" driven wildfire emergency all potential north, south, and east bound escape routes would be cut off. This could result in a large number of people being trapped in a non-survivable situation.

**Issue 4:** We feel some independent verification of some of the claims made regarding noise, dust and particle, and visual pollution should be required. The Hidden Meadows Community was told there would be practically no dust, no significant noise, and no incidental damage to property when a major development was built near the golf course in our community. We found this not to be the case. Others living near other developments have reported similar experiences. Noxious gases, dust, and microscopic particulate matter released during blasting boulders, crushing rock, and moving large amounts of earth remain in the local atmosphere for extended periods. Noise from blasting and rock crushing will have significant effect on quality of life over the projected ten year build out period. The Deer Springs and I-15 corridors are essentially closed valleys, which tend to trap and prolong these effects, and are

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proximate and often downwind of this project. Both have extensive elderly populations whose health may be at risk because of these activities. The Hidden Meadows community, also frequently downwind of this project consists of an extensive elderly population and an increasing infusion of young families with young children who may be at long term risk from these conditions. No mitigation is provided for these conditions. **The Hidden Meadows Community Sponsor Group recommends and requests a comprehensive health risk assessment for these at risk populations be conducted and become part of the Draft EIR review.**

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding our comments.

Best regards,

C Wayne Dauber  
Chair  
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