

COMMENTS

RESPONSES

June 7, 2015

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To: San Diego County Planning and Development Services Staff  
Cc: San Diego County Planning Commission; San Diego County Board of Supervisors; Town Council of Elfin Forest Harmony Grove; San Elijo Hills HOA Board of Directors; James Desmond, Mayor of San Marcos; Christine Hurdle, Director San Elijo Hills

To All Concerned:

I am writing to provide comments on the planned Valiano community project and Harmony Grove expansion projects in area between San Marcos and Escondido. I write as a Cocos fire evacuee and lucky survivor of that catastrophe. My concerns and feedback follow:

- **Road Congestion:** North County already suffers from extreme road congestion. Current residents already need to schedule errands and discretionary road trips around school and work rush hours due to road congestion, and still the traffic is often heavy. It makes no sense to add more residents who add to the traffic problems, unless builders are required to implement necessary road improvements before breaking ground.

- **Wildfire Safety Risks:** On May 14, 2014, about 3:30pm, I hurriedly grabbed my two pets and set out to evacuate my Altair neighborhood due to the imminent threat of the Cocos fire. I drove a short distance to Wild Canyon Road, the only escape route open because the fire cut off the only other route, Double Peak Road. I found myself in a line of traffic that did not move for more than one hour. In that hour, the column of black smoke over the hill in back of the neighborhood thickened and towering flames leaped over the top. Traffic was gridlocked with many of us desperately calling 911 for rescue. For the first time in my life, I thought I was going to die. It appeared that the fast moving fire would sweep down the hill at any minute and we all would die where we sat. If the wind hadn't shifted just at the right time, I am convinced I would not be here now.

The issue of limited evacuation routes is a problem throughout the County, a problem made worse by the road congestion mentioned above. Adding more residents without remedying the traffic infrastructure will only further play roulette with human lives. Will it take a massive loss of life in a future wildfire to finally address the issue? We need more evacuation routes for the current population, not more people to evacuate.

- **Drought:** The California drought is deepening with serious concerns about water shortages for the current population throughout San Diego County. And new communities are being considered? This makes no practical sense. Not only will this put a bigger burden on the water supplies, needed by current residents, it will decrease critical supplies for firefighting.

- **Environmental Impact:** Areas of open land need to be preserved to sustain the ecology, beauty and wildlife habitats of our County. More people and more human use of the land will irreversibly damage or destroy all of these treasures.

It seems clear that those making the decisions about building the Valiano community or expanding Harmony Grove do not live in the areas impacted. Letters like this one would certainly not be necessary if they did. I suggest that before decisions are made about more building, decision makers need to drive through the impacted areas to experience the traffic and ask the locals if the issues cited above are realities. Only then will the right decision against more building be crystal clear.

Sincerely,  
Mary A. Bennett  
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AB-1 A Traffic Impact Analysis was prepared to analyze the Project's traffic impacts (Appendix H of the Final EIR), including a cumulative traffic analysis with other projects in the area; the impacts are also discussed in Subchapter 2.8 of the EIR. Mitigation measures would be implemented that would implement necessary road improvements.

AB-2 The comment raises fire safety issues with evacuation. This comment is addressed in Topical Response: Fire/Evacuations.

AB-3 The proposed water usage would be below the baseline condition, as explained in Responses C-2, C-8, C-10 and K-99. See Response C-5 for a discussion of water supply for firefighting.

AB-4 As shown on Figure 1-13, a number of areas would be retained in open space. These areas include 35.4 acres of retained agricultural easement, 55.7 acres of common areas open space, and 27.1 acres of landscape easement. In addition, 31.2 acres of the Project would be located within biological open space (i.e., those areas identified by technical professionals as containing habitat of biological value and which would be preserved). Together these areas total 149.4 acres, or over 62 percent of the Project. The open space would support the existing ecology, agriculture, and open character of the site.

AB-5 The comment makes a suggestion for decision-makers to obtain additional community input. This is not a CEQA-related comment and no response is required.