

Santa Margarita Area Residents Together

PO Box 50

Santa Margarita, CA 93453

<http://margaritaresidentstogether.org>

Dear SMART Supporters:

I am writing to update you about the Santa Margarita Ranch development. As you know, the developers who own the Ranch are pushing for approval of a sprawling "ag cluster residential subdivision" project. The final Environmental Impact Report has been released and identifies 11 Class 1 impacts – impacts both significant and unavoidable (see back). The final EIR can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/4jwzvs>

In addition to concerns with the project, SMART has serious concerns about the process. Some startling facts have surfaced recently -- evidence that meetings were held between the Ranch owners and County Planning staff in violation of a legal agreement between SMART, the Ranch, and the County.

The current pro-growth majority on the Board of Supervisors routinely votes to support developers, ignoring recommendations of county planners and attorneys, the Planning Commission, and the public. The June 3 election results clearly illustrate the public has had enough. But until the new Board is seated in January, the pro-growth majority will continue to make decisions. The Planning Commission will start its review of the final EIR – all 2,500 pages – on July 7. There has been, and will continue to be, unprecedented pressure to rush this project to this Board before January.

This project has definitely been put on the fast track. The Planning Commission has scheduled a special session for Monday, July 7th, at 1 PM, to begin their review of the final EIR. Please attend and let your voice be heard. This project is too large and complex, and damaging to too many resources. It demands a thorough review.

SMART is fighting to ensure alternative voices are heard and sanity prevails. We are pursuing legal action against the County for breaking its promise to include SMART in the process. We will take additional legal action if this project is approved without adequate review. We need your help today! SMART does not often ask for your financial support, but we are asking now. We hope you will consider making a generous donation today. The stakes are very high.

For more information, see the chronology and sidebars on the back of this letter. Above all, please give generously. Stay involved and help us make sure the integrity of the process – and the incredible diversity of resources at Santa Margarita Ranch – is protected

Sincerely,



John Beccia
President
Santa Margarita Area Residents Together

PS: Your donation will ensure that SMART can launch any effective legal challenges, as needed.

JB

Information you need to know about proposed development on the Santa Margarita Ranch.

For more information, please see our web site: <http://margaritaresidentstogether.org/>

Unavoidable Impacts of the AG Cluster

1. Ag: Ag Cluster would permanently compromise the sustainability of a 676.7-acre grazing unit and would permanently convert 5 acres containing prime soils to nonagricultural uses.
2. Ag: Ag Cluster Subdivision would create conflicts between proposed urban uses and existing and future agricultural uses.
3. Air Quality: Ag Cluster Subdivision will result in operational air pollutant emissions, primarily from vehicular traffic.
4. Air Quality: Ag Cluster would exceed the population growth assumptions of the 2001 Clean Air Plan.
5. Biological: Ag Cluster would result in the removal of an estimated 200 to 400 blue oak, coast live oak, and valley oak trees within the Blue Oak Woodland, Coast live Oak Woodland, Valley Oak Woodland, Valley Needlegrass Grassland, and California Annual Grassland habitats on the site.
6. Cultural: Development of the proposed residential cluster in this area would substantially diminish the integrity of the design, setting, materials, feeling, and association of this important character-defining area.
7. Cultural: Thirty-two prehistoric and historical archaeological sites and six isolates are located within or immediately adjacent to Ag Cluster site.
8. Noise: Long-term traffic generated by Ag Cluster would incrementally increase noise levels at existing receptors located adjacent to roadways in the Santa Margarita Ranch vicinity
9. Traffic: Development of Ag Cluster would result in the addition of 1,154 average daily trips (88 AM peak hour and 119 PM peak hour trips) to study-area roadways and intersections.
10. Visual: The proposed development has the potential to alter the aesthetic character of vicinity through alteration of scenic vistas, the introduction of new light and glare generators in to the area, and the changing of the area's character from a rural to rural-residential condition.
11. Water: Ag Cluster would increase the use of water from area aquifer units, including the Paso Robles and Santa Margarita Formations.

Chronology

Here is what has happened in the last few years:

- SMART opposed 36 home development on Tract 1 due to inconsistencies in Negative Declaration.
- SMART withdrew objections to Tract 1 in exchange for Settlement agreement specifying a habitat study and future EIRS.
- Santa Margarita Ranch (SMR) proposes 111 homes across from the graveyard in an Agricultural Clustered Subdivision (Ag Cluster).
- Proposal triggers two EIRs because of requirements in Settlement.
- SMART is party to establishing the scope of both EIRs per the Settlement agreement.
- Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) is issued. Report lists 11 Class 1 impacts (significant and unavoidable impacts) on the 111 home proposal and 11 Class 1 impacts on the future development scenario (More information below).
- The DEIR is a forum for many environmental groups and public agencies to learn what is planned for the Santa Margarita Ranch and to study and comment on the impacts. Facilitating this participation is SMART's charter.
- At the end of the comment period for the DEIR, SMR decides to modify the plan for the 111 homes in hopes of avoiding the reality of the 11 Class 1 impacts.
- The modification of the proposal triggers the requirement for a Recirculated Draft EIR (RDEIR).
- The County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning meets secretly with the SMR Owners to determine the scope of the RDEIR. This is in violation of the Settlement Agreement.
- SMART learns of this violation and files a claim against the County of San Luis Obispo and SMR.