

Item 18 Attachment

July 31, 2013

SMMC

11-4-2013

To: Los Angeles City Council
Citywide Planning Commission
Director of Planning

**Scientific Community Opposition to Hidden Creeks Estates Project
CPC-2005-6656-AD-GPA-ZC-CU-DA-ZAD, Santa Susana Mountains SEA**

Honorable Councilmembers:

We, the undersigned members of California's scientific community, express complete opposition to the proposed Hidden Creeks Estates Project that would extend suburban development over one-half mile deeper into the core habitat of the Santa Susana Mountains. No substantive subdivision, or suburban neighborhood development, on the subject 259-acre hillside property is possible without unavoidable, regionally significant, adverse biological impacts. The Browns and Mormon Canyon watersheds, in which this project is proposed, contain high quality riparian and upland habitats that are integral to the Santa Susana Mountains core wildlife habitat.

The subject property abuts the 2,326-acre Michael D. Antonovich Regional Park at Joughin Ranch, a premiere natural area of the Los Angeles River watershed. This proposed one-half mile deep encroachment into the core of the Santa Susana Mountains ecosystem would compound the unprecedented 4,000 acres of mass grading and stacked tiers of tract homes along the northern edge of San Fernando Valley caused by the still occurring development of Porter Ranch that started in the early 1980s. Millions of cubic yards of new grading, and over 150 new homes in any urban-adjacent-wilderness area unequivocally requires that the City of Los Angeles issue a Statement of Overriding Considerations if such significant biological impacts are not avoided.

The applicant's Environmental Impact Report claims that a few mitigation measures, such as providing new athletic facilities, can offset this loss of over 150 acres of core wildlife habitat. We urge the City to not certify the flawed Final Environmental Impact Report and to emphatically deny any project on this site that includes more than the 33 homes currently allowed under the Los Angeles County General Plan. There is no public policy justification to upzone land for a project that will result in regionally significant biological impacts to one of the City's most important and accessible natural areas.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Our affiliations are listed for identification purposes only and should not be interpreted to represent an official stance of our employers.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Espinoza, Ph.D.
Professor of Biology and Associate Dean
California State University, Northridge

Kimball Garrett
Ornithology Collections Manager
Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

Thomas Gillespie, Ph.D.
Professor of Geography
UCLA

David A. Gray, Ph.D.
Professor of Biology
California State University, Northridge

Travis Longcore, Ph.D.
Associate Adjunct Professor, Institute of the Environment and Sustainability
UCLA

Phil Rundel, Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
UCLA

Walter Sakai
Professor of Biology
Santa Monica College

Paula Schiffman, Ph.D.
Professor of Biology
California State University, Northridge

H. Bradley Shaffer, Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
Director, La Kretz Center for California Conservation Science
UCLA

Jeanne Robertson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Biology
California State University, Northridge

Patricia Adair Gowaty, Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
UCLA

Stephen P. Hubbell, Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
UCLA

Jeffrey W. White, Ph.D.
Professor of Biology
Humboldt State University

cc: Mr. Michael LoGrande, Director of Planning