



COMMITTEE FOR  
GREEN FOOTHILLS

# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 13, 2006

PRESS CONTACT:

Brian Schmidt, Legislative Advocate  
phone (650) 968-7243 • [Brian@GreenFoothills.org](mailto:Brian@GreenFoothills.org)

## Stanford, County sued over environmental violations

COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS SUES OVER DECISION NOT TO BUILD A REQUIRED TRAIL ON STANFORD LAND

PALO ALTO, CA -- Environmental advocacy group Committee for Green Foothills filed suit on Friday, June 9th against Stanford University and Santa Clara County, arguing that the County's decision to exclude a required trail from Stanford lands in the County violated state law because it was done without any environmental review.

"Stanford promised to build two trails to make up for the impacts from a massive expansion in campus development," said Brian Schmidt, the Santa Clara County Legislative Advocate for CGF. "Now they've pressured Santa Clara County to drop one trail requirement and simply expand an existing sidewalk along the heavy traffic of Alpine Road. The expanded sidewalk has no recreational value, will provide little additional use, will be enormously expensive and cause environmental damage to hillsides and a major local creek. This galling example of Stanford's 'bad neighbor' policy – taking a benefit it was supposed to provide, and instead creating a major detriment to the community – has to be stopped," said Schmidt.

The lawsuit was filed in Santa Clara County Superior Court today. CGF seeks to overturn the approval of the decision to exclude the trail from Santa Clara County. CGF does not challenge a simultaneous decision to build a trail on the other side of the Stanford campus.

### Stanford required to provide two trails

The Santa Clara County 1995 Trails Master Plan identified two trails crossing opposite sides of Stanford lands, the "S1 Trail" and the "C1 Trail". As a condition of Stanford University's 2000 General Use Plan that allowed Stanford to add 5 million new square feet of housing and academic

COMMITTEE FOR  
GREEN FOOTHILLS

3921 E. Bayshore Road  
Palo Alto, CA 94303

650.968.7243 PHONE  
650.968.8431 FAX

[info@GreenFoothills.org](mailto:info@GreenFoothills.org)  
[www.GreenFoothills.org](http://www.GreenFoothills.org)

facilities, Stanford was required to come back to the County with a plan to move forward with “building, dedicating and maintaining” these two trails on University lands by the end of 2001. “During this 5 year period, Committee for Green Foothills and other community members proposed several alternative alignments and several compromise alignments, both in public and in private suggestions to Stanford officials. For one year, community members waited for any Stanford counteroffer before we were told that they would push ahead with their unworkable plan for C1,” said Jeff Segall, board member for Committee for Green Foothills.

### **Stanford pushed County to eliminate environmental review in December**

In 2003, the County decided to split the planning of the two trails and move forward with planning for the less-controversial S1 Trail first, and initiated an extensive review process to determine the S1 Trail alignment. Stanford offered an alternative alignment for the S1 Trail that moved it away from Page Mill Road, but when the County indicated in the fall of 2005 that it would accept that offer, Stanford added another condition. It offered to make the S1 Trail available immediately, but only if the County immediately decided to exclude the second trail, the C1 Trail from Santa Clara County. Stanford proposed that instead of going forward with the C1 Trail within its lands, it would offer to pay San Mateo County and Portola Valley to expand an existing sidewalk along Alpine Road. The County Board of Supervisors voted to accept this proposal in December. The trails plan was approved without any environmental review of the C1 alignment, even though the environmental review for the S1 Trail had been extensive.

“Stanford’s offer for the S1 Trail was used to get the County to throw out better alignments proposed by the environmental community. Later, Stanford said its S1 Trail offer was unavailable unless the County immediately excluded the C1 Trail, or unless another long delay ensued to hold up the S1 Trail until the C1 Trail had also been reviewed,” said Schmidt. “Even if San Mateo County eventually does review the proposal, that doesn’t release Santa Clara County from conducting its own review of its own decisions.”

Stanford and the County also changed plans without environmental review by agreeing to take money instead of a trail if San Mateo County or Portola Valley reject the plans for an expanded sidewalk. This decision to eliminate a potential Santa Clara County trail in return for money is another approval made by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors that was made without environmental review. This agreement also leaves unclear what happens if Stanford money is spent on environmental review in San Mateo County or Portola Valley but no expansion is approved, possibly establishing a situation where neither a trail nor money for the Parks Department would occur.

“There’s a striking contrast between the S1 Trail decision with a full scale Environmental Impact Report, and the more-destructive decision on the Alpine Road sidewalk, which was made with no review at all,” said Schmidt. “We think the S1 Trail construction should go right ahead, as something justified under state law, but the situation with the C1 trail needs to be reviewed.” The S1 Trail alignment, while far from ideal, has some recreational usefulness, so Committee for Green Foothills has not challenged that decision or its environmental review.

### **Expanding a sidewalk instead of building a trail has environmental impacts**

Committee for Green Foothills has proposed several alternatives to a C1 trail along Alpine Road. Locating a trail on Stanford lands inside Santa Clara County (generally following the 1995 Trails Master Plan alignment), would avoid many environmentally-sensitive streamside areas and provide views and solitude to hikers, while Stanford’s own proposal for an expanded sidewalk proposal along Alpine Road would impair creek habitat, require armoring streambanks, and tear down part of a hillside to relocate the Alpine Road to make room for the trail. Stanford claims its proposal can be downscaled but provides no details and no assurances that changes would be accepted. Most of Alpine Road sidewalk is not on Stanford land as required by the Trails Master Plan and General Use Plan, but rather is within a right-of-way. Because Stanford promised to dedicate a trail easement on its land that would mitigate the crowding Stanford development would bring, the expanded sidewalk fails to satisfy its obligations under the General Use Plan.

“This has the potential to set a terrible precedent. The Santa Clara County Trails Master Plan is held up as a model around the State. The County’s largest developer – Stanford – should not be allowed to essentially pay to maintain an existing sidewalk rather than provide a trail on its own lands when it proposes such a large-scale development. We sadly felt we had to take this action today to protect the County’s regional trails and open spaces,” said Holly Van Houten, the Committee’s Executive Director.

###

### **About the Committee for Green Foothills**

Committee for Green Foothills is a regional grassroots organization working to establish and maintain land-use policies that protect the environment throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. Committee for Green Foothills, established in 1962, is a Bay Area leader in the continuing effort to protect open space and the natural environment of our Peninsula.

For more information about the Committee for Green Foothills or about our work on this issue, visit [www.GreenFoothills.org](http://www.GreenFoothills.org).