



GREEN FOOTNOTES

COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS www.GreenFootHills.org

SPRING 2008

Victory in and for Coyote Valley

BY BRIAN SCHMIDT

Spring began this year with extremely welcome news, that the land developer entity calling itself the Coyote Housing Group had decided to withdraw its proposal to destroy three thousand acres of working farmland and vital wildlife habitat in Coyote Valley. While the environmental community cannot claim the sole credit for victory, our successful effort to force consideration of environmental issues was a necessary element in stopping it. The simple fact is that destroying the environment is costly and time-consuming, and that fact combined with the uncertain economy to end the project.

Our fight to save Coyote Valley combined efforts across the environmental community. Committee for Green Foothills worked together with the local Sierra Club and Audubon chapters and with the Greenbelt Alliance to stop this project. In the last year, student researcher-activists at DeAnza College provided essential scientific observations and supplied welcome energy to our effort. The groups occasionally disagreed and were occasionally divided, but much less so at the end, and were all the stronger when united.

We at the Committee participated in every effort as much as we could with our professional staff, our active Board of Directors, and countless email Action Alerts from members. We particularly provided leadership for the effort on two fronts. First, we showed the fiscal analysis to be irredeemably flawed through reliance on an unsustainable housing boom. Because fiscal problems were the final blow, our pressure on the fiscal analysis helped pull back the curtain to end the project.




Carl Humick

The view of Coyote Valley won't change for a while.

In addition, we led in pointing out San Jose's mistake in allowing the land developers to choose the developer-hired consultants for the city's own environmental and fiscal analyses. Despite the fatal flaws in both analyses, developers insisted in maintaining this "right", and it may have helped lead to city hesitations and the project's end.

Developer control over environmental documents remains a problem with San Jose, alone among the Bay Area cities (the other cities choose their own consultants). This points to how much work remains for us. We need to fix San Jose's environmental review process so we can avoid a repeat of the Coyote Valley travesties. We need to critically question new

proposals to destroy farmland in Coyote Valley suggested by Gavilan College, as well as revived-and-wrong proposals from ten years ago. San Jose desperately needs stronger "triggers" in its General Plan to prevent expanding outwards until absolutely necessary.

Despite all the work remaining, we can celebrate this wonderful victory for the environment. What is particularly encouraging is that five years ago, we fought Coyote Valley development even though we did so without much hope. We fought it because fighting it was the right thing to do, despite the political and economic juggernaut we faced. It turned out that doing the right thing has its rewards – sometimes, you win. 



COMMITTEE FOR
GREEN FOOTHILLS

Committee for Green Foothills is a grassroots 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to establish and maintain land use policies that protect the environment throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara County.

Founded in 1962, Committee for Green Foothills is leading the continuing effort to protect open space and the natural environment of the Peninsula and Coast. Through grassroots education, planning and legislative advocacy, CGF works to protect and preserve our local natural resources, views and open space.

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From the President ...

As winter transitions into spring, CGF is proud to renew our commitment to the protection of our fragile regional resources and endangered agricultural lands. We are pleased to introduce you to the new board leadership team for 2008-09, a truly accomplished and energetic group of environmental stewards.

Our new President, Jeff Segall of Mountain View, has been an active member of our board since 2002, serving as Treasurer and Vice President. He is a tireless and effective leader on Stanford-related issues and has a keen interest in the preservation of working landscapes in southern Santa Clara County.



Jeff Segall

Incoming Vice President Matt Burrows is a resident of San Carlos and although he has been on our board for only two years, his considerable outreach and promotional talents have ensured the great success of our recent major fundraising events.



Matt Burrows

Bill Whitmer of Palo Alto will take over as Treasurer, offering a wealth of experience and service within the local environmental community. His expertise in organizational, financial and strategic planning will keep CGF on a solid and sustainable course.



Bill Whitmer

Filling the role of Secretary, Jennifer Hagan will do an outstanding job of recording our successes and documenting our organizational legacy. Her dedication to open space preservation, legal expertise and close connections with the equestrian community will greatly benefit our ongoing outreach efforts.



Jennifer Hagan


The CGF Directors, while all committed to preservation of open space, are a diverse group, geographically, background, age, gender, experience on boards, professions. However CGF, like many environmental organizations, is not very ethnically diverse. A goal for this year is to become so. Preservation of open space serves all communities. We welcome more people from the rich multicultural milieu of the San Francisco Peninsula join us. If you or someone you know is interested in joining our CGF Board, we want to hear from you.

I am pleased to announce that on May 1st, CGF will have a new Executive Director, Cynthia D'Agosta. A native Californian, Cynthia's community involvement and work experiences cover a wide range of leadership and team building work on open space planning and natural resource protection. She has spent the last 8 years working as the first Executive Director of a new local government agency, the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority.



Cynthia
D'Agosta

Cynthia, who makes her home in San Jose, said, "I'm very excited to accept this opportunity to return to the work of open space protection and preservation in general. I am very inspired by the Committee's history, dedication, and successes. I look forward to continuing in this tradition, and achieving new heights with the Committee for Green Foothills."

I have been honored to serve as President over this past year and I want to thank all of you for your encouragement, your enthusiasm and your steadfast support of CGF. In a world that can often seem fragmented and frantic, our ability to experience the beauty, the tranquility and the timelessness of our natural world is a rare gift indeed. Because of you, it is a gift that can be shared for generations to come. 

Freeway Dreams, Nightmares and Revolts

BY LENNIE ROBERTS

In 1962, at the height of the postwar suburban sprawl, San Mateo County commissioned George Nolte Consulting Civil Engineers to prepare a City-County Highway Plan that would define a system of highways and freeways "to adequately serve San Mateo County in the year 1990".

The highway plan, proudly presented to a welcoming Board of Supervisors, was based upon an expected 900,000 population by 1990. It's interesting to imagine what the Peninsula would have looked like if the freeway builders' dreams had materialized. Dreams? Or more likely nightmares! The resulting plan that proposed to crisscross the county with an ecstasy of new highways and freeways simply boggles the mind.

North South Freeways

By 1990, the plan envisioned no fewer than five north-south multi-lane highway/freeway systems:

Highway 1 down the coast from Daly City to Santa Cruz

Skyline Parkway that would extend Skyline Boulevard north through the San Francisco watershed lands

Junipero Serra Freeway which was under construction

Bayshore Freeway that was nearly completed

Bayfront Freeway to be constructed out in the Bay from Candlestick Point in San Francisco south to Palo Alto and beyond

A more appropriate name for Bayfront freeway would be "Bay-Affont", since it would have involved the filling of many hundreds of acres of open Bay waters

between San Francisco and Foster City. One scheme, the Rockefeller Plan, envisioned scraping the top off San Bruno Mountain to provide the necessary fill. South of Foster City, the freeway would cross through sloughs, wetlands, and salt ponds owned by Leslie Salt, assumed to be fair game for future filling and development at the time.

East West Freeways

The proposed east-west freeways were equally audacious:

San Bruno Freeway, now called Highway 380, would continue west from Junipero Serra Freeway and connect to Cabrillo Highway where the Shelldance Nursery is located today

Fassler Avenue and Linda Mar Boulevards in Pacifica would blast the hills and ridges to the east up to Skyline Parkway

Millbrae Avenue-Granada Route, a new highway, would cut through the watershed and snake down to Cabrillo Highway at the Half Moon Bay Airport

Highway 92 would become the major freeway connecting the coast to the Bay, notching through Skyline and providing quick access to the extensive holdings of Westinghouse Corporation

Higgins Purisima Road, just south of Half Moon Bay, would extend east to join Edgewood Road at Skyline

Froment Road would expand Tunitas Creek Road into a highway

Willow Freeway, following present-day La Honda Road, would connect Menlo Park to Cabrillo Highway at San Gregorio

The *Southern Crossing*, a new Bay bridge, would be built near the San Francisco-San

Mateo County line

Multiple highways and arterials were planned along the Bay to connect it all together


Individual and Collective Revolts

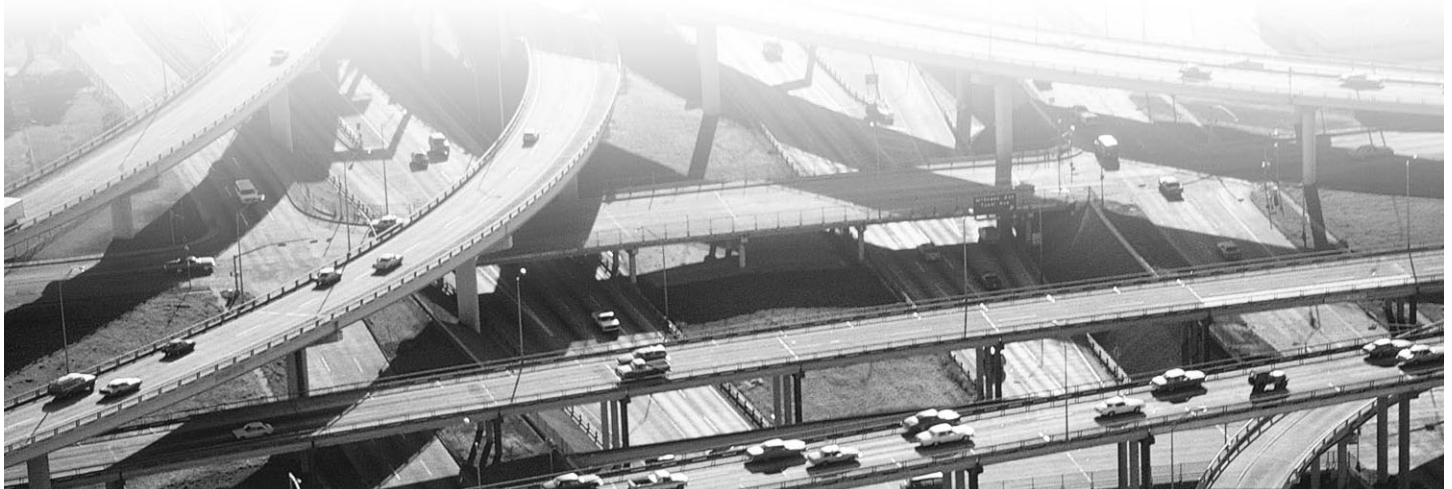
As things turned out, most of this asphaltic nightmare is dead and gone, thanks to many individual and collective revolts that were occurring in San Francisco, Marin, and beyond at about the same time.

Voters in the Bay Area resoundingly defeated the *Southern Crossing* in 1972. The *Willow Freeway* met its demise due to activists in Palo Alto and Menlo Park. The rugged geography of the Santa Cruz Mountains, the vision and tenacity of environmental activists, and the exorbitant costs of construction squelched the most egregious projects, including the six-lane *Devil's Slide Bypass*.

Establishment of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission in 1965 and the Coastal Commission in 1976, both the result of massive citizen efforts, prevented further attempts to fill the Bay and chop prime agricultural lands into subdivisions.

Looking back, it seems strange that the plan had no transit component! Today, our planning for transportation includes a variety of transit options, albeit still not as robust and reliable as they should be. Our countywide land use plans incorporate firm boundaries to keep urban development within cities and maintain rural areas as natural, productive farms, forests, and watersheds.

Stay tuned; there is much yet to be done, on both sides of the green line! 



Update on Habitat Planning in Santa Clara County

BY BRIAN SCHMIDT

A multi-year effort to create the Santa Clara County Habitat Conservation Plan/ Natural Communities Conservation Plan (the "Habitat Plan") could result in the largest land acquisition in the County in decades, but could also harm endangered species if not handled correctly.

How the Plan Would Work

Ultimately, more than 40,000 acres of the most valuable habitat could be purchased, improving public land management for endangered species, and modifying land use policies to restrict impacts on native species. The goal of the plan is to go beyond requiring mitigation for harm that development causes to endangered species by requiring habitat expansion and improvement so they are actually better off than they were before development occurred.

All this comes with a large caveat. The plans

currently in place seem reasonable, but making them work correctly needs further development. Take the issue of funding – will it be enough to buy and maintain all the habitat that the plan calls for? Some 40% of the funding relies on outside grants – is that realistic? Additional funding would supposedly come from the Santa Clara Open Space Authority, but the Authority's funding is tied up in litigation brought by the Taxpayer's Union, so that funding is in doubt. These issues will need resolution.

Coyote Valley Status Unclear

With the Specific Plan for Coyote Valley on hold, it is unclear whether other proposed developments in the valley will affect the Habitat Plan. Old plans that may be revived, like the Coyote Valley Research Park (the "Cisco" project) are supposedly exempt from the Plan - but they would be vulnerable to legal challenges if someone with the resources could take them on. New

plans like the potentially destructive Gavilan College proposal also need consideration.

Threats Outside the County Line

New threats are happening just outside the County borders, too. In San Benito County, a proposed 6,000 unit development just on the county border threatens the integrity of a floodplain and important wildlife corridor, along with all its other environmental impacts. These issues will have to be considered during the plan development.

Monitoring the Plan

The Committee for Green Foothills remains active in monitoring the plan, and Committee Advocate Brian Schmidt has served on a Stakeholder Committee for several years. A recent workshop co-sponsored by the Committee publicized some environmental issues, so we will be doing our best to make sure the County ends up with the best result. **CGF**



Mt. Hamilton thistle



Tiburon indian paintbrush



Jewelflower



Cait Hurnick

Stanford has not complied with promised recreational access.

Stanford Keeps on Developing While It Fights Trail Mitigations

By BRIAN SCHMIDT

Sensible environmental protection requires that mitigations for damage to the environment either precede or, at the very least, happen when those environmental impacts occur.

So why has Stanford been allowed to develop under the 2000 General Use Permit without constructing the required trail mitigations? Over 15% of the permitted office construction has occurred, and over one-third of the residential construction has been constructed or approved for construction, yet the trails have not been built.

Background on the Trail Mitigations

Stanford promised to build two trails to mitigate for these impacts. Still, years after the impacts began, Stanford refuses to construct the trails. The inaction on

the southern trail near Page Mill Road constitutes a particularly egregious violation, since Stanford chose the alignment, and it is fully permitted. Yet Stanford refuses to proceed because Committee for Green Foothills filed a lawsuit against the attempt by Stanford and Santa Clara County to eliminate the *northern* trail by simply offering to expand the Alpine Road sidewalk.

Stanford's proposal for the northern trail generated strong opposition by neighbors who were concerned about intrusion into their properties and safety issues, as well as the principle that they were being asked to mitigate for Stanford's project. The environmental community had equally strong objections to the impacts on San Francisquito and Los Trancos Creeks, as well as the complete uselessness of expanding a little-traveled sidewalk.

The good news is that in San Mateo

County, where the expanded sidewalk would have been located, the County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to reject Stanford's offer. The Board of Supervisors also called on Stanford to immediately transfer the money it promised for the sidewalk expansion to a program to provide real recreational improvements. Stanford has not complied with this request.

Update on CGF's Lawsuit

On February 21, a court in San Jose finally heard CGF's case against Stanford and Santa Clara County for making this environmental decision without any environmental review. The case has been held up on technicalities regarding proper procedures, and even if the hearing goes our way, it only clears away the procedural hurdles. Still, this is an important step in getting Stanford to comply with its responsibilities. **CGF**

Parks for the Future Encore!

Measure O

BY LENNIE ROBERTS

Voters in San Mateo County will have another chance this June to provide a dedicated source of funding for our local parks. Measure O will help meet critical funding gaps for parks and recreation in each of the county's twenty cities, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Ladera and Highlands Recreation Districts, and the 13 parks owned by San Mateo County.

Measure A, a similar measure on the November 2006 ballot, fell short of the necessary 2/3 majority. Several factors worked against its passage: lower than predicted voter turnout; aggressive state wide, anti-tax campaigns against cigarette and oil taxes; and its placement at the end of a long, four-page ballot. Many volunteers worked on other crucial races, and many assumed that a parks funding measure would pass without their help. We now know otherwise!

Strong Support for Measure O

The Measure O campaign this spring will have a robust organization, and will focus on the benefits to each city. Two polls conducted in September 2007 and January 2008 show that local parks continue to have very strong support with 70 percent of those polled supporting Measure O despite the recent economic downturn. Our polling also identified the most effective messages to use in swaying undecided voters.

Estimates show that Measure O will provide approximately \$16

million in revenue, annually, generated by a one-eighth cent sales tax that will cost the average resident less than \$2 per month. Under the funding formula, 52% of the revenues would be distributed to the cities in the County based on population. Of the remaining revenue, 42% would be allocated to San Mateo County parks and 6% to the three parks and open space districts operating in the County.


The Case for Measure O

Revenues from Measure O will be used to support local parks and recreation services, including acquiring and developing parkland, maintaining and preserving open space and wildlife habitat, repairing and upgrading playgrounds, picnic areas, and sports fields, and after-school programs and summer programs for children and teens.

Measure O will provide many worthwhile benefits: increased quality of life, neighborhood safety, healthier kids and families, and improved air and water quality. Like good schools, beautiful parks contribute to the attractiveness of our communities, the value of our homes, and our quality of life.

How You Can Help

The campaign for Measure O needs everyone's help. Getting the required two-thirds vote is tough.

You can help by donating to the campaign, endorsing the measure, and spreading the word to your friends, neighbors, and beyond! To make a contribution, volunteer, or get more info, visit www.ParksfortheFuture.org. 



Credit is due

In the Fall 2007 Green Footnotes we did not credit Darin Boville for his lovely photo. To see more of his work go to montarafog.com.

Pave Wetlands, or Restore Them?

Smart Development in the Era of Global Warming

By STEPHEN KNIGHT

No longer an abstract future threat, rising sea levels caused by global warming are now a harsh reality that all of us must face – including those concerned with the future of San Francisco Bay and those only concerned with developing the land around it.

Over the last century, sea levels rose about seven inches at the Golden Gate and could rise another two to three feet by 2100, threatening shoreline cities with flooding. The alarming rise in sea level due to global warming threatens the health of the San Francisco Bay Area – our fish, wildlife and Bay Area communities.

The Wisdom of Re-establishing Wetlands

One practical and natural response to the projected rise in sea level is to re-establish 100,000 acres of healthy wetlands all around the Bay. This number is the goal of the San Francisco Bay Habitat Goals Report, a decade-old consensus scientific blueprint for a healthy Bay.

Wetlands play a critical role in the health of the Bay. Wetlands filter water, provide habitat and recreation, and improve the economy and our quality of life. Because tidal salt marshes provide natural flood control, significant wetland restoration is a cost-effective way to help reduce the impact on developed shoreline areas when sea levels rise due to global warming.

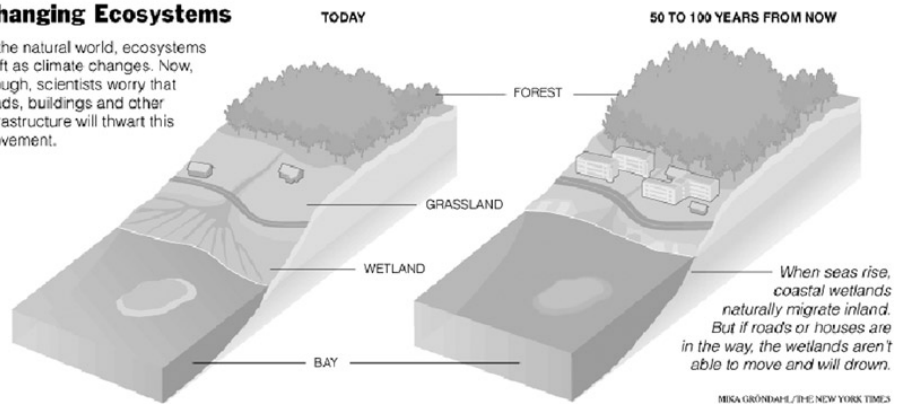
The good news is that tidal wetlands can help us both fight and adapt to climate change. They buffer floods by absorbing water, allowing the construction of lower levees, and they capture and hold carbon in massive amounts. In fact, scientists from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the White House agree that wetland restoration is an important strategy for fighting global warming. A single acre of tidal wetland captures and converts around 2000 pounds of carbon dioxide into plant material each year, equivalent to the emissions from driving a car some 2280 miles.

Re-thinking Shoreline Development

Recent scientific studies about rapid ice

Changing Ecosystems

In the natural world, ecosystems shift as climate changes. Now, though, scientists worry that roads, buildings and other infrastructure will thwart this movement.



MIKA GRÖNHÄLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

melt from Greenland to Antarctica create fear that the seas could rise even further. Scenarios like these are frankly “scaring the hell out of a lot of people,” as San Mateo County Supervisor Rich Gordon has observed. Rather than being paralyzed, we must act intelligently to protect and preserve our precious Bay shoreline. And we must make smart decisions about where to put new infrastructure, such as housing, as the Bay Area continues to grow. New development on the Bay shoreline, in particular, should be examined under the microscope.

Rising sea levels will of course threaten extensive high-value infrastructure all around the Bay, including ports and airports, housing and office parks. Decisions will have to be made about where to defend existing infrastructure, and in some cases where it may make sense to retreat to higher ground rather than commit to paying the long-term high cost of building and maintaining higher, hardened levees. The Peninsula faces perhaps more than its share of such decisions, with SFO, Foster City, Redwood Shores and other areas all in need of protection behind reinforced levees.

In the face of that reality, plans to put high value development in areas not already protected by levees should be viewed with a high degree of skepticism. As San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission Executive Director Will Travis told the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors late last year “It may be better to abandon plans than to allow development and face the costs of protecting it from flooding...”

Of course, one such large development is being considered on the Peninsula – Cargill’s plans to develop its 1433-acre salt pond property in Redwood City. The proposal would be highly controversial even if it didn’t involve destruction of restorable tidal wetlands.

In fact, Cargill’s development proposal will likely propose to restore a portion of the property to wetlands. But wetlands too need to adapt to rising sea levels. Current projections suggest that South Bay tidal marshes will be able to keep up with sea level rise, capturing sediment to maintain their elevation. But as highlighted in a recent New York Times article, wetlands that are hemmed in by levees may well end up being destroyed.

Steps We Can Take That Will Make a Difference

Global warming is indeed a daunting international policy dilemma. But individuals should not feel paralyzed. The problem of sea level rise is a consequence of countless decisions aggravating a global problem – a problem that we can all mitigate through countless small actions. Local and regional policy land use decisions favoring smart growth over destruction of open space and wetlands are a very good place to start as well. **ccf**

— Stephen Knight is Political Director with Save The Bay

Save The Bay works to counter global warming threats and educate the general public through volunteer programs, advocacy and public education campaigns

Climate Change, CEQA, and Local Land Use

BY BRIAN SCHMIDT

The specter of climate change – rising sea levels, decreased snow packs, lost farmland and lost wildlife habitat – weighs heavily on the Bay Area as it does on many parts of the world. While we may not be subsistence farmers for whom a change in climate can determine our survival, we still have much at stake and bear responsibility for solving the problem. Although Californians produce far fewer greenhouse gas emissions than Americans overall, we still produce far more than individuals in the developing world and need to take action.

How Sprawl Contributes to Climate Change

In addition to developing renewable energy sources and practicing energy conservation, we need to create wise land use policies to reduce sprawl. Sprawl causes climate change: it converts forests and grassland into suburbs, releasing carbon stored in trees and soil. Sprawl creates giant, energy-eating monster mansions requiring air conditioning. And sprawl forces people into cars that require more pavement or “heat islands” and spew more carbon, creating still more global warming.


The Committee for Green Foothills realized the danger of climate change years ago, arguing that development projects should document greenhouse gas emissions along with other destructive environmental impacts. Our arguments have been largely ignored, but times are changing. Last year San Jose had to withdraw a woefully inadequate Environmental Impact Report, in part, because of pressure from California Attorney General Jerry Brown over inadequate climate change analysis.

Controlling Climate Change

Future City and County General Plans will have to consider their effects on climate change or risk legal consequences from the Attorney General.

Individual projects present another challenge, however, as Jerry Brown will not chase down every sprawl-inducing subdivision, dam, and quarry expansion. We at the Committee can be very effective by demanding that development projects control their greenhouse gas emissions.

Ultimately, under the California Environmental Quality Act, cities and counties will need to require Programmatic Environmental Impact Reports. Because it may be difficult to do a comprehensive analysis of every small project that contributes greenhouse gases, a Programmatic EIR can analyze those impacts and propose mitigations. And while mitigations could in theory be conducted anywhere in the world, why not do them nearby? Why not support local agriculture and better public transportation or buy easements on land that would otherwise be logged?

As we do our work of fighting sprawl and protecting open space, CGF has a great opportunity to help control climate change. It is a problem that we all have to solve. 



Why Our Cities Need Agricultural Mitigation Policies

BY BRIAN SCHMIDT

On February 5th of this year, a referendum failed to win the votes necessary to a stop development in the City of Santa Clara that would convert a former University of California agricultural research area called “BAREC” to single family homes with some community housing.

From the Committee for Green Foothills’ view, this was unfortunate, but we also acknowledge a split in the environmental community. Some groups felt the proposal was close enough to being a good project and should be allowed to go forward – rather than stopping it and fighting for a better project later.

While the agriculture that formed the core of the Valley of Heart’s Delight has almost entirely disappeared from San Jose northwards, it is not all gone. BAREC and the Grant property in Mountain View represent recent losses in the last year, but some agriculture survives in Sunnyvale, in Saratoga, and elsewhere, even in San Jose well north of Coyote Valley.

Just talking about protecting remaining farmland is not enough, and failure to act, as in Santa Clara’s case, is completely unacceptable.

Even doing something creative, like facilitating children’s access to farmland and 4-H programs, would be far better than doing nothing, the option Santa Clara chose for BAREC.

How Mitigation Can Work

On one key issue, the need to mitigate for the loss of agricultural lands, strong agreement exists among environmentalists. Even groups that supported privatizing BAREC agreed that a better project would have done some kind of mitigation for the loss of agricultural lands.

Santa Clara County cities with remaining agricultural land under their jurisdiction, no matter how small, should develop agricultural mitigation policies before allowing agricultural land to be developed. Barring great need, these lands should be kept agricultural.

Even creating new farmland, while

difficult, can be done. Andy’s Orchards has done it in Morgan Hill, leasing some unused land from a neighboring homeowner and planting an expanded orchard. Mountain View discussed doing something similar when it supported developing Grant Farms.

If development is essential, then the resulting financial windfall to developers should pay for the creation or protection of farmland. If as in the case of Santa Clara, no other farmland exists in that city, it should look to the nearest area to protect farmland or create new farmland. Gilroy has done this, and Morgan Hill is considering it. Other cities should do at least as much because they have preserved far less farmland than those two cities have.

Even doing something creative, like facilitating children’s access to farmland and 4-H programs, would be far better than doing nothing, the option Santa Clara chose for BAREC.

Taking the Next Step

The next step is for cities with remaining agricultural land, no matter how small, to adopt well-thought-out agricultural mitigation policies. Agricultural land and open space provide welcome relief from the asphalt and concrete that surround us – our quality of life depends on it. **CGF**



Will Desalination Contribute to Sprawl?

BY BRIAN SCHMIDT

The idea of converting our endless ocean water into something people and lawns can drink has been tried for decades without ever being cheap or environmentally sound.

The High Cost of Desalination


Desalination using distillation or reverse osmosis requires tremendous amounts of energy and currently costs three times as much as water obtained from other processes. Yet, desalination is being touted once again as a cheap, abundant, and environmentally beneficial technology for increasing the world's dwindling supply of fresh water. Companies now claim that new, renewable technologies like solar power can provide water at an affordable cost. Left unsaid is the disposition of the concentrated saline sludge leftover from desalination, usually dumped into near-shore ocean waters.

How Desalination Enables Sprawl

Also left unsaid is that, at a broader level, the lack of water has been a physical limit on sprawl that substitutes for strong anti-sprawl regulation. The danger is that desalination plants will overcome political opposition on the basis of promises for using cheap, renewable power sources. Even if "cheap and green" sources of energy to power desalination plants never bear out, once built, desalination plants would greatly expand sprawl. The lack of water will not prevent development forever if desalination spreads. Even if that desalination never becomes cheap and green, the cost of desalinated water will decrease as a percentage of the overall cost of housing. It's a safe bet that home prices will continue to increase faster than the cost of desalinated water.

Simply put, cheap and "green" desalinated water, solar powered or otherwise, poses a serious threat to the environment. Because of desalination, the lack of water no longer provides protection against development. Areas where water is scarce often lack zoning protections against unwise development that creates sprawl and the saline sludge that desalination plants generate.

Containing Sprawl that Desalination will Bring

So what to do? We should not allow desalination projects to proceed beyond the pilot stage until cheap and green renewable energy sources are proven, environmentally responsible solutions for saline-sludge waste products are implemented, and anti-sprawl zoning regulations for surrounding lands are strengthened. 



CGF Sues Los Gatos over Ross Creek Development

BY BRAIN SCHMIDT

On February 21, 2008, the Committee for Green Foothills filed a lawsuit against the City of Los Gatos for approving a development within its 100-year flood plain. The development also encroaches on the Ross Creek stream corridor in violation of its Guidelines for Land Use Near Streams.

Ross Creek runs through central Los Gatos before eventually joining the Guadalupe River. Although existing development invades the stream corridor, significant riparian habitat survives, and Ross Creek runs year-round with fish. The newly approved development is massive in terms of its impact on a less-developed portion of Ross Creek.

Two problems make Los Gatos' approval critically flawed. First, expert analysis shows that the development falls within the 100-year flood plain, placing the development at risk and threatening neighbors and wildlife with displaced floodwaters. Second, the development violates Los Gatos' Guidelines for Land Use Near Streams that require it to protect stream habitat.

The Land Use Guidelines issue is significant. Los Gatos, like other cities in Santa Clara Valley, promised to protect streamside habitat in order to eliminate a requirement to have the Santa Clara Valley Water District approve development alongside streams. By violating this promise, Los Gatos now has sole legal liability.

CGF expects that its lawsuit will prevail and protect Ross Creek and we hope it encourages other cities to protect their streams and follow land use guidelines. **CGF**

The Committee is watching...



Peter LaTourrette

Half Moon Bay — where Federal Judge Vaughn Walker has issued a bizarre judgment of \$40 million in favor of developer Chop Keenan, who has been seeking approval of an 83 home subdivision called Beachwood. Instead of appealing the ruling, the City has signed an agreement to pursue legislation to overrule all state environmental laws on Keenan's property, as well as an adjacent parcel; if that fails, the City will be obligated to pay Keenan \$18 million.

Stanford University — which has decided not to dump up to 300,000 cubic yards of "diggings" from campus construction on the former Christmas Tree Farm along Sand Hill Road, but instead plans to truck the dirt across the Dumbarton Bridge. CGF urges Stanford to partner with the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge and use the dirt beneficially for restoration of Bair Island.

SB 1295, authored by Senator Denise Ducheny — which would eliminate the ability of the Coastal Commission to appeal projects approved by local governments, placing the burden of appealing bad projects entirely upon citizens and community organizations.

Proposed closure of 48 California state parks - which would include Henry Coe State Park, the second largest in California, and Portola Redwoods State Park, one of the closest state park camping sites in the Bay Area, for minor

budgetary savings that are greatly outweighed by the impact on the taxpayers' right to access these publicly-owned, natural open spaces.

A proposed new quarry near Watsonville Road on the west side of Gilroy - which may affect open space and Uvas Creek.

The California Board of Forestry — which will decide whether to revive the environmentally destructive, permanent logging plan for the Los Gatos Creek redwoods.

Palo Alto — which is deciding whether to stop monster mansion development in its hillside areas.

The Committee Applauds

San Mateo County Board of Supervisors — which adopted new Green Building standards for major remodels and new residential, commercial, and industrial construction.

San Mateo County Board of Supervisors AGAIN — for unanimously rejecting a proposed sidewalk expansion along Alpine Road by Stanford University and to Supervisor Rich Gordon for calling Stanford's tactics "unconscionable".

Santa Clara Valley Water District — which adopted unanimously all recommendations from its Environmental Advisory Committee to reduce erosion and pollution in local watersheds.

San Mateo County Planners who are developing a Watershed Protection Ordinance to comprehensively address potential impacts on water quality from land clearing and grading on steep slopes as well as setbacks from creek banks and riparian areas.

The Gilroy citizen group, SOS Gilroy — whose strong opposition to the Westfield proposal for converting County agricultural land into yet another shopping mall, helped convince developers to relocate their proposed project.

The Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce — whose energetic Environmental Advisory Committee seeks to promote environmental awareness in general, Earth Day activities, and green businesses that protect against climate change.

Craig Britton — who is retiring after 30 years with the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, which has now protected over 50,000 acres of open space in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties.

A Special Tribute to Congressman Tom Lantos CGF honors Congressman Tom Lantos for his passion for our landscapes and his unswerving devotion to protecting land — from the Phleger Estate in Woodside and Bair Island in Redwood City to Mori Point in Pacifica, and the 4,000 acre Rancho Corral de Tierra near Half Moon Bay. He leaves a lasting legacy of magnificent parks and open space.

SAVE THE DATES

Farm Tour

*Join Committee for Green Foothills for
a Santa Clara County Farm Tour!*

Saturday, June 28, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

\$65 for CGF members, \$85 for non-members

Transportation and catered lunch included.

For more information: www.greenfoothills.org

To RSVP contact info@greenfoothills.org or (650) 968-7243 x314

Also:

Nature's Inspiration:

Celebrating Lennie Roberts

September 28th, 2008



COMMITTEE FOR
GREEN FOOTHILLS

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