

Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.

Post Office Box 353, Agoura Hills, California 91301



July 2010 MEETING (www.lvhf.org)

Thursday, 15 July 2010, 7:00 p.m.

The Place – Diamond X – Take Las Virgenes to Mulholland; turn left on Mulholland. For the next 3/4 mile, the King Gillette Ranch will be on your right. After you've passed Stokes Canyon Road, in about 3/4 mile, you will see a sign on your right with "Diamond X" and the National Park Service logo on it. A short distance past the sign a narrow road goes south at a right angle. This is Wickland Road, and, at this point you are entering the King Gillette Ranch. Follow Wickland about 300 yards until the road forks; take the left-hand fork; keep bearing left to the lighted house on the right. Park; enter through the lit doorway.

**Call to Order
Roll Call
Agenda Changes/ Approval
Delegates Reports**

**Correspondence/Announcements
Officer's Reports
Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Old Business/ Reports

1. Oak Tree Committee Report – HOO
2. Los Angeles County Oak Woodlands Conservation Management Plan Report
3. Internal - Tag Lines for Federation & Newsletter & New Committees - Coastal & Fundraising
4. The Edge Update

New Business

1. LVMWD – Director Carlos Reyes/Manager Jeff Reinhardt - Renewal of NPDES permit for Tapia Water Reclamation Facility with input from meeting with Heal the Bay
2. Living with Nature & Wildlife - Guest - Making yards safer for wildlife & people-lighting, fencing & landscaping. Report/update on anticoagulant poisoning of our wildlife in the Santa Monicas & how to use non-anticoagulant rodent control to prevent killing our coyotes, bobcats & mountain lions.
3. Update Steeplechase
4. Former Standard Pacific Project /new owners - Blue Marble - Update

WHO'S DOING ALL THAT GRADING ON AGOURA ROAD?

Riopharm - "Lucky Victim of History and Circumstance"



Riopharm grading on Agoura Road

Locals have been asking what's going on with the extensive grading and removal of over 90 percent of the oak trees along a particularly scenic 14-acre property along Agoura Road in Agoura Hills about halfway between Chesebro and Liberty Canyon.

The grading and removal of 44 oak trees is the work of Riopharm USA, Inc. (previously RMR) in preparation for construction of 24 closely-packed single-family homes approved by the City Council in 2006. There will be only the most minimal separation

between the houses, very short driveways and little room for homeowners and visitors to park along the street. Here's how the project happened:

Back in the late '70s and early '80s, before Agoura Hills incorporated, land use planning was in the hands of a County controlled by absentee developers. In those days, the County Supervisors made zoning decisions based on obsolete A-1-1, (one-house-per-acre) zoning regardless of topography, access or environmental constraints. If this wasn't enough to satisfy the developer, he was usually given whatever higher zoning density he wanted. With the County under court order to adopt more restrictive zoning, developers were rushing to gain approval for higher density projects before the rules were changed. RMR was born out of that planning environment.

In the late '70s the County approved zoning for condominiums for RMR despite the property issues and constraints and the presence of so many oak trees. After Agoura Hills was incorporated in December, 1982, that multi-family zoning then found its way into the City's new General Plan, and the property was zoned "RM" (medium density residential).

With two separate tracts comprising the 14 acres and based on the densities permitted in the General Plan, entitlements in 1989 were acquired on one tract for 14 townhome lots and on the other tract in 1993 for 14 single family home lots. Once these subdivision maps were recorded, the 14 legal lots on each tract stay with the land; and are permanently recorded legal lots.

Meanwhile, the construction and design permits for housing on those legal lots were allowed to lapse.

In 2005, Riopharm applied for a conditional use permit to construct 27 detached single family homes and an oak tree permit to remove 33 oaks. The Agoura Hills Planning Commission held four public hearings on these permits and denied the request for the permits by a unanimous vote of all five commissioners, citing as reasons for the denial,

"The sizes and massing of the units ... "

"Lack of light, air, privacy, and open space ... "

"Incompatible ... lot and yard sizes ... "

"(The project) does not maintain an awareness of the City's natural environmental setting ... "

"The project does not preserve and protect the natural features of the property without requiring significant and detrimental impacts to the on-site oak trees."

Riopharm appealed the Commission's denials to the Agoura Hills City Council. This appeal was heard in three public hearings in 2006. Meanwhile, two of Agoura Hills' planning commissioners, Harry Schwartz and Bill Koehler, who had been part of the unanimous denial of Riopharm by the Planning Commission in 2005, were elected to the City Council.

They were advised by the city attorney that they could not vote on Riopharm because they had taken previous action in regard to the project [as planning commissioners].

This left the City Council's final decision on October 11, 2006, in the hands of only three of the five Agoura Hills councilmembers. Dan Kuperberg, a former Fountainwood delegate to the Federation, voted to deny Riopharm's permits, but Councilmembers Denis Weber and John Edelston decided to approve them. Thus, by a procedural fluke, a project that had been denied by the entire Planning Commission, and almost certainly would have been denied by a majority of the City Council, ended up being approved by the City Council on a 2-1 vote.

By that time, the density of the project had been reduced by approximately 25 percent. The one recorded tract of 14 townhomes was reduced and converted to 11 single-family homes, and the 14 single-family home recorded tract was reduced to 13 homes, for a total of 24 single-family homes.

In accordance with City of Agoura Hill's codes, the initial 2006 approval of the CUP and oak tree permit was good for two years. In October, 2008, grading and building plans had not yet received final approval from the City, so Riopharm was given a one-year administrative extension. In December, 2009, with Riopharm's project still unbuilt, the Agoura Hills City Council was asked to approve a final one-year extension, with the planning department also recommending City Council consider and approve the removal of 11 additional oak trees, for a total of 44, because removal of the additional oaks was "necessary for the required infrastructure and grading."

The removal of the 44 oak trees is to be mitigated by planting four replacement trees for each tree removed. Replacement trees are required to include one 36" boxed tree and two 24" boxed trees.

The grading Riopharm has already done has "vested" the City Council's October, 2006, approval, but why did Riopharm begin construction at a time when the housing market was so depressed? It may be they had no choice. After a decade of spending money drafting plans, hiring consultants and preparing for public hearings, Riopharm's approvals were set to expire on October 11, 2010, unless they did enough work on the site to vest their approvals.

Given the current state of the housing market we can only hope the Riopharm project doesn't end up an abandoned blight.

But the real question is: How could such a densely designed, environmentally destructive project be green-lighted in these more enlightened times?

County actions created zoning and a template that Agoura Hills incorporated and followed in their first General Plan. But the city had a mixed and divided City Council, one that included both pro-development and environmental members. At that time, the planning thinking was, if you were going to have higher density development then put it next to the freeway. Once they made that decision everything else flowed from there; the recording of the two tract maps with 28 legal lots that run with the land, further cemented it, and ultimately came back to haunt the city.

In addition, the extremely unusual situation of two planning commissioners elected to city council (after voting to deny the project as commissioners) between hearings which disqualified them from voting and left the Council decision making unbalanced.

The Council couldn't unravel previous decisions and go back to square one unless they proposed a plan amendment, which would have put the city at risk legally with the developer, particularly because the process had been so lengthy.

The only consolation for the loss of 14 acres of rural highway frontage and 44 oak trees is that the heavily wooded property to the east on both sides of Agoura Road is not scheduled for further development.

WHAT ABOUT AGOURA ROAD EAST OF RIOPHARM?

The Riopharm 14 acre development doesn't reflect Agoura Hills' long-range plans for the rest of that rural section of Agoura Road. The remaining semi-rural, two-lane section of Agoura Road between Kanan Road and the Liberty Canyon community is slated to remain a two-lane road in Agoura Hills' General Plan. Part of the section of Agoura Road between Riopharm and Liberty Canyon follows the route of the original Camino Real and includes a section of pavement dating back to the 1930's, along with dozens of oak trees of various ages.

This stretch of road and the canyon leading off it to the southwest belong to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and are to be permanently preserved as part of the "Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor" connecting Cheeseboro Canyon Park and the rest of the Simi Hills to Malibu Creek State Park and the rest of the Santa Monica Mountains, so that, as our former Congressman, Brad Sherman likes to put it, "our cougars won't have to date their cousins".

COUNTY TO PROTECT AND RESTORE OAK WOODLANDS WITH CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

(This is the first in a series; as we continue to follow and report on the plan's implementation.)

Successfully balancing the need to preserve, protect and restore our oak woodland resource with the rights of property owners has never been easy. The County of Los Angeles is making a valiant effort; Supervisors Zev Yaroslavsky and Michael D. Antonovich each contributed \$25,000 in grant money to launch a Strategic Alliance headed by Santa Monica Mountains Resource Conservation District Senior Conservation Biologist Rosi Dagit and comprised of stakeholders from the environmental, scientific, business and political communities as well as planners, consultants and representatives from government agencies, with the objective of developing and producing a Los Angeles County Oak Woodlands Conservation Management Plan (LACOWCMP).

The County has a long history of concern for its oak resources and in 1982 was one of the first governmental entities in the state to enact an Oak Tree Protection Ordinance, in which it identified oaks as “valuable historical, aesthetical and ecological resources.” However, the Ordinance only provides protection to individual trees; the oak woodland as a habitat and its associated ecology received no protection under the Ordinance. In other words, while the Ordinance has succeeded somewhat in preserving historic oak trees—reviews of its effectiveness indicate even more could be done—it has failed to protect the woodlands as a functional whole. Since the Ordinance’s adoption, over half of the land developed in the County has occurred in and near oak woodlands.

Oak woodlands are not just a collection of individual trees. An oak woodland is an oak stand with a greater than 10 percent canopy cover or one that may have historically supported that. Associated with that cover and connectivity are over 300 vertebrae species and more than 5,000 invertebrates, as well as hundreds of native plant species. The woodlands are a complex interconnection of oak trees, plants and animals that create a dynamic living system.

The trees filter out air pollution and absorb carbon dioxide; the canopies prevent erosion, and along with providing many health, recreational and other benefits, the woodlands are an iconic part of our visual landscape. Real estate prices for homes in or near oak woodlands are consistently higher than those without oaks or other natural spaces.



The County shares oak woodland loss with other urban areas in California, and in 2001 the state legislature created a fund through the adoption of AB 242 for oak

woodland conservation. In 2004, the legislature amended CEQA through SB 1334 to address the impacts and mitigation of land development in oak woodlands. Since 2009 the Natural Resources Agency and the California Air Resources Board have required evaluation of the impacts of oak conversion on greenhouse gas emission. A single large coast live oak can sequester over 9 tons of carbon dioxide in 50 years. Imagine how important oak woodlands are in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions!

The County is in the process of updating its General Plan, adopting new CEQA guidelines and updating the zoning code. When the OWCMP has been completed, the protection, enhancement and restoration of oak woodlands can be integrated into the overall planning process of the General Plan Update, ensuring it has the necessary teeth.

The draft OWCMP is currently undergoing a partial re-write and re-organization, accommodating many of the suggestions and input its author(s) have received to date.

Some of the elements we will discuss in future newsletters include educating and getting the public on board as advocates, creating opportunities for recovering oak woodlands as the focus of planning and community efforts, “qualifying” oak woodlands, policy differentials between larger developments vs. single family homes, and defining and making terminology less vague so reasonable people reading a definition and looking at the same data can make the same accurate assessment or determination.

To prevent impacts to existing oak woodlands, one of the OWCMP’s priorities is to create incentives and rewards for private landowners to entice them to voluntarily preserve and restore oak resources. Of course, this is essential for the plan to work, and we certainly understand the necessity and wisdom in offering attractive incentives. But we need to make sure the incentives don’t invite abuse by landowners and planners, such as increased density that ultimately causes loss of the oak resource anyway. Proper identification of woodlands, long-term monitoring of woodland health, enforcement and significant penalties will be key.

Here are some of the incentives/benefits being considered in the OWCMP:

- **Dedications or Donations of Land**

Dedicating conservation easements or woodlands to a public trust (this has implications for both single-family and larger developments).

- **Avoided Permitting, Mitigation and Monitoring Costs – Streamlined CEQA Process**

When a development is designed to avoid impacts to oak woodlands, the time, permit application development, mitigation and monitoring implementation costs may be avoided. Also, projects that do not require these permits can be expedited through the Regional Planning process.

Mitigation requirements for removing oak woodlands can be very expensive – one typical mature tree in woodland is valued as much as \$100,000 – and may involve planting twice the number of oaks removed.

- **Carbon Sequestration Benefits**

Because these fees for offsetting loss of oak woodland could be substantial, the financial incentives to property owners to preserve enhance or expand healthy oak

woodlands are significant.

- Existing Oak Woodland Expansion Credits

Property owners who preserve, protect oak woodland for a minimum of 5 years could receive limited additions or expanded development considerations due to their proven stewardship.

- Fire and Fuel Modification Benefits

Clearing up to 200 feet from all structures is costly. The presence of oak woodlands significantly reduces clearance costs because native understory is less flammable and oak trees are harder to ignite and not as prone to explosion. Oak stands that are well maintained prevent slope failure, reduce erosion and retard the advance of wildfire.

- Land Acquisition

Outright purchase acquisition is most direct way to ensure long term protection. One of the benefits of the OWCMP is the map that highlights priority purchases. Grant funding could be pursued from the County Oak Woodland Fund as well as from the Oak Woodland Fund managed by the Wildlife Conservation Board.

- Conservation Easements

Landowner retains the title for the land, but the County or a local land trust would obtain development rights in perpetuity, thus preventing development.

- Income and Property Tax Credit

When donating oak woodland conservation easements, landowners would receive tax benefits for full value of their ecological gift on County property taxes. The gift also meets U.S. Federal Income Tax deduction criteria.

- Transfer of Development Rights

Consideration of transfer of development rights for parcels within Priority Oak Woodland Conservation Areas obtained in exchange for higher density development in already disturbed locations.

The inclusion of the fire/fuel modification benefits outlined above are exceptional. It is great to see the County's appreciation of the role native vegetation and oaks play in slowing wildfire. It's the new science replacing the outmoded method of brush clearance, better protecting our homes and the environment.

We hope the Oak Woodland Conservation Management Plan's implementation will encourage the cities of Calabasas and Agoura Hills to add overlays to their oak ordinances/plans. Calabasas has long been a champion of its oaks and focused on their preservation and protection.

The OWCMP is the antithesis of County's proposed Healthy Oaks Ordinance (HOO). The HOO is not only inconsistent with most policy in the OWCMP, it erodes and undermines the original Oak Tree Protection Ordinance - never mind the untold damage and havoc it has the potential for wreaking on our remaining oak woodlands resource. This 200-plus-page document is a tremendous effort by members of the Strategic Alliance, particularly Ben Saltsman, Supervisor Yaroslavsky's planning deputy, and Senior Conservation Biologist Rosi Dagit, both of whom continue to do an exceptional job on a tight budget.

**This article contains excerpts from the LACOWCMP*

OWTS UPDATES: CITY'S CREDIBILITY TANKS

The Calabasas City Council's ongoing public updates on the status of the city's off-site waste treatment systems (OWTS) continue to raise the eyebrows of even the most seasoned Council observers.

Their astonishment and disbelief is caused by city staffers' manipulation and distortion of facts and data, encouraged in public hearings by Mayor Barry Groveman (see the June newsletter at www.lvhf.org). A city staffer's allegation to the Council during a recent update about finding the "smoking guns that you have been looking for" suggests that staff is receiving an overzealous and biased mandate.

Clearly, these public "updates" are being orchestrated for desired results. Go to the city's website (see links below) and tune in to archived meetings to see for yourself: the mayor has a mission. The updates are increasingly being used to justify fast-tracking an expensive and unnecessary sewer system into Old Topanga, a rural, antiquated subdivision of just 38 homes. Meanwhile, the city's Dry Canyon/Cold Creek area, which staff says has 42 septs, has not been considered for a sewer system. Similar environmental, health and safety issues apply in that community. Why is the mayor not thumping for sewers there?

The latest snafus came to light in a review of the OWTS update, including the slideshow, at the April 28th Council meeting. Mayor Groveman introduced the update by saying it was a "[report card on conditions of the septic tanks the city is finding...](#)"

City building official Sparky Cohen, responding to the mayor's leading questions, interjections and suggestions, at one point described the situation as "horrible." (So much for unbiased staff reporting.) When the mayor asked if "for-sales" have been increasing as a result of the OWTS ordinance, Mr. Cohen noted that staff was "seeing a lot of for sale signs," though he gave no comparison or analysis. He reported that city staff had compiled an inventory of for-sale homes with un-permitted septs and sent letters to the sellers' respective realtors "as a courtesy, informing them of the obligation to obtain operating permits for properties." The mayor lauded the staff for protecting unsuspecting buyers who might be "defrauded." We wonder: Why would the mayor want to involve the city in real estate transactions between private parties? The state already requires sellers to disclose defects or malfunctions in septic systems. Negatively impacting the ability of a homeowner to sell his home exposes the city to potential liability.

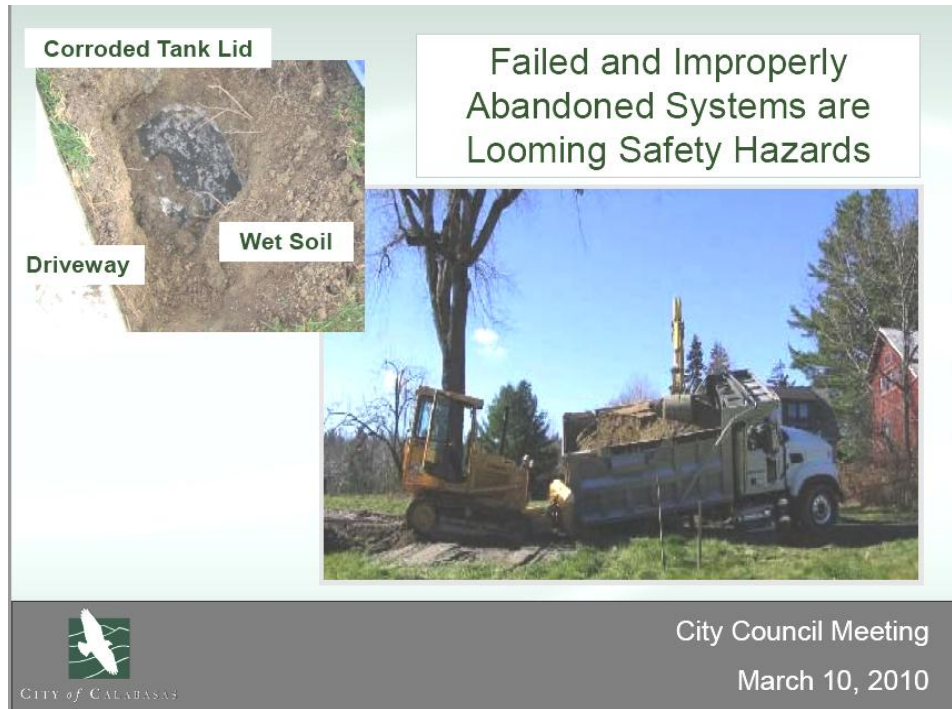
Instead, the city could *help* homeowners by revising the OWTS ordinance to require city **officials to return OWTS inspection results within a specified time**. Once the certified inspectors (paid by the homeowners) have completed their inspections, there are no time requirements for the city, in turn, to provide homeowners with the results and/or status of their inspection/permits, effectively leaving them in the lurch. Several residents who were given results by their inspectors in May still haven't heard back from the city, potentially leaving them unable to sell their homes in a timely manner.

Describing other "new challenges" in overseeing Calabasas OWTS, Mr. Cohen spoke of "seeing a lot of [home] expansions in areas with OWTS and no permits" and of

“improperly abandoned systems where someone can fall in or a vehicle can run over it and cave in.”

Responding to the mayor’s request to focus on the most important info so the Council could move to other items on the agenda, City Manager Tony Coroalles then described the next slide (below): “That is an abandoned septic that they didn’t properly abandon, because it’s got to be filled in, got to put gravel in it so that doesn’t happen if something drives through.” Councilmember Washburn remarked, “The truck fell into the septic.” Mayor Groveman then said, “I’m happy to be one person, and I’m sure you would all agree, I think we should make people aware of this - I wouldn’t want one resident to walk into this and pay hundreds of thousands to take these things out of the ground.”

Slide



There was only one big problem, as a Calabasas resident discovered just a few weeks ago: The slide showing a dump truck stuck in a collapsed septic tank that Mr. Coroalles described and Mayor Groveman and Councilmember Washburn commented on was not in the city of Calabasas, let alone in Old Topanga.



(C) 2005-1991 Daniel Friedman

Photo use courtesy of InspectAPedia (New York) Daniel Friedman

The photograph was lifted from the Internet site InspectAPedia in New York (http://inspectapedia.com/septic/Home_Septic_Safety.htm), its copyright cropped out and the photo cropped and placed on a slide with a city of Calabasas logo. There are explicit instructions on the InspectAPedia site prohibiting use of its material without permission. The city not only used the photo without obtaining permission - flouting copyright law - but it also used the photo as an integral part of the OWTS update presentation April 28th describing, "conditions of septic tanks the city is finding."

We are all advocates for clean water and for functional septic systems. But the casualty of these increasingly questionable updates and the city's nearly constant manipulation of OWTS information is the issue of whether sewers are necessary. Councilmembers Bozajian and Maurer have distinctly and continually raised questions about the interpretation of the information presented at these updates, and they voted against the city seeking bids for an EIR in preparation for sewers in Old Topanga. Likewise, the Federation voted to oppose sewers in Old Topanga and to opt instead for cleaning up, repairing, monitoring and inspecting systems as the best and most environmentally savvy solution. Keeping sewers out of Old Topanga will allow the land to dictate its use, one of the guiding principles of the County's North Area Plan.

The mayor's attempt to justify a price tag of over a million taxpayer dollars to install sewers in a tiny, 38-home neighborhood by invoking such environmental victories as the purchases of Ahmanson Ranch and Soka/King Gillette and Councilmember Bozajian's open space initiative for Calabasas is...well, absurd. Unless, of course, the mayor's objective is to build out Old Topanga. Based on his pro-sewer, anti-septics actions, we can only surmise that development is his driving force.

Who is going to be held accountable to the citizens of the city, and who is going to restore the credibility of the OWTS inspection process and reporting? Councilmembers Jonathon Wolfson and Dennis Washburn surely do not want to see further erosion of the process. In the months ahead, they will have an opportunity to ensure that the ethical guidelines the staff recently proposed for the city's volunteer commissioners are applied to the staff itself. Questions should be answered, OWTS updates should be credible, and, most importantly consideration should be given to saving the taxpayers' money and preserving the Old Topanga community from the overdevelopment that unnecessary sewers will bring.

Link to OWTS Update on April 28th Council Meeting – at 14:20
http://calabasas.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=2827

Link to OWTS Update on June 9th Council Meeting – at 39:36
http://calabasas.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=2894

FIRST AMENDMENT COALITION COMPELS CITY TO COMPLY

As we reported in last month's Federation newsletter, the City of Calabasas' ongoing refusal to provide access to or copies of requested public records ignited the attention of the First Amendment Coalition (FAC).

FAC is a California nonprofit public interest organization dedicated to advancing free speech, open and accountable government and public participation in civic affairs. The Coalition acts locally, statewide and nationally and strives through litigation and other efforts to prevent unnecessary government secrecy and to resist censorship of all kinds.

On June 2nd, the City received a request from an attorney for the Coalition to provide records that the City had recently denied as not being subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act. The FAC disagreed and demanded that all documents be provided.

The City of Calabasas did comply and began providing some of the documentation that was previously denied, with further documents still to be provided We'll keep you posted!

TALES OF "THE EDGE", PART II

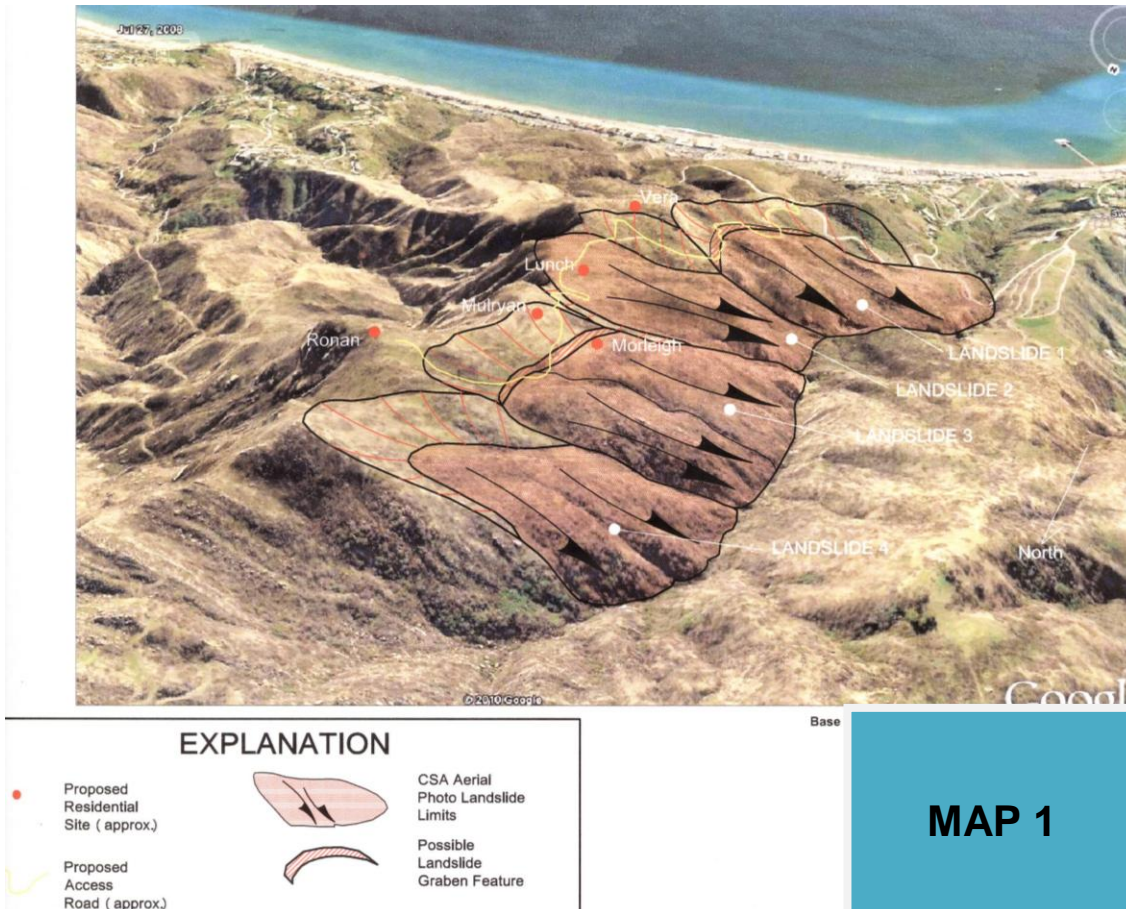
When we last left our hero, David Evans, (aka "The Edge" - the guitarist for the U-2 Rock Group) he was struggling mightily to overcome the laws of gravity, slope stability, and combustion to get Coastal Commission permits to build his "Sweetwater Mesa" development consisting of five mega-mansions and a new, mile-long, 20'-wide access road on the crest of a County-designated "significant ridgeline" at elevations of 1000' to 1700' on the south slope of Saddle Peak east of Malibu Canyon.

On its part the Coastal Commission staff found the geology report originally submitted by "The Edge's" lobbyist, Don Schmitz, to be inadequate and asked that there be a "peer review" of it by an independent geologist (to be funded by "The Edge") to determine if his home and four apparent "spec" houses would meet the requirements of the Coastal Act that all new developments must be,

- designed to minimize risks to life and property from fire, flood, and geologic hazards.
- designed to ensure stability and structural integrity, and
- visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas.

The two enclosed maps are from that second peer review required by the Coastal Commission and performed by the firm of Cotton, Shires, and Associates with funds provided by "The Edge".

The first map shows a view looking south down Sweetwater Canyon toward the ocean in the distance. Malibu Pier can be seen jutting out from the shoreline on the far right. On the left side of the canyon known landslides have a dull reddish color with black downhill arrows indicating the direction of movement, and are outlined with thin black lines. Uphill from these landslides and also outlined with thin black lines, but without a dull reddish color, are scars from the pull-away scarps where the five landslides originally pulled away from the canyon wall above them.



The five proposed building sites, all with Irish names, are shown as red dots. The proposed mile-long, 20' wide, access road to the building sites, with up to a 19% grade, is shown as a winding yellow line connecting "Ronan" and the other four building sites. The white line on the right dipping down into rugged Sweetwater Canyon (center of photo) and then climbing up the steep slope to join the proposed yellow access road is the existing steep, narrow, rough access road over an additional mile long that leaves Pacific Coast Highway just east of the Malibu Creek Bridge and passes through the gated Serra Retreat community off to the right of the photo.

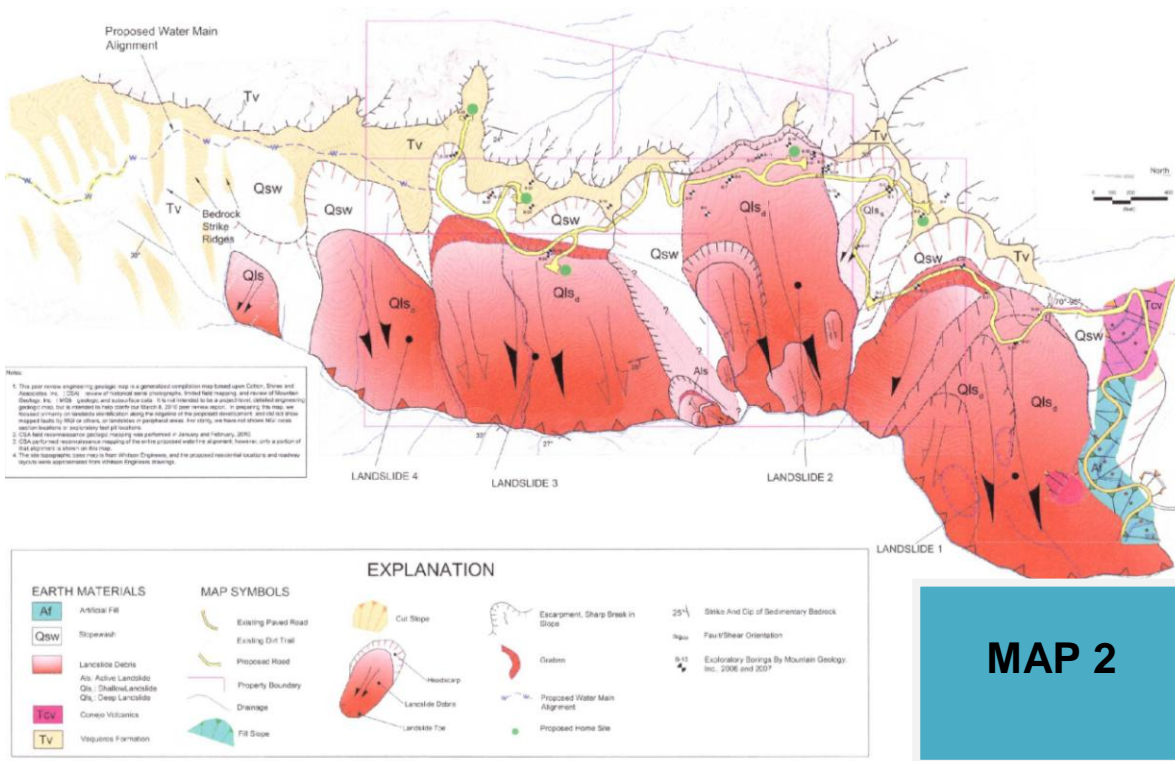
The existing, substandard white road and the proposed yellow ridgetop roadway would be the only means of access to the five mansion sites for emergency vehicles and the only means of escape for residents when this part of the mountains burst into flame, as they did in 1970, in 1993, in 2007, and surely will again in the future.

Los Angeles City Fire Chief Don Anthony told a state commission in 1977 that 40 to 100 acres of mature coastal chaparral, such as are found Sweetwater Mesa, would generate as much heat during a Santa Ana wind-driven brush fire as the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, and that fire equipment would not be able to save homes situated on long driveways in remote areas far from main roads

Fires, typically driven by gale-force Santa-Ana winds and generating flames 100-200' long , would be driven up the steep, northeast-facing slopes and draws leading up to the Ronan, Mulryan, Lunch, and Vera building sites on the County-designated “significant ridgeline”, subjecting homes on those ridge-top sites to extreme heat and flame during wind-driven brush fire conditions. (The Morleigh site is slightly less exposed to fire, being off the “significant ridgeline”, but, nevertheless, at the top of a large landslide).

Mitigating the fire hazard by removing portions of the chaparral might reduce the fuel load in future brush fires, but it would significantly increase the landslide hazard because it would remove the deep, woody roots of the chaparral that play such an important role in maintaining slope stability.

The second map is a geology map from the same peer review report that looks east from Sweetwater Canyon to the “significant ridgeline”. Known mapped landslides are shown in red with arrows pointing downhill in the direction of movement. On this map the proposed building sites are shown as green dots, while the proposed mile-long access road, beginning in the purple “Qsw” area on the right, is shown in yellow. The 7600'-long water main to be built from the tank at the top of Saddle Peak is shown as a series of “W’s” connected by dashed lines coming from the upper left.



If things go as planned, the Coastal Commission will hold a hearing sometime in the fall at which David Evans (aka “The Edge”) and his team of consultants, lawyers, and lobbyists will try to overcome the constraints of the Coastal Act, the law of gravity, the law of storms, and common sense to gain approval for permits to build his dream house and four other apparent “spec” mansions in one of the most impossible locations in the Santa Monica Mountains. Will he succeed? Stay tuned.

SPEAKING OF LOVE-STARVED COUGARS ...

He may not have been dating his cousin, but Cougar P-12 was spending a lot of time with a female last January. The result of this socializing made the papers a few days ago.

You may have seen the recent article in the *Los Angeles Times* about the newest residents of the Las Virgenes Area. Three baby mountain lion cubs, named P-17, P-18, and P-19, were born recently in the mountains somewhere south of Peter Strauss Ranch. This is the second litter of cubs born in the mountains near Malibu Lake in the past six years.

The father of the cubs is believed to be P-12, the 140 pound male who somehow made it over or under the Freeway in the Liberty Canyon area late during the night of January 24th. He was reported to be spending time in the company of a female a few days later.



Courtesy of the National Park Service

Because mountain lions are very shy and elusive, they go out of their way to avoid contact with people, so Las Virgenes residents may not realize that a handful of wide-ranging cougars are still at the top of our food chain. They generally stay out of sight, but the National Park Service which has radio-collared a dozen of them in the Santa Monicas, the Simi Hills, and the Santa Susanas since 2002, estimates there are currently seven cougars active in all three mountain ranges. Aren't cougars dangerous? Potentially, yes, but in the last 120 years there have been less than ten fatal attacks on humans in California, some of them involving rabid animals. There have been no reports of dangerous encounters locally, and Park Service radio-collar reports show cougars carefully staying out of developed communities.

While our local cougars haven't caused any human injuries, humans have caused the death of several cougars, while others have been killed in conflicts with other cougars.

Major causes of cougar deaths since 2002 include,

Several have been killed by automobiles, especially in Malibu Canyon.

Others have been killed by other cougars, especially males trying to eliminate competitors.
At least two have been killed by a buildup of anti-coagulant poisons in their systems.

The Park Service assures us there is plenty of food for P-12 and his progeny in the form of deer, coyotes, and raccoons, and studies show mountain lions rarely prey on pets or “hobby animals.”

“MY BACKYARD AS A PARK”

Rebecca Steinberg, a second year graduate student who is working on her Masters’ Degree at the prestigious Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies will be one of our guest speakers at our Thursday night meeting.

She will be speaking about large carnivore conservation in the greater Santa Monica Mountains, particularly bobcats and mountain lions, “with particular emphasis on non-target secondary anticoagulant poisoning” of these species through their consumption of rodents and other prey that has been poisoned with anticoagulants.”

In addition, she is working with National Park Service (NPS) biologists and will be giving us a preview presentation of their upcoming NPS community program called “My Backyard as a Park? Living with Nature and Wildlife,” scheduled from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, August 7th at the pavilion at Paramount Ranch.

“My Backyard as a Park” is not intended to be a passive lecture program. Rather, it will be an active, participatory program especially designed for “people who live next to parkland, open space, and other natural areas who may be experiencing various wildlife conflicts.”

It provides an opportunity for community members and biologists to learn from each other regarding how to make homes and yards **safer for wildlife** as well as people, including kids and pets.” Topics include how to improve lighting, fencing, and landscaping and to share research to date on anticoagulants and their potential impact on wildlife.”

“My Backyard is a Park” is intended for the whole family. Children are especially encouraged to come. The Animal Guys from the Wildlife Learning Center will be there with live native animals for kids to see up close. Food and light refreshments will be provided.

So that organizers can know how much food to provide, residents interested in attending on the 7th should RSVP by either calling Rebecca at (805) 370-2331 or emailing her at RSVP.CommunityProgram@gmail.com.

CUTS IN CALABASAS?

Many Calabasasans are suffering through “sticker shock” brought on by the 2010-11 – 2011-12 proposed budget recently submitted by the city manager and approved by the City Council. The budget projects a decrease in general funds balance, in other words a loss, of approximately \$3,350,000 over the next two years. Adding to the heartburn is the fact the projected actual loss for 2009-10 is \$3,476,300, a whopping 197 percent more than the loss they budgeted for. If the city’s budgeting acumen is as accurate now as it was last time, the city could be facing losses of \$6,600,000 over the two-year budget period.

** More on this to come.....*

NPS SEEKING COMMUNITY OUTREACH & VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGER

I am very excited to share with you a unique employment opportunity with the National Park Service located at Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. We are seeking a Community Outreach and Volunteer Program Manager (GS-0025-11) to work with community organizations and groups in fostering greater connections to our national and state parks, especially for under-served communities throughout Greater Los Angeles. The incumbent will be responsible for managing and coordinating a variety of community outreach programs, including media and marketing, recreational outings, transportation, volunteerism, service learning, and youth employment. A description of the opportunity and application requirements can be found at USAJobs under announcement # SAMO 10-03D, or follow this link: <http://bit.ly/bG6ihx>. The opportunity is open to all US Citizens; no previous federal employment is required. Please assist us in circulating this opportunity and identifying potential candidates.

As always, thanks for your assistance in helping us make parks more relevant and welcoming.

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Woody Smeck
Acting Deputy Regional Director
National Park Service, Pacific West Region

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Federation congratulates our delegate and president of the Old Topanga Homeowners, Inc., Jody Thomas for her Emmy Nomination as the Foley Artist on HBO's World War II Miniseries "The Pacific" produced by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg. The category is "Outstanding Sound Editing for a Miniseries, Movie, or Special." Good luck Jody!

222,000 SQ FT SENIOR RESIDENTIAL FACILITY PLANNED ON CALABASAS INN SITE

The Calabasas Planning Commission will hold a public hearing this Thursday for a proposal to demolish the Calabasas Inn facility and develop the site with a 222,379 square foot senior residential facility with 106 assisted living units and 104 independent living units on approximately five acres of the former Calabasas Inn property on the south side of Park Sorrento between Park Entrada and the Tennis and Swim Center.

The Commission will hear testimony on the following matters,

- Site Plan Review for the 222,379 square foot residential facility.
- Conditional Use Permit.
- Development Plan to increase the allowed building height from 35' to 46'.
- Oak Tree Permit to permit removal of four oak trees and encroachment into the protected zone of 20 additional oak trees.
- A reduction in required parking of 25% for Phase I and 20% for Phase II.
- A Tentative Tract Map to subdivide the property into condominium units.

Access to the property would be from Park Sorrento west of the Tennis and Swim Center.

For more information contact City Planner:

Glenn Michitsch

(818) 224-1707

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