



# Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Coalition

*--Dedicated to the sustained conservation of native animal and plant species in the Southwest Bioregion.*

November 10, 2016

Mayor and City Council members  
City of San Marcos  
1 Civic Center Drive  
San Marcos, CA 92069.  
VIA EMAIL [PlanningDivision@san-marcos.net](mailto:PlanningDivision@san-marcos.net)

**RE: Wildlife Coalition opposition to San Marcos Highlands project on the Council agenda of November 15, 2016**

Dear Mayor and Council members:

The undersigned organizations are united in opposition to the proposed San Marcos Highlands project (Highlands) and urge your denial. The project is well-known to many of our members and is one of the most threatening projects to our precious local coastal sage and riparian habitats.

The Highlands project places 189 single family dwelling units in the middle of one of the few remaining large open space areas in northern San Marcos and the County-- the most damaging location possible in this area. The project site is not only covered with undisturbed coastal sage scrub and riparian habitat, the headwaters of the Agua Hedionda Creek are located here and run through the property.

Another major objection we have is that the Highlands project will constrain an important wildlife corridor between the San Marcos Mountains to the southeast and an unnamed mountain range to the northwest. Further, it will remove over 77 acres of natural habitat in an area that currently supports abundant wildlife, including sensitive species.

The design of the project, which places houses on either side of Agua Hedionda Creek, requires a street crossing of the creek. A wildlife undercrossing of the street is proposed, but it will not succeed. The proposed undercrossing is too long and narrow to be used by larger mammals, such as deer. They will be forced onto the street, resulting in the potential for collisions with vehicles. Further, the wildlife corridor along the creek appears to be too narrow for wildlife to use.

At some point in the future, it is clear that the City of San Marcos intends to extend Las Posas Road through to Buena Creek Road. In the Highlands project, the road is extended to the northern property line. It crosses the east-west wildlife corridor, and a wildlife undercrossing is necessary, but not included. Since this undercrossing will be on the Highlands property, it is not clear how the undercrossing will be accomplished in the future if it is not in the Highlands plan. We are very concerned that if it is not included in the Highlands plan, it is likely to be infeasible in the future.

The project requires annexation yet there is yet to be an agreement with the natural resources agencies that complies with the North County MSCP Planning Agreement. The loss of the lands, habitats, and wildlife corridors as a result of this project would severely undermine an effective multiple species plan in the future.

Last, there are alternatives to the proposed project that will reduce its unacceptable environmental impacts. These are widely known and should be fully analyzed and pursued.

We respectfully urge you in strongest terms to deny this environmentally damaging project and require the developer to work with opposition groups and the neighboring communities to achieve a better project.

Thank you for your consideration,

Undersigned Member Organizations of the Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Coalition

*Joan Herskowitz, Buena Vista Audubon Society*

*Frank Landis, California Native Plant Society San Diego Chapter*

*Dan Silver, Endangered Habitats League*

*Pamela Heatherington, Environmental Center of San Diego*

*Laura Hunter, Escondido Neighbors United*

*Richard Fowler, Palomar Audubon Society*

*Diane Nygaard, Preserve Calavera*

*Van Collinsworth, Preserve Wild Santee*

*Jim Peugh, San Diego Audubon Society*

*George Courser, Sierra Club, San Diego Chapter*

*Mary Clarke, Co-Chair, North County MSCP/MHCP Task Force, Sierra Club, San Diego Chapter*

cc.

Mr. Mark Wardlaw, County of San Diego

Mr. Mendel Stewart, USFWS

Mr. Ed Pert, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

