

# Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Coalition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 12, 2019



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## Environmental, Climate Coalition join forces to Oppose Harvest Hills in Escondido

Today, more than 20 environmental, conservation, and climate organizations sent a letter to the Escondido City Council urging opposition to the proposed Harvest Hills Development.

The groups noted that, in spite of a new marketing position, the project formerly known as Safari Highlands Ranch is substantially the same when it comes to key impacts, namely location in a high-risk fire zone, high evacuation hazards for new and existing residents, and thousands of new cars on the roads in already traffic constrained areas.

Also of concern are traffic and long-term climate impacts from the addition of 67,000 **daily** vehicle miles traveled in a time when we need to be reducing VMT in order to comply with climate protection goals. The destruction of critical habitat areas key for successful adopted and proposed Habitat Management plans are also a significant impact.

Fire is one serious concern. Dan Silver, Director of Endangered Habitats League said, *"Experts have shown that this project cannot be safely evacuated if threatened by a fast-moving wildfire, and it will endanger the ability of the surrounding community to evacuate as well. Elected officials need to prioritize public safety and not create a fire trap."*

George Courser, Conservation Chair of the San Diego Sierra Club stated, *"This sprawl project is one of the worst we have seen proposed. This area is more appropriate as key wildlife habitat for local adopted conservation plans. As the state burns, we hope the elected officials will search their conscience before locating more housing in an extreme fire risk area."*

Speaking on the relationship of development and climate impacts, Sophie Wolfram of the Climate Action Campaign stated, *"Sprawl development is one of the key culprits driving the climate crisis. At a time when we have to be doing everything in our power to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, denying this project, which will vastly increase vehicle trips and tailpipe emissions, is just a no-brainer."*

The groups call out the fact that the change in marketing of an old proposal fails to address the fundamental concerns. *"Safari Highlands Ranch may have a new name but it remains the embodiment of reckless urban sprawl and the antithesis of Smart Growth. When we know better, we must do better. Bottom line: Harvest Hills is the Wrong Plan in the Wrong Place,"* said NeySa Ely, President of the San Pasqual Valley Preservation Alliance, a local community group.

The organizations signed on to the letter include Sierra Club San Diego, Endangered Habitats League, San Pasqual Valley Preservation Alliance, Escondido Neighbors United, Coastal Environmental Rights Foundation, Environmental Center of San Diego, San Diego Audubon Society, Preserve Calavera, San Diego Democrats for Environmental Action, California Chaparral Institute, Buena Vista Audubon Society, Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association, California Native Plant Society, Friends of Rose Creek, Friends of Agua Hedionda Creek, Escondido Chamber of Citizens, Endangered Habitats Conservancy, San Diego Coastkeeper, Climate Action Campaign, North County Climate Change Alliance, The Chaparral Lands Conservancy, Palomar Audubon Society, and San Diego 350.

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