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Preserving natural habitats, watershed resources, and trails

June 24, 2009

William P. Warford
Opinion Editor
Antelope Valley Press
Palmdale, California 93551

499 words

re: Viewpoint or My Turn submission regarding Editorial, "Environmental group to fight Tejon Ranch" (June 12, 2009, page C6)

Dear Bill,

Many things are "unbelievable" without facts. The *Antelope Valley Press* Editorial ("Environmental group to fight Tejon Ranch", 6/12/09) inaccurately states the Agreement will "leave 90 percent of the Tejon Ranch in its native state," "environmental groups have equal control," and project opponents are "outrageously greedy."

The Agreement, posted at www.tejonpreserve.com, states that 65 percent of the Ranch will be used for farming, grazing, hunting, filming, sand and gravel mining, oil and gas extraction, implementation of mitigation for Tejon developments, and recreational open space for residents. That is neither "dedication to conservation" nor "native state" so how can 90 percent be dedicated to conservation?

The Agreement creates an Option to Purchase (with tax dollars?) additional acreage, at market value, that expires December 31, 2010. That is not a "dedication" either.

Then the *AV Press* Editorial states that environmental groups have "equal control" on the new conservancy corporation. Tejon Ranch Corporation funds the corporation, appoints half its board of directors, and owns the land. In fact, only five closely-knit private organizations appoint directors to the board. Other regional environmental, community or government organizations have no representation or influence, and the five organizations are not universally respected. In fact, their own executive officers have resigned, and memberships have been cancelled, in protest to the Agreement. The Agreement's requirement that organization members

give up their right to free speech, subject to legal retaliation from this well-funded Wall Street corporation, is especially disdained.

Lastly, the Valley Press editorial asserts that “the outrageously greedy Center for Biological Diversity wants the entire ranchland untouched” and “refused to participate in the discussions.” In fact, the Center was involved in the discussions for years until the Agreement was signed and, according to Ileene Anderson, has never opposed well-thought-out development on Tejon that would respect environmentally critical habitat and wildlife corridor lands. The Center will continue to oppose development in environmentally critical areas and the lack of public services that will burden existing taxpayers in three counties.

The need for water resources will impact us all, as 23,000 units, commercial and industrial firms, and two new golf courses in west Antelope Valley will rely on water from the Antelope-East Kern Water Agency (AVEK). Existing landowners of three counties will bear the cost of infrastructure development. Traffic and pollution will impact Antelope Valley residents’ lifestyles and dark skies, and cannot be mitigated.

From an environmental perspective, as Richard Hume stated in the *Los Angeles Magazine* (June 2009) article referenced in the *AV Press* Editorial, the proposed development is “the rough equivalent of dropping a Boulder, Colorado, into the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or a couple iterations of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, down into Yosemite.”

Mr. Warford, the developments as currently proposed would have huge impacts on the Antelope Valley and our environment. There are widespread concerns among Antelope Valley residents, Los Angeles County Regional Planning, and environmental scientists. There is nothing “unbelievable” about opposing the developments as proposed, and I think the *Antelope Valley Press* owes the “ordinary folks” a sincere apology.

Respectfully Submitted,



Wendy Reed
Director, Antelope Valley Conservancy