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Ventura Coastkeeper Fights to Protect the Water Quality and Ecological Integrity of the Santa Clara River and Ventura County's Coastal Waters From the Proposed Newhall Development

Water Quality Concerns Raised in Ventura Coastkeeper's Extensive DEIS/DEIR Comment Letter Submitted to the Department of Fish and Game ("DFG") and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Demonstrates that the Agencies Cannot Approve the DEIS/DEIR for the Newhall Development



A Pristine Stretch of the Santa Clara River Just Downstream of the Proposed Newhall Development, whose Water Quality, Ecological Integrity, and Aesthetic Beauty will be Severely Impaired if the Newhall Project is Approved

Santa Clarita to Ventura, CA - For thousands of years, all inhabitants of the Santa Clara River watershed have relied on an ecologically healthy Santa Clara River ecosystem to sustain their existence and culture. Flowing 86 miles from the headwaters of the San Gabriel Mountains to the Pacific Ocean through a 1,600 square mile watershed, the Santa Clara River is southern California's last and largest naturally flowing wild river system that is not heavily dammed or channelized. It is home to as many as 12 federally endangered plant and animal species, and another 25 species of special concern, including the Southern California Steelhead, California Red-Legged Frog, Arroyo Toad, and Least Bell's Vireo. It provides numerous ecosystem services and aquatic ecosystem functions to the Santa Clara River Watershed and Ventura's Coast including: habitat for endangered

and threatened species, groundwater recharge; and clean and safe water quality for swimmers, surfers, other recreational users, and consumers of fish and seafood. A free flowing Santa Clara River, the ecosystem services it provides, species it supports, and wellbeing it brings to all those who enjoy it, is a treasure for all of Southern California, one that residents and non residents alike have a responsibility to themselves, their children, and their communities to protect. It is thus of the utmost importance to Ventura Coastkeeper (“VCK”), that the Newhall Development is only approved by State and Federal Agencies if it will have a less than significant environmental effect on the Santa Clara River Watershed and Ventura County’s coastal waters.

Under CEQA, the DFG cannot approve the DEIS/DEIR for the Newhall Ranch RMDP (Resource Management and Development Plan) and SCP (Spineflower Conservation Plan) because because not only does the DEIS/DEIR fail to identify and correctly forecast the proposed development’s numerous substantial impacts to water quality and fails to set forth mitigation measures that will reduce the impacts to water quality and aquatic biological resources to a less than significant effect, but feasible project alternatives and mitigation measures not set forth in the DEIS/DEIR would substantially lessen the proposed development’s significant effects on water quality and aquatic biological resources.

The Newhall Ranch Project proposes to develop 22,610 homes, seven schools, a golf course and a water reclamation plant that would move roughly 77,000 people into 12,000 acres along the Santa Clara River and its tributaries. During construction, the Project proposes to discharge 19.9 million cubic yards (four football fields over half a mile deep) of dredge and fill material from excavation into 83.2 acres Santa Clara River. “After construction, the ongoing long term ecological and water quality impact to the Santa Clara River Watershed and Ventura County’s coastal waters will be devastating if the development is approved with the mitigation measures under any of alternatives set forth in the DEIS/DEIR, except the no project alternative,” says Jason Weiner, Associate Director and Staff Attorney of the Ventura Coastkeeper.

Not only does the DEIS/DEIR not identify significant water quality impacts in the stretches of the Santa Clara River and Ventura’s Coastal waters downstream of the proposed development, but it erroneously dismisses as irrelevant the effects of the proposed project’s pollutant loading that will lead to eutrophication and bioaccumulation of toxic pollutants in the Santa Clara River Estuary and Ventura’s coastal waters. Additionally, the DEIS/DEIR does not evaluate the chronic toxicity impacts nor full acute toxicity impacts that individual pollutants, the aggregate of pollutants, or pharmaceuticals discharged from the proposed development into the Santa Clara River and Ventura’s coastal waters will have on water quality and aquatic life. Amongst other concerns, the forecast of the proposed project’s discharge of pollutants is unrealistically low in comparison to nationwide statistical data of the concentrations of pollutants commonly found in urban runoff, and in light the inadequate stormwater best management practices set forth in the DEIS/DEIR. VCK is especially concerned that if the DEIS/DEIR is adopted, that the development’s urban runoff will impair Ventura County’s coastal waters with pathogens that will threaten the health of beachgoers, surfers, and the general public that comes in contact with Santa Clara River water.

Additionally, DEIS/DEIR is insufficient because it must demand the development utilizes the low impact development (“LID”) standards required by the Ventura County MS4 Permit with a 5% Effective Impervious Area requirement for new developments for the project’s impacts to water quality and aquatic resources to be adequately mitigated and for the project to possibly receive a 401 Water Quality

Certification as required by the Clean Water Act. Merely implementing the stormwater best management practices set forth as mitigation measures in the DEIS/DEIR is insufficient for the development to obtain a Clean Water Act 401 Water Quality Certification from the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board because the Project would contribute additional pollutants to impaired waterbodies. On this ground alone, the DEIS/DEIR cannot be adopted.

About The Wishtoyo Foundation and its Ventura Coastkeeper Program:

The Wishtoyo Foundation, a community based 501(c)(3) non profit with over 700 members consisting of Ventura County residents, Chumash Native Americans, and the general public that enjoys, depends on, and visits Ventura County's inland and coastal waterbodies. Wishtoyo uses traditional Native American Chumash beliefs, practices, songs, stories and dances to increase awareness of our connection with the environment and to preserve the maritime culture and resources of the Chumash people and coastal communities. Core values of the Chumash include sustainable living and respect for the environment. In 2000, the Wishtoyo Foundation launched the Ventura Coastkeeper to protect, preserve, and restore the ecological integrity and water quality of Ventura County's inland waterbodies, coastal waters, and watersheds.

Wishtoyo and its Ventura Coastkeeper program believe that our land, waterbodies, and oceans are interconnected, co-dependent communities to which we as individuals, are one of many living entities that belong. As such, it is our responsibility to protect the land, water, and oceans we exist upon for the common good and to sustain our well being, co-existence, and harmony with the world and the many diverse surrounding communities that we depend on.



Not many of Ventura County's residents or visitors are aware of how the severe water quality impacts from the proposed Newhall Development will effect them if it is approved as set forth by the DEIS/DEIR. (pictured above: a surfer at C-Street, in Ventura California)