

From: James McRitchie <jm@corpgov.net>
Date: May 25, 2009 2:17:48 PM PDT
To: DSCHILTG@sonoma-county.org, sdee@sonoma-county.org
Cc: Joe Dear <Joe_Dear@calpers.ca.gov>,
George Diehr <George_Diehr@CalPERS.CA.GOV>
Subject: Preservation Ranch DEIR scope comments (Buckeye Ranch LLC, Fuller Mountain LLC, Hoover Ridge LC, and Bear Flat LLC, 103 APNs)

Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department
Attn: Steven Dee, David Schiltgen
2550 Ventura Avenue,
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Via e-mail

May 25, 2009

SUBJECT: Preservation Ranch DEIR scope comments (Buckeye Ranch LLC, Fuller Mountain LLC, Hoover Ridge LC, and Bear Flat LLC, 103 APNs)

Dear Mr. Dee and Mr. Schiltgen:

Please add me to the mailing list for all future notices of this project. I wish to participate in your agency's administrative review process in order to preserve my right to bring possible legal action under provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). I just became aware of this mountain top removal project and of the involvement of the California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS) in the project. At this point, I can do little more than register my shock that my retirement system, which is widely known for its environmental stewardship and whose CEO co-chairs Ceres, is so heavily invested in a project that appears like to have significant adverse effects, such as:

- * aesthetics, with what amounts to mountain-top removal
- * reducing the habitat of rare or endangered species
- * the movement of migratory fish and wildlife
- * quality of water supply, resources and recharge
- * substantial increases in traffic in comparison to the existing traffic load
- * encouraging the use of large amounts of water and energy in a wasteful manner
- * causing substantial erosion and siltation
- * conflicting with established recreational uses of the area

Due to the complexity of the project, I recommend your agency engage a blue ribbon scientific peer review panel to ensure adequate evaluation by independent and qualified experts in the areas of needed expertise. With the scope of the project changing several times, the dEIR should analyze all potentially significant foreseeable impacts, regardless of whether or not the applicant is currently proposing them. In the current economic

environment it is not difficult to imagine project changes necessary to ensure economic viability. Your analysis should also include an evaluation of impacts likely from project failure. I will be especially skeptical of claims of infeasibility due to additional cost or lost profits. Additionally, I am skeptical of mitigation reporting conducted by others, unless the dEIR includes clearly enforceable monitoring by your agency and enforceable agreements with any third parties to ensure compliance.

The DEIR should provide substantial evidence of the efficacy of a two-for-one conversion provision of the County, " conversion ordinance as specific mitigation for the loss of ridge top acreage. With its unique ecology, especially with regard to the watershed and migration patterns, it would be helpful to provide examples of how these restoration methods have proven effective. In my understanding, this has not been the case with mountain-top mining in the Appalachians. For example, the Federal EPA recently announced they will review 200 permits in process under the Bush Administration. The EPA said the projects "would likely cause water quality problems in streams below the mines, would cause significant degradation to streams buried by mining activities, and that proposed steps to offset these impacts are inadequate."

Since the "Preservation Ranch" project involves almost 20,000 acres, your analysis should include in its baseline conditions not only the project's immediate footprint but the surrounding watersheds and biological areas. Your alternatives analysis should include off-site locations and reconfigurations such as milder terracing and a more compact footprint to reduce impacts to the watershed and migratory movement. Such alternatives analysis is especially important for almost 600 acres with slopes ranging from 30 to 38% on highly erodible soils. Due to the prospect of erosion on these steep slopes a reduced project alternative should also be analyzed. An alternative to 83 miles of largely unbroken fencing should consider incorporating several corridors for migration, although that would do little to address the impact on fish migration.

Sincerely,

James McRitchie, Publisher
PERSwatch
9295 Yorkship Court
Elk Grove, CA 95758

<http://perswatch.net/>
jm@perswatch.net