

Support our Local Birds on June 26 at 6PM in Goleta City Council Chambers!

Attend the Final EIR hearing for the Rancho Estates Mobile Home Park
Fire Improvements Project

Send your comments by June 26 to Joe Pearson at jpearson@cityofgoleta.org

Quick Project Summary:

A proposed emergency access fire road for the Rancho Estates Mobile Home Park would be built on top of the existing maintenance road and trail along Devereux Creek. This newly-widened road, 20' across, would run for 900' and require permanent removal of vegetation along either side, including a number of native trees (oak, willow, sycamore) in addition to non-native ash. This road would completely eliminate any buffer zone along Devereux Creek, which is in direct conflict with City policy. To approve the Project, the City Council would need to grant an exception to their own policy. This Project still needs to be approved by the California Coastal Commission.

Alternative 2a would run a much shorter, gated road from Sea Gull Drive into the mobile home park, instead of the 900' road on top of the streamside buffer zone. Unfortunately, this Alternative calls for eliminating two mobile homes, which is very unpopular with the property owner.

Alternative 2b does not require the new 20' wide 900' long access road, but keeps the other fire-safety improvements including installation of a new fire line and hydrants. This option provides safety improvements, would not require the City to waive their environmental policy, and keeps the bank and vegetation along Devereux Creek intact with the existing buffer (which is already too narrow).

Talking points against the proposed project:

- The project is in conflict with the City's policy that protects biological resources. The Devereux Creek corridor in this area is critical habitat for migratory and resident birds. The proposed road and vegetation clearances would degrade on-site and adjacent bird and wildlife habitat, including the important migratory bird "stopover site" at the end of Coronado Drive. This is a designated Audubon birding hotspot known as the "Coronado Seep". This area is especially valuable for fall migrants from late July to early October.
- The proposed fire road is in the Coastal Zone, conflicting with Coastal Act 30240(a), which states that Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area, ESHA, shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values; Coastal Act 30240 (b), which states that development adjacent to ESHAs must be situated and designed to prevent impacts to ESHAS, and Coastal Act 30231, which protects the biological productivity and quality of coastal waters, including encouraging riparian habitat.
- The fire road improvement construction will reduce the Streamside Protection Area (SPA) buffer for Devereux Creek. This is not a compatible land use.
- Road construction would result in direct removal of native riparian trees, including willows, oaks, and a sycamore. These trees are important as habitat, for shading, and as filters for contaminants. Additionally, mitigation plantings cannot occur in the road corridor, due to operation/maintenance in order to meet fire code clearances.

Why Support Alternative 2a – Alternative Access Road (Sea Gull Drive) and Fire Line Location

- The shorter, gated access road and fire line are in a different location farther from the creek, avoiding harm to Devereux Creek's Streamside Protection Area.
- As this alternative requires the removal of two mobile homes, support for this alternative is provided with the expectation that the park owners would relocate the displaced residents with minimal disruption to those residents, and that the park owners will reimburse all relocation costs incurred by those residents.
- It achieves the goal of fire safety (access, fire lines) without the environmental impacts of the widened access road in the proposed project.

Why Support Alternative 2b: - No Emergency Access Road and Alternative Fire Line Location

- It meets some of the safety goals as it calls for installation of new fire line and hydrants
- The Devereux Creek buffer and existing vegetation remain, greatly reducing impacts to the environment.
- It does not require the City to waive their own Policy (as does the Project).
- It is more likely to be approved by both California Coastal Commission and the property owner
- Other municipalities such as Santa Clara and San Luis Obispo allow a 'grandfathered' secondary fire access road to be less than 20 feet.

Please contact our Conservation Committee at Conservation@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org if you have questions or would like to help.

We – and the birds - thank you for your support!