



Protecting and Restoring the Santa Barbara Channel and Its Watersheds

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December 11, 2006

Mayor Marty Blum
Council Member Roger Horton
Council Member Iya Falcone
Council Member Brian Barnwell
Council Member Helene Schneider
Council Member Das Williams
Council Member Grant House

Re: Veronica Meadows

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing on behalf of Santa Barbara Channelkeeper (Channelkeeper) in regards to the proposed development project on the “Veronica Meadows” property, which is to be discussed at the City Council Hearing on December 12th. Channelkeeper is extremely concerned that the City Council is considering alternatives to the Veronica Meadows Project that include significant and unavoidable impacts to Arroyo Burro Creek.

Over the last several years, the City has spent hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars on projects designed to restore Arroyo Burro Creek and improve water quality. These projects include a feasibility study on the use of water quality treatment technology at the creek estuary, the Arroyo Burro Creek restoration project currently underway, and the proposed use of the Santa Barbara Golf Club for storm water retention and treatment. From these actions, it seems apparent that the City of Santa Barbara considers the protection and restoration of its creeks and water quality a priority issue, especially along Arroyo Burro Creek. Channelkeeper therefore finds it puzzling that the City Council should only consider alternatives to the Veronica Meadows Project that include significant and unavoidable impacts to Arroyo Burro Creek.

While the alteration of creek ecosystems resulting from one project may often seem worthwhile or mitigatable through restoration, the cumulative water quality impacts caused by loss of natural creek habitat throughout a watershed are enormously significant and irreversible. At this time, the City of Santa Barbara is working with the County on developing an integrated approach to watershed management by coordinating local planning and development efforts with additional water quality efforts of departments such as Project Clean Water and the City’s Creek’s and Water Quality Division. Such efforts are especially appropriate around Arroyo Burro Creek, which is currently listed on the State’s 303(d) List of Impaired Water Bodies for pathogens from urban runoff and storm sewers. In the near future, this listing will likely have significant financial implications to the City as it will be forced to comply with upcoming Total Maximum

Daily Load (TMDL) requirements imposed by the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Any additional destruction of natural creek habitat will only serve to exacerbate this problem.

The City Council is not obligated to the property owner to provide an easement over city property for the purposes of property access. The Council is, however, obligated to the citizens of Santa Barbara to protect its natural resources and water quality. Channelkeeper strongly urges that the Council does **NOT** approve either of the proposed alternatives due to their unavoidable and significant impacts to water quality in Arroyo Burro Creek.

Respectfully,

Ben Pitterle
Watershed Programs Director
Santa Barbara Channelkeeper