

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SAN DIEGO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION LAUNCHES REVIEW OF CONTROVERSIAL LILAC HILLS RANCH DEVELOPMENT**

*Development faces strong opposition from residents throughout the county and conservation groups, including Cleveland National Forest Foundation*

**San Diego** – The San Diego County Planning Commission will hold a hearing on the controversial proposed Lilac Hills Ranch development on Aug. 7, 2015 at 9:00 am at the [County Operations Hearing Room in San Diego](#). The proposed project would place nearly 1,750 housing units on about 600 acres currently zoned to support agriculture and up to 110 homes. The Planning Commission must review the project and then make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors as to whether to approve or deny the proposed development.

The project can only move forward as proposed if the Board of Supervisors adopts amendments to its General Plan, which sets zoning, density and transportation regulations for the county. The San Diego County General Plan was adopted in 2011 after 13 years of staff work and public meetings and cost more than \$18 million of taxpayer funds to develop. General plans are recognized by state courts as the “land use constitution” of a jurisdiction.

The current General Plan recognizes that the Valley Center and Bonsall areas, where the proposed project would be located, are rural and should remain rural. It also prohibits the County from approving new, dense “villages” such as Lilac Hills Ranch unless those projects comply with strict standards, including that they must (1) ensure protection of farmland and wetlands, (2) be located near transit and existing commercial services and (3) meet certain density requirements. The proposed project violates all of these standards.

“What is the point of spending more than a decade and \$18 million on a General Plan if the County simply ignores it when a well-funded developer comes forward with its own ideas?” said Jana Clark, board member with the Cleveland National Forest Foundation. “The General Plan already allows the construction of more than 72,000 new homes in the unincorporated county. There is absolutely no need to build Lilac Hills Ranch at its proposed location.”

County staff developed a report for the Planning Commission regarding the proposed Lilac Hills Ranch project. The staff report includes fundamentally misleading information. The report claims that the project would be a “sustainable,” transit-friendly development because its location is within one-quarter mile of I-15.

While that may be the distance to the highway from the project as the crow flies, the development is actually 1.6 miles (or more, depending on a home's location) from the highway as the car drives. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) has noted in comments on the project that, "there are no planned transit services identified in the adopted 2050 RTP/SCS for the proposed project area." The project site is also well beyond the boundary of SANDAG's "Smart Growth" area.

"If the County approves this project, it will signal to developers that new towns could spring up anywhere," added Erin Chalmers, attorney with Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP, which represents Cleveland National Forest Foundation on land use issues. "The General Plan clearly defines which areas should be protected for ongoing agricultural and habitat values. Lilac Hills Ranch would tear up hundreds of acres of steep, fire-prone terrain to create a bedroom community of commuters. Lilac Hills Ranch residents would add seven million auto trips to rural roads and highways every year. This development flies in the face of the Smart Growth principles espoused throughout the General Plan."

Lilac Hills Ranch would place significant strain on taxpayer resources and put the health and safety of its future residents at risk.

- Providing adequate fire and emergency services to Lilac Hills Ranch residents would be very difficult. The fire district with jurisdiction over the project has stated that all of the proposals for new stations to serve the project are unworkable. The developer does not hold sufficient easement rights to provide adequate evacuation routes for residents in the case of a wildfire or other emergency.
- The project would require expensive new infrastructure including roads, water meters and city-scale pipe-works, sewer system and stream spans.
- The proposed development is miles from job centers and established schools as well as amenities like grocery stores, public transit and places of worship.

"San Diego County residents in both rural and urban areas should be very concerned if Lilac Hills Ranch is allowed to move forward," noted Ms. Clark. "We need to send a clear message to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors that we will not allow the county to ignore the General Plan and its smart growth principles that we all worked so hard to adopt. We should be progressing toward a sustainable,

transit-oriented future, but Lilac Hills Ranch moves San Diego County in the opposite direction.”

[Cleveland National Forest Foundation](#) is made up of private citizens who believe that action must be taken to protect the remaining undeveloped lands in the forest and that sound regional planning to build sustainable, quality urban communities is fundamental to saving the integrity of San Diego County’s wilderness areas.

[Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP](#) specializes in government, land use, natural resource and environmental law. Since 1980, the firm has provided representation to public agencies and community groups throughout California.

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