



Bennett Valley
Homeowners Association
P.O. Box 2666, Santa Rosa, CA 95405

December 6, 2011

Bill Keene, General Manager
Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
747 Mendocino Ave Suite 100
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

Re: Impact of Jacob's Ranch on Bennett Valley Roads

Dear General Manager Keene:

The Bennett Valley Homeowners Association supports public access to open space properties and is pleased that Jacob's Ranch, purchased in 2003, will finally open to the public in 2012. The project has been designed to be part of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, a region-wide network that will likely attract mountain bikers and equestrians from afar.

Our community is concerned about additional traffic on the roads adjacent to Jacob's Ranch, which is located at 5297 Sonoma Mountain Road. We are especially concerned that a large portion of the additional traffic will include heavy-duty pickup trucks pulling heavy horse trailers, with tandem wheels, which wreak additional havoc and damage to the roads and shoulders. On November 15, 2007 we wrote to the Open Space District (copy attached) expressing this concern:

We also request that you work with the Board of Supervisors and County Transportation Department to ensure that the roads that provide access to the trailhead on Sonoma Mountain Road are properly maintained. The additional traffic going to and from the trailhead may exacerbate some of the maintenance problems that we have been experiencing.

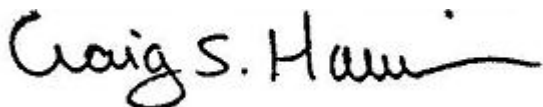
Since we wrote our 2007 letter county policies and budget priorities have changed and now no more than 219 miles of high priority county roads are being well-maintained. All other roads, including Sonoma Mountain Road and Pressley Road, will not be maintained except for the filling of potholes and the removal of debris. Transportation Director Demery estimates that within a decade many of the orphaned roads will deteriorate to a point where they can only be ground up into gravel. We are concerned that Jacob's Ranch will increase traffic on Sonoma Mountain Road and Pressley Road. This will inevitably result in the degradation of these roads even faster than projected.

General Manager Bill Keene
December 6, 2011
Page 2

We believe that the Open Space District should provide funds to improve and maintain Sonoma Mountain Road and Pressley Road (we acknowledge that much of Pressley Road is currently in good shape because of repairs undertaken in 2010). The Jacob's Ranch project impacts these roads and funds to improve them should be considered as much a part of developing the site for public access as building trails, parking lots, and rest rooms. Ironically the lengthy access road from Sonoma Mountain Road to the trail head at Jacobs Ranch has been designed to meet Sonoma County Emergency Services Department standards, including the creation of seven new turnouts. The wooden bridge that crosses the South Fork of Matanzas Creek is being replaced because it does not meet current building standards. Would allowing Sonoma Mountain Road or Pressley Road to deteriorate to gravel meet Sonoma County Emergency Services Department standards for access to a public park? How would allowing these roads to degrade to gravel affect response times for ambulance, fire, sheriff and other emergency vehicles? We suggest that the county roads that provide access to Jacob's Ranch should be maintained to at least a Pavement Condition Index (PCI) of "fair" and preferably a PCI of "good."

One option that has been suggested to preserve the pavement on county roads has been to create zones of benefit (special tax assessment districts). Under this approach the local residents would essentially pay increased property taxes to maintain the county roads that serve their homes. You will hopefully understand that many residents will not think it fair that they would have to shoulder this burden to benefit non-resident equestrians and mountain bikers.

Sincerely,



Craig S. Harrison
President
573-9990
charrison@hunton.com

Attachment

cc: Supervisor Valerie Brown
Supervisor David Rabbit
Supervisor Shirlee Zane
Supervisor Mike McGuire
Supervisor Efren Carillo
Sonoma County Transportation Director Phil Demery



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ATTACHMENT

November 15, 2007

Kim Batchelder
Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
747 Mendocino Avenue, Suite 100
Santa Rosa, CA 95401-4850

Re : **Initial Study for North Slope Sonoma Mountain Ride Trail Project**

Dear Mr. Batchelder:

On behalf of the Bennett Valley Homeowners Association (BVHA), thank you for your presentation last night concerning the proposal to develop a hiking trail from Jacobs Ranch to Jack London State Historical Park. The BVHA was established in 1970 and is dedicated to promoting and preserving the rural, residential character and natural environment of Bennett Valley. The BVHA is enthusiastic about the proposed trail and strongly supports increased opportunities for residents of our area to enjoy the many public parks that surround us. Ironically, few Bennett Valley residents have easy access to the parks adjacent to us, and many drive thirty minutes or more for hiking opportunities. This situation needlessly adds to traffic congestion and pollution.

As planning and construction of the trail proceeds, we request that the District maximize opportunities for dog owners to hike the trail with dogs on leashes. We also request that you work with the Board of Supervisors and County Transportation Department to ensure that the roads that provide access to the trailhead on Sonoma Mountain Road are properly maintained. The additional traffic going to and from the trailhead may exacerbate some of the maintenance problems that we have been experiencing.

Thank you for your proposal, and we look forward to working with you as the project is implemented.

Sincerely,

/s/ Craig S. Harrison

Craig S. Harrison
President