

September 5, 2016

Via E-mail

Planning Commission
c/o Contact Staff Liaison Rick Medina - Senior Planner
City of Seaside
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Re: Final EIR for Monterey Downs and Monterey Horse Park and Central Coast Cemetery Specific Plan (SCH201291056)

Dear Commissioners:

I write on behalf of LandWatch Monterey County (“LandWatch”) regarding the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (“FSEIR”), the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (“DSEIR”) (together, the “SEIR”) for the Monterey Downs and Monterey Horse Park and Central Coast Cemetery Specific Plan (“Project”) and regarding the proposed approval of Project entitlements.

LandWatch continues to review the 2000-page FSEIR. Initial review demonstrates that it fails adequately to address the issues raised by DSEIR comments by LandWatch and others the FSEIR.

A. Water Supply

The SEIR improperly concludes that there would be no significant impacts for Phases 1-3 as long as the water provided is within the total 6,600 afy allocations to member agencies made by FORA. It is obvious that continuing seawater intrusion and aquifer depletion are not abated by some entitlement or allocation of water. The SEIR ought to acknowledge that fact because the purpose of CEQA is to discuss physical impacts on the environment, not water rights.

Similarly, the SEIR fails to provide any real analysis of water impacts from phases 4-6, simply labeling that impact as unavoidably significant because it would require water supply in excess of current allocations. Analysis cannot be avoided by labeling an impact unavoidably significant.

The FSEIR appears to conclude that pumping from the 900-foot aquifer would be without impacts, but it provides no analysis to justify this conclusion. The FSEIR also fails to provide adequate responses to comments seeking information about the expected pumping from the 900-foot aquifer, arguing that the information is somehow not relevant.

The FSEIR improperly restricts the scope of its cumulative analysis to the Fort Ord area. There is no question that Fort Ord pumping is just a portion of the hydrologically connected pumping from the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin and its Pressure Subarea. The SEIR should be revised and recirculated with an adequate cumulative analysis.

The SEIR identifies some possible additional water supplies, but it fails to provide any information about the impacts of developing those sources. Nor does the SEIR provide any information about the impacts of not completing the project due to lack of water, as is proposed as mitigation. Nor does the SEIR provide any assessment of the effects of reallocating water away from already approved projects to supply this project, even though it identifies this as an option.

LandWatch reiterates its request that the City revise and recirculate the SEIR to address the defects set out in its comments.

B. Traffic

The FSEIR fails to provide the information requested by LandWatch to justify the DSEIR's claim that 28% of trips would remain internal to the project. The SEIR's proposed traffic mitigation relies on a "trigger point" system that will not ensure timely mitigation because some improvements are not required to be in place before occupancy of the development that triggers the need for those improvements. The SEIR fails to specify the actual fair share payments, leaving the public without any basis to determine whether the proposed mitigation will be effective.

Despite objections, the SEIR fails to provide any performance standard for level of service during special events, which may occur as often as 125 days per year. To conclude that these impacts are less than significant without any standard for what constitutes an acceptable level of congestion service is inadequate.

C. GHG

Despite request, the FSEIR fails to disclose the basis of the claimed efficacy of GHG reduction features. The FSEIR also fails to respond to mitigation proposals for GHG impacts, despite the fact that the impact remains significant and unavoidable.

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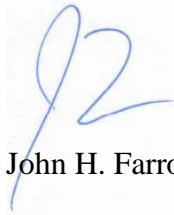
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D. Noise

The SEIR's noise analysis must be revised and recirculated. The description of the environmental setting is inadequate because insufficient measurements have been taken. SEIR ignores applicable noise standards and fails to provide the analysis required to determine compliance with other standards. Proposed mitigation will not ensure that relevant performance standards are met and will not protect open space uses. The project fails to comply with applicable noise policies from the Fort Ord Reuse Plan.

Yours sincerely,

M. R. WOLFE & ASSOCIATES, P.C.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JH Farrow', is positioned above the printed name.

John H. Farrow

JHF:hs

Cc: Michael Delapa
Janet Brennan