

April 9, 2007

The Hon. Ron Roberts, Chair
San Diego County Board of Supervisors
1600 Pacific Highway, Room 335
San Diego, CA 92101

RE: Rancho Guejito – *A Call for Protection*

Dear Chairman Roberts:

The undersigned organizations enthusiastically endorse the protection of the 21,000-acre Rancho Guejito, located east of Valley Center. It is one of the most important properties in California. Here's why:

- The ranch contains the best preserved Mexican land grant in Southern California that is still in private ownership and remains undeveloped. Its Old California history and cattle ranch – in their original setting and context – provide an unparalleled opportunity for education and interpretation. Here, our children can understand their past.
- Culturally important as an ancestral area to the Kumeyaay and Luiseño – the Native Americans of the area – it is rich in archeological history and considered a sacred site.
- With clean water from pristine watersheds, the large expanses of open space are irreplaceable habitat for San Diego's wildlife. Golden eagles and mountain lions find "room to roam." The ranch is a critical ecological link between coastal habitats and the adjoining, higher elevation Cleveland National Forest.
- Twenty different plant communities, including one of the last strongholds of the rare Engelmann oak, support high biological diversity, including endangered species and 16 types of raptors. The mosaic of oak woodlands, expansive grasslands, vernal pools, and riparian areas is unparalleled in the county. Opportunities for scientific study abound.
- Once planned for acquisition as a state park, preservation could provide unique recreational opportunities for urban populations, and maintain the quality of life that attracts high-wage businesses to San Diego and keeps our economy strong.
- The beauty of Rancho Guejito is legendary – a place where time has stood still. Its sun-drenched hills, endless seas of grass, sparkling creeks, forests of great oaks, granite outcrops, and immense solitude must continue to inspire us.

Large scale development on Rancho Guejito, as recently proposed, would do irreparable harm to San Diego's historic, cultural, and environmental identity. Such "leapfrog" development would also burden the taxpayer with costly infrastructure extension and service provision. We ask for your help in averting this outcome.

Let us pursue "win-win" solutions that reward the excellent stewardship by past owners and the current owner, the Coates family. Let's invest in our future by preserving its past. Using funds now available from local, state, and federal sources, an unprecedented legacy can be created for the family, for our elected leaders, and for the people of California. Please support the protection of this natural and historic treasure.

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Clare Billett
Managing Director
**San Diego Conservation
Resources Network**

Tom Golich
President
**San Dieguito River Valley
Conservancy**

James Birkelund,
Senior Project Attorney
Natural Resources Defense Council

Dave Grubb
Chair
**North County Coastal Group,
Sierra Club**

Howard M. Blackson III
President, 2007
**Citizens Coordinate for
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California Oak Foundation

David Hogan
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Bill Collins
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**League of Conservation Voters –
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Rick Landavazo
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**The Friends of Hellhole Canyon
Open Space Preserve**

Bruce Coons
Executive Director
Save Our Heritage Organisation

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Carolyn Martus
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**San Diego Chapter,
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Dan Silver
Executive Director
Endangered Habitats League

Andy Mauro
Conservation Chair
Buena Vista Audubon Society

Carol Stanford
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**Escondido Citizens' Ecology
Committee**

Nancy McCleary
President
**League of Women Voters of
San Diego County**

David Toler
Council Member
**San Pasqual Band of Diegueño
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Wallace Tucker
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The Escondido Creek Conservancy

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Bruce Reznik
Executive Director
San Diego Coastkeeper

Joe Zechman
Chair
**San Diego Chapter,
Sierra Club**

Reply to:

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Endangered Habitats League
8424-A Santa Monica Blvd., #592
Los Angeles, CA 90069

cc: Chair and Members of the Board of Supervisors, San Diego County
Mayor and City Council, City of Escondido
San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission
Interested parties