



Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101-2074

March, 12 2011

Dear Members of the Board,

We are deeply concerned over the unnecessary removal of significant amounts of native chaparral habitat in the wildland and urban interface areas of Santa Barbara County, especially in the Santa Ynez Mountains.

We strongly support appropriate vegetation management activities to reduce fire risk, however, many such projects being conducted in the County under the guise of fire risk reduction are in fact,

1. Unnecessarily destroying valuable natural resources
2. May be in violation of state and federal environmental laws
3. Can increase fire risk by causing the spread of flammable, invasive weeds
4. Pose erosion and flooding threats

We are therefore urging you to update the County's "Brushing Ordinance" to,

1. Make the rules enforceable
2. Make "brushing" permits discretionary
3. Lower the permit threshold from 5 to 1 acre
4. Consider the preservation of the region's natural resources
5. Consider renaming the ordinance to reflect the value of native shrublands

As a brief overview of the overwhelming scientific evidence demonstrating how shrubland ecosystems can be properly managed, how chaparral responds to clear cutting and fire, and why the kinds of clearance operations being currently conducted in the Santa Ynez Mountains (such as those in the Painted Cave area) are counterproductive, we would like to offer the information provided on the following pages of our website:

Fire and Science

<http://www.californiachaparral.org/firescience.html>

Threats to Chaparral

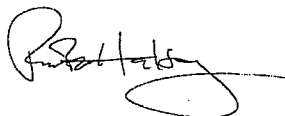
<http://www.californiachaparral.org/threatstochaparral.html>

Protecting Your Home

<http://www.californiachaparral.org/bprotectingyourhome.html>

The mountains above Santa Barbara provide a priceless natural resource. It is critical that local and regional governments protect this resource and ensure that any associated land management actions are based on science. To help facilitate this process, we would be honored to offer our expertise.

Sincerely,



Richard W. Halsey

Director

The California Chaparral Institute is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation that specializes in conducting research and educational programs to help the public and government agencies better understand the fire-prone ecosystems in which we live. A major focus of our organization is to communicate the most recent scientific research as it applies to shrubland ecosystems, especially the chaparral.

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