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March 20, 2009

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA
CLERK OF THE
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Supervisor Joe Centeno, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

*Santa Ynez
Valley Alliance*

Re: Hunter / La Purisima Resort General Plan Amendment Initiation

Honorable Chair Centeno and Members of the Board,

The mission of the Valley Alliance is to work collaboratively with individuals, groups and governments to protect the rural character of the Santa Ynez Valley and support good stewardship of natural and agricultural resources through education, comprehensive planning and public participation.

The Valley Alliance respectfully requests that the Board of Supervisors decline to initiate the Hunter / La Purisima General Plan Amendment because it dramatically contravenes adopted County policies that protect agriculture and Rural land use. The Valley Alliance and numerous others have expressed their concern that this request could set a dangerous precedent that would encourage "leapfrog development" of agricultural parcels and undermine agricultural viability in Rural areas of the County. County staff has recommended against initiation of this project because of its fundamental inconsistency with the Land Use Element.

On January 7, 2009 the County Agricultural Advisory Committee reviewed the proposed project and considered its potential impacts. The Committee expressed concern that the project could impact surrounding agricultural uses and set a bad precedent on rural land countywide. The Committee overwhelmingly voted to recommend that the County not initiate the project or any similar rezone, until a comprehensive review of the compatibility of such uses with agricultural land was completed. Furthermore, the Planning Commission did not endorse the initiation of this project because of the controversial precedent it would set.

Initiation of this request would encourage similar requests in the Santa Ynez Valley and throughout the County. Staff reports have stated, "Creating a path for approval of resorts such as this would be inconsistent with several policies of the County's Agricultural Element. ...proceeding with approval of this project could encourage property owners to non-renew their agricultural preserve contracts in order to pursue development. ...This could contribute to the loss of agriculturally viable land in the County." The Alliance is particularly concerned because of the clear implications this proposal has for the potential development/expansion of other resorts in the Santa Ynez Valley and along the Gaviota Coast.

The Santa Ynez Valley Alliance urges you to follow adopted County policy and support the recommendations of both the Agricultural Advisory Committee and staff and decline to initiate the Hunter /La Purisima Resort General Plan Amendment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark Oliver, President

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