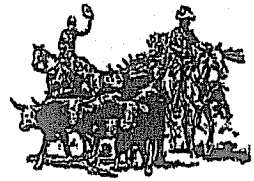


SANTA BARBARA COUNTY CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 303, Los Alamos, CA 93440



"WORKING TO SAVE RANCHING"

Mr. Kim Kimbell
Chair, Gaviota Plan Advisory Committee
317 E. Carrillo Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: GavPAC Recommendation for Public Trails through Las Varas/Edwards Ranches

Dear Mr. Kimbell:

Santa Barbara County Cattlemen's Association represents farmers and ranchers throughout Santa Barbara County. Our members are watching closely the GavPAC's trails deliberations because public trail designations on productive agricultural land pose a threat to long-term agricultural viability. Our Association opposes the loss of productive agricultural land in Santa Barbara County, particularly where that loss results from irresponsible land use planning decisions.

Our Association is particularly concerned about proposed public trails on the Las Varas and Edwards Ranches because these ranches, purchased separately by Tim Doheny in the mid-1960's and combined to increase their agricultural viability (including the addition of more orchard acreage, a large irrigation reservoir, and an additional irrigation meter from the Goleta Water District), represent something of a landmark on the Gaviota coast. These ranches comprise both productive citrus and avocado groves and a cow-calf operation that uses rotated pastures to maximize forage use while avoiding over-grazing. These ranches stand as an agricultural barrier to creeping urban and suburban growth from the east. Although the Santa Barbara Ranch and the Dos Pueblos Ranch once were thriving agricultural enterprises, this no longer is true. Both of these major landholdings are slated for residential development. As productive farming and ranching ceases to be productive, the urban creep will continue, swallowing up one large ranch after another.

In addition to protecting and preserving the incredible natural beauty of the coast, and uniquely diverse native plant communities and wildlife habitat, the Las Varas and Edwards Ranches represent the potential for long-term agricultural productivity on the Gaviota Coast. We ask that the GavPAC consider the importance of these ranches in holding the line against urban/suburban creep and failing agriculture.

The Association opposes any proposal to impose upon the owners of the Las Varas and Edwards Ranches any public trails, either now or in the future, that impair long-term agricultural viability. Our position is consistent with the Coastal Act provisions that call for protecting and preserving agricultural productivity in the Coastal Zone. For example, the Coastal Act states: "Public access from the nearest public roadway to the shoreline and along the coast shall be provided in new development projects except where (1) it is inconsistent with public safety, military security needs, or the protection of fragile coastal resources.... or (3) **agriculture would be adversely affected.**"

Forcing a rancher to allow the public, with their loose dogs and their trash, into a pristine rural area that has a long history of agricultural production and that is being operated as a working ranch poses a wide variety of obstacles to continuing the agricultural operation. You need only talk to the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's

Mr. Kim Kimbell

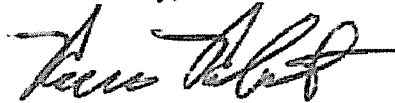
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Department's Rural Crimes Unit to learn about stolen and vandalized equipment, large-scale fruit thefts, cows shot in pastures, stolen wire and entire pumps, and a wide variety of crimes committed by members of the public when they have access to rural lands. Add to that the unintentional damage from dogs chasing cattle into and through fencing, plastic trash being consumed by curious calves who will die before the rancher knows what is wrong, erosion caused by hikers diverting from the trail, the cost of trying to fence trail users out of the agriculture, people climbing through fencing to cross pastures or to take photographs, and the result is an agricultural enterprise losing its profitability. Every time a ranch employee has to stop work to deal with a trail-related issue, the ranch loses productivity. Every lost calf puts a big hole in profitability.

Successful rural agriculture and public trails do not mix. Trails appear to work better in more suburban areas where the agriculture is more intensive and the farmers or their employees live on the land and can guard it more effectively. The Las Varas and Edwards Ranches are over 1,000 acres of agriculture. No one can afford to adequate fence and guard that much land if the public is invited into it.

Our Association urges the GavPAC to designate on its trails mapping only the trails that the Dohenys now offer as part of their application. These trails skirt around the fringes of the operation, keep people away from the calving pastures, and can be contained enough to protect the agricultural enterprise from damage. We strongly oppose any trail that reduces precious pasture lands or that introduces the public to the center of the ranch operation. Those are precisely the kinds of trails that threaten agricultural viability and eventually result in the loss of agriculturally productive lands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rocco Roberts", written in a cursive style.

Rocco Roberts
President

Cc: David Lackey, Santa Barbara County Planning & Development

Cc: Brian Tetley, Santa Barbara, County Planning & Development