

April 15, 2012

RE: Las Varas Ranch Project

Dear Madame Chair and Honorable Board Members:

My name is Stan Giorgi and I grow lemons at the intersection of Hollister Ave. and Ward Dr. I have attended and participated in the public hearings for the General Plan Update for the Eastern Goleta Valley and although I would like to continue those discussions, I am actually writing this letter on behalf of the Applicant about our experiences of dealing with the public in our farming operation. I am under the impression that part of this proposal before you today could include the designation of a public trail in and around the agricultural areas of this property. With that thought in mind, I will lay out our personal experiences of having an active agricultural operation without fencing. First, I will say that times are different than when my great-grandfather farmed our land. There was a much higher level of respect for private property and trespass was not such a big issue as it is today.

The first item that we deal with is the trash accumulation in and around the orchard from trespassers. It is not uncommon for us to remove up to 1,500 pounds of garbage per year. Not only does this take a significant amount of man-hours but it is easily the most disgusting work that we perform. It is useless work that poses a health hazard to myself and our employees.

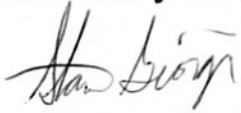
The next item that we deal with is vandalism. We often have irrigation pipes that get broken, wind machines have parts stolen, tree limbs get broken and sticks are used to damage fruit. This past year alone, we had two water filter stations and 2 wind machines damaged all at a cost of around \$2,500 for time and materials.

Next, we have theft. Yes, believe it or not, people steal lemons, sometimes by the grocery bag. When I have confronted people in this scenario, they act as if they are entitled to that fruit or are even surprised that the property is privately owned. As well as fruit theft, we have vehicle batteries stolen, tractor parts or any other metal item worth selling.

And lastly, food safety is the current hot topic in most food producing agricultural operations. I am not here to debate the details of the program for food safety, but merely point out that a large component of a food safety program has to do with food security. As growers we are faced with excluding all unauthorized contact with crops in the field. This means securing the property lines which ultimately means fencing of some sort. To be effective, this fencing has to exclude anyone from getting in at any spot along the fence line and possibly having contact with the crops grown in the field.

Knowing what I have experienced, I hope that you will seriously consider the ramifications of having an unfenced public trail included in this proposal. As a property owner, I cringe at the thought of ever having a public trail like this near or adjacent to any of the acreage that I farm. I understand that most people would never pose a problem to the owners, but, unfortunately, it is always the few that ruin it for the rest. With that in mind, please listen to the owners and protect what rights they have to protect their own property or you may never be able to extract a public trail from a property owner again without a fierce legal battle.

Thanks for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stan Brown".