



MONTE NIDO VALLEY



COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



*A Dark Sky Community*

E-NEWSLETTER

August/September 2014

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## **WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE**

**The Land use Plan backed by our local group gets final approval  
from LA County Board of Supervisors**

**Plans for Monte Nido October BBQ and Square Dance**

**Local land development on Piuma-- background info**

**Local Trail use and maintenance of rights reminder**

**More Monte Nido Stories from Ann Monahan**

**Minutes of September 2014 Board meeting**

## Local Coastal Plan gets Final Approval

At the eleventh hour with one final hurdle to cross it looked like the multi-decade effort to get approval for a land use plan covering Monte Nido and the rest of coastal Santa Monica Mountain areas might be in jeopardy due to opposition by vineyard and winery interests seeking to expand those operations in the Santa Monica Mountains.

For us the processes and rules for home owner and equestrian related permitting would be clear and permanent and would be outside the jurisdiction of the Coastal Commission if this County Plan could just get passed. As we reported in the last newsletter, final approval was obtained from the Coastal Commission in July 2014. All that remained was a final vote by the LA County Board of Supervisors at their August 26, 2014 meeting. Our local activists mounted a letter writing and lobbying effort to express support for final approval of the Plan.

IT PASSED!

Here is the message on the results reprinted here from Kim Lamorie, President of Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation.

*Thank you!*

*We did it - you did it!*

*Your personal testimony and hundreds and hundreds of letters of support over this lengthy hearing and approval process made all the difference. The Santa Monica Mountains will finally have a Local Coastal Program (LCP). What a great day to celebrate final approval of the most important document ever to govern land-use in the Santa Monica Mountains!*

*Credit for this herculean feat, goes to our Third District Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, who envisioned and championed the LCP from start to finish. Zev and his planning deputy Ben Saltsman's extraordinary efforts to protect our coastal resources, homeowners, horse owners, and communities in the LCP are now assured.*

*The Federation is grateful to Zev - for his integrity, energy, passion and 20 year enduring commitment to the preservation of the Santa Monica Mountains. Kudos also to Supervisors Don Knabe and Gloria Molina for their yes votes yesterday - without them, the LCP would not have come to fruition; as well as to the California Coastal Commission for its two unanimous approvals.*

*WHAT A VICTORY - WHAT A JOURNEY*

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*AND WHAT AN INCREDIBLE LEGACY ZEV IS LEAVING US!*

*On behalf of all that is wild and wonderful in the Santa Monica Mountains - thank you again for being such an integral part of this winning effort. To the future ...!*

*Sincerely,*

*Kim Lamorie*

*President, Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation,,  
Inc., of the Santa Monica Mountains*

## Annual Monte Nido Dinner and Square Dance

*Please plan to join the fun at our autumn festivities Saturday evening October 11 on Fleeman's meadow where we will be putting on our dancing boots and square dancing the night away. Look for details in Nextdoor Monte Nido and on posters in the neighborhood. Please note that tickets must be purchased in advance by Oct. 9.*

*Many thanks to Ilda Jacobsen who is heading up the planning committee. If you want to volunteer to help her, you can email her at [ipoz4@yahoo.com](mailto:ipoz4@yahoo.com)*



**Monte Nido**  
**SQUARE DANCE**  
**& BBQ**  
Saturday, October 11, 2014



**FLEEMAN'S MEADOW**  
6-8p BBQ Food Truck (BYOB + a pie)  
8-10p Square Dancing

**\$35 Per Ticket**  
All tickets sold in advance.

- PURCHASE TICKETS BY OCTOBER 9th -

> ONLINE: <https://montenidosquaredance.eventbrite.com> (fees apply)  
> MAIL/DROP OFF CHECK: Ilda Jacobsen, 25733 Punto de Vista Drive 91302  
Make checks payable to MNVCA. Provide name and number of tickets.  
Contact Ilda Jacobsen at [ipoz4@yahoo.com](mailto:ipoz4@yahoo.com) with questions.

## Vintage Properties Development on Piuma Rd

The long saga of development of lots on Piuma near the first hairpin turn continues as we await reviews by appropriate officials. The plans by the developer are for huge, land use intensive, suburban homes rather than the rural character homes we were promised. As a result, local community members and the MNVCA Board have requested from the County Planning office, that a thorough Environmental Impact study be done and that the building plans be modified to mitigate environmental impacts to nearby parklands, backbone trail vistas, and water resources.

Many thanks to Jo Powe for her careful detailed analysis of environmental concerns and for her assistance in drafting the MNVCA position letter. Thanks to Joan Slimocosky, Suze Randall, and Carrie Baltin for getting the word out to the community

For further background on this topic check out the 2012 article entitled "30-year-old Tract in Monte Nido Showing Signs of Life" from the Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation Newsletter archives. Thanks to Ilda Jacobsen for turning up this informative archive in her research on the subject.

<http://archives.lvhf.org/newsletter/2012-02%20LVHF%20FEBRUARY%202012%20NEWSLETTER.pdf>

For the text of this LVHF Newsletter item, look at the Addendum at the end of this Newsletter. To see the photos of the area, look at the website noted above.

## Monte Nido Stories collected by Ann Monahan

(From Ann) This is an essay written by Dara Baltin when she was only 16 years old. It is so heartwarming to read how a very young girl can display the wonderful values that she obviously has. She puts a beautiful voice to the emotion we all feel when describing our magical home here in Monte Nido. You will notice that there is no mention whatsoever of an iPad, iPod, iPhone or any other video game or screen. She values the gifts that never end...the majesty and tranquility of our blessed home town, Monte Nido.

(essay by Dara Baltin at age 16)

I come from a very tight knit community where happy hour is not what you think. The small town mentality is very unlike the Calabasas community that surrounds me. My haven, Monte Nido, means mountain nest. We who live here are surrounded by nature's daily miracles and the most beautiful Santa Monica mountains that you would expect to see anywhere but Los Angeles.

When you think of happy hour you probably think of going to a sports bar at about five o'clock with some friends. In my neighborhood, happy hour has always been when all the dogs are out with their owners and everybody is giving everyone else a friendly hello. It is very rare that you can ever get a walk and not see anybody. It is like we are living in a world away from the hustle and bustle of the city. There are no streetlights or sidewalks and the narrow roads, bridges, and creeks are just some of the many things that make Monte Nido unique.

Evermore, when you are in Monte Nido you feel like you could be anywhere. The creeks and the sounds of the crickets chirping at night give you the country feeling. The nightly howling of the coyotes and the beautiful and delicate deer are just some of the animals that we find here. The surrounding scenery makes me think every single day how lucky I am to live in a place like this. This neighborhood is a retreat from the every day hectic life of the city. I know that

when I leave the busy school in which I attend, I have a quiet place to go home to.

Growing up walking through the creeks with my brother and being able to experience nature first hand has made me a very diverse person. I know what the city is like, but I also know that there is a world beyond that. I have a high appreciation for the natural world and just being outside. Being nestled in the mountains my whole life and seeing the constant beauty surrounding me gives me the appreciation that I have for living life to the fullest. I hold this community so dear to my heart and I know that I can always come back here if I ever need to get away from the busy life I know I will have.

## Note on Local Trail Use

Community members are encouraged to make use of local trails like the Lost Canyon Loop and Cold Canyon Trail for hiking and horseback riding. To help ensure we keep access as well as to share your fun, you might want to document your hikes and rides with photos and posts on social media.

Thank you  
MNVCA Members

Board members and community volunteers organize annual events such as July 4 celebrations, October Square Dance, and Holiday Pot Lucks as well as the Adopt-A-Highway cleanup, Fire Safe Council, the monthly Bulletin Board and this Newsletter. They represent our interests at Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation and at County Supervisor and Coastal Commission meetings to protect our rural character and our trails. If you have not done so as yet, you can still join for 2014. The cost is \$50 (\$25 for first time members) and can be addressed to MNVCA at P.O. Box 8054, Calabasas 91372.  
Judy Goldin, Treasurer

## **MNVCA Board meeting Sept. 9, 2014 Minutes**

Minutes: MNVCA Board of Directors meeting, Sept 9, 2014 at Maria and Radu Ioan's home.

Called to order at 7:09PM by Carrie Baltin

Present from Board: Carrie Baltin, Judy Goldin, Mary Helen Young, Jill Reiss, Maria Ioan, Ann Monahan, Gary Wooller, Alicia Gonzalez, Joan Slimocosky, Ilda Jacobsen, Dana Chidekel

Present from Community:

Deborah Roth, Suze Randall, Jo Powe, Jane & John Cudworth, Chris Kurjanowicz, Radu Ioan, Doug Dilg, Silvan Leroy, Sheila Rosenthal, Cynthia Maxwell (Pres. of Cold Creek Canyon Homeowners Assoc. and on Board of Save Open Space)

Guests – Rachel Burnap (MRT), Steve Smith, and Daryl Hamilton from LA County Department of Public Works (DPW), Lee Renger from LVMWD Board of Directors.

### **Report from DPW on street resurfacing:**

Steve Smith reported that repairs are scheduled to begin on the County roads that intersect Cold Canyon. The scheduled start date is Oct 12 with completion expected by Oct 22. Work will take place between 7AM – 4:30PM. Homeowners will receive door-to-door notices - a general flyer and then a second, specific flyer advising them of dates where and when driveways will be impacted. If drainage becomes an issue after the repairs, contact DPW and they will take care of it.

Roads will get a chip seal followed by micro surfacing. Chip seal takes about 2 days. It includes "road oil and an aggregate for body". Micro surface follows: a slurry product, which sets up very quickly, to integrate into the roadway for good surface. Most root bulges have already been removed and roads have been widened to remove vegetation and sloughage.

Repairs on Cold Canyon at the wash out won't happen this year. The water line has to be replaced

first before road repair. These road preservation efforts cannot be done during the winter months because there are not enough hours of sun/heat. The wash out resulted from a water main break, not rains. What's left of the road is still secure – the integrity has not been undermined. If there is any further erosion they will handle it. Water pressure should be better now than before the break because some length of pipe is gone. Larger fire trucks should still have adequate clearance to get through on the one lane. Private contractors will be hired for the job.

Darryl Hamilton requests copy of these relevant Minutes.

Questions about the water main break and repairs have to be answered by water board members.

### **Rachel Burnap, Restoration Supervisor with MRT:**

Mountains Restoration Trust is a Monte Nido neighbor owing to their open space in north of Monte Nido. MRT has been working with the Fire Safe Council to protect our community. MRT was awarded a grant in 2012 from National Park Service to promote Fire Safety and those funds have been used to host the recent seminars at Saddle Peak Lodge. The grant includes funds to remove Eucalyptus trees in 3 key dangerous locations.

1. North of MN close to Mulholland and Cold Canyon, consisting of about 49 native Eucalyptus on steep slope, on LA County land managed by MRT as part of the Cold Creek Preserve. The trees can be seen from Mulholland and Cold Canyon road. Eucalyptus burn very easily and particles become wind born. They are the worst trees in the world for spreading spot fires. MRT has done lots of environmental homework before doing this. The same resin in Eucalyptus that makes them such a fire hazard accumulates in soil and suppresses native vegetation in the understory. These trees are very damaging to the local environment. Extra biofuel also reduces regrowth of native vegetation after a fire. In late fall/early winter 2014-2015, in non-nesting season, LA County fire crews are going to carefully cut them down. They will re-sprout. Therefore, MRT trained technicians are going to hand paint every stump

with herbicides, which won't spill into surrounding environment due to the hand application. The herbicide will be Garlon 4. National Park Service approves it for this project. It is nontoxic to invertebrates and has a half-life of 30 days in soil. It is a regulated substance and requires a permit for use.

2. Eleven Eucalyptus trees on private property at Piuma and Cold Canyon Road (Saddle Peak Lodge). Ann Ehringer wants to protect ingress and egress for Monte Nido.

3. Eucalyptus trees located at the end of Camino Colibri.

It may be possible to arrange additional removals of Eucalyptus on other private properties, depending on remaining grant funds after these three priorities are satisfied.

LA County wants to be sure MNVCA supports project number 1 above (on County land) before they grant a permit. Every Monte Nido resident is encouraged to send an email or fill out a form stating their support, one per address. LA County wants official support from the MNVCA Board as well as individual letters. These support letters are needed ASAP and should be sent to: Mr. Bryan Moscardini, Departmental Facility Planner I, County of LA Department of Parks and Recreation, 510 South Vermont Ave. LA 90020

Motion: that MNVCA endorse removal of groves of Eucalyptus trees at location 1 on County land by MRT at the earliest possible date - passed unanimously.

**Minutes:** from July approved

#### **Treasurer's report:**

A Franchise Tax Board form was received about a year ago. Because we are not tax exempt we have to pay \$800/year. Dan Lange, attorney at law, was hired to file the necessary paperwork for tax-exempt status. However, he never responded to Judy Goldin or returned calls so Goldin fired him and told him to return the paperwork from the Tax Board to our PO box. Doug Dilg explained how fees work for LLCs; no bills are mailed from the state but fees must be

paid. Monies can be assessed in arrears for many years. We do not know if LLC regulations apply to tax-exempt status. But it may be imprudent to do nothing and wait for another letter from Franchise Tax Board asking for fees. We need to consult an attorney or accountant. Cynthia Maxwell has a contact for an attorney who handles non-profits. Jo Powe says Malibou Lake Homeowners is in process of filing for 501c3 status. They may have all relevant necessary info on this. Goldin will contact Malibou Lake board member and get referral from Maxwell.

July 4: Summary information has been received. We were in the red \$537 (we were over budget because CHP charged us for \$828 security, plus we paid partial band fees of \$500, and Waste Management fees were higher this year). In 2013, and prior years we had profits. Next year John Cudworth can try to see if we can get fee reduction from CHP. Suggestion that in the future we can do a better at communicating to the community that the event is a Fund Raiser rather than just a community event, in order to encourage donations.

**Correspondence:** Goldin has received a solicitation from SOS for a contribution. Last year we donated \$200. It was agreed to wait until next year to decide about this.

**Federation Report:** Joan Slimocosky reported there was no August meeting. All focus was on LCP.

**LCP Passed – it's OVER!** In Oct 2014 there will be a final, official sign off and LA County will take over jurisdiction.

**Monte Nido Directory:** follow up again with Cathy Sieling.

#### **Vintage Properties:**

The permit application is still in biology. No permit has yet been granted. Powe thinks the longer the delay, the better it is for us. We have very strong arguments under CEQA and the Fish and Wildlife support is also helpful. There is still hope that the County says Vintage mitigation measures need additional review. That might bring Osgood back to the negotiating table with MNVCA. A sales

team (Realtor) is already engaged by Vintage. The MNVCA goal is for Vintage to build smaller homes on the 15 developable lots. Slimocosky wants to note in the record: The Real Estate Firm handling these sales should disclose the Sunday motorcycle raceway issue on Piuma to potential buyers.

### **Square Dance:**

Ilda Jacobsen reported there is a committee meeting tomorrow to discuss food, fees, etc. The date is Oct 11. Fleeman's Meadow has been secured. Insurance forms will be sent to Goldin. Port-a-Potty is booked. The caller is booked (same one as always, Wayne Simmons). Joan Slimocosky provided historical info for the committee's use. Posters will be up soon. We still need an electrician. A BBQ food truck is under consideration, depending if it's in the budget. The event is not expected to be a fundraiser but the goal is to break even. A Save The Date needs to be circulated with signs as well as posted on Next Door, ASAP. Motion that the board advance Ilda \$600 to pay some expenses passed. (It was noted that the Trails Council gets insurance through the National Association of Non-Profits and perhaps we can get better pricing there).

### **Water District Report:**

Lee Renger (Stokes Canyon resident – up for re-election - opposed by man named Wilk from Highlands) Represents the division from Topanga to far end of Malibu Lake, from part of Calabasas City to Malibu City line. It's a geographically large division with 9600+ registered voters. The overall water district comprises 20,000 hookups serving 70,000 people. There are 5 Divisions – 3 representatives are up for re-election this year. LVMWD had a \$65 Million budget per year for water and sewage services. Slimocosky informed the Board that historically there have been rifts between MNVCA and the Water District. Years ago, MNVCA sued the District and proved the Tapia Treatment Plant was dumping unsafe water into the creek. But now, as a result, we have a quality treatment plant. Reclaimed water is tertiary treated and is of higher quality than drinking water in some other water districts, but it still has nutrients in it. The District is required to not put water in the creek between April 15 and Nov 15. During “rainy

season” it's ok. But now, because of the drought, we are forced to put reclaimed water in the creek to save the trout. When we can't sell reclaimed water we spray it on the fields on Las Virgenes. The fields are also sprayed to keep them wet enough to absorb without runoff. All our water comes from No Cal from Lake Oroville (reservoir), via Lake Shasta, and travels about 600 miles to get here. (Because of the drought, MWD is currently receiving some water from CO River). In passing San Francisco, it dumps into San Francisco Bay Delta and flows through channels to pumps. Some salt water from the estuary gets mixed in with our water and it hurts farmland when salts build up. Islands in the delta were formed from levees and now contain farms built on peat. That land is sinking, and is now 15 feet below water level. If levees break, salt water will get into our water path and we will not be able to receive water. Our water storage here will last about 6 months. Other reservoirs and underground water storage will get us through this year but next year we may be seriously limited in water use. Now we have mandatory water restrictions (3 days a week, never on Sunday). Drip irrigation is an exception and can happen at anytime. NO watering between 10AM and 5PM. Powe asked about watering at later hours during frost periods. Credit is available for removing lawns through a program called Mow No Mo. Even if the lawn is dead from no water, you can get paid \$2/sq. foot to tear it out. The lawn must be removed, not just killed. You can install artificial turf or xeriscapes. LVMWD wants to expand use of reclaimed water but has no way to store it right now. LVMWD may have to build a reservoir for reclaimed water to keep it out of the creek and save water in winter to deliver in summer. The reservoir is very expensive and can't pay for itself. However, EPA and State may force us into it because it's so expensive to treat the water to the Reverse Osmosis standards required for release that the reservoir becomes preferable. (at costs of over \$100 million). Grant monies will possibly become available to fund it. LVMWD provides high quality sewage compost free of charge at the facility at Los Virgenes and Lost Hills Roads. Since there's virtually no industry in the district, there aren't a lot of heavy metals in our sewage compost.

Re: Water Main Breaks: The system is very old and fragile. Renger asked staff to run a simulation of what would happen with a very large fire needing large water flow but staff wouldn't run the simulation due to liability concerns (If they don't know about a problem, they can't be sued for not correcting it). Instead, they are installing a 5 million gallon tank. So now we have the water but may have problems getting it to Monte Nido. Local valves have recently been replaced. Renger hasn't heard about the water main wash out on Cold Canyon Road, but can look into it so road repairs (referenced earlier in the minutes) can be accomplished. The Community expressed concerns about evacuations in an emergency while Cold Canyon is restricted to one alternating lane.

A notice will be put on Monte Nido Next Door: It is legal to take water from fire hydrants when the receiving vehicle is hooked up with a water meter. Some residents believe that tankers have been seen hooked up without a meter. If trucks are seen stealing water in this fashion from hydrants (frequently at Piuma and Las Virgenes) residents should call the water district at 818 251 2100 or report them at LVMWD.com.

There will be a bond issue on the November ballot involving the Bay Delta. Bypass tunnels will be built no matter what. But ecology needs to be addressed. Renger is in favor of the bond issue.

#### **New Business:**

A flock of Turkey Vultures are creating a strong ammonia smell along Cold Canyon. Is there anything we can do to abate that? They sleep in trees there and drop on Hodges' house. It is creating a health hazard. Suggestion was made to contact Wildlife Center to see if they have any suggestions. Cynthia Maxwell reported that Turkey Vultures are raptors and, therefore protected under Migratory Bird Act. It is illegal to disturb a nesting site or trim those trees. A permit from Fish and Wildlife is required to take the birds. Doug Dilg will follow up.

Winter Banquet this year? MNVCA Board Elections should be held by Nov. meeting so a new board is seated by Jan 1. Once again, we are a bit late, so nominations this year will be in Nov. A

banquet can be considered for the March 2015 meeting.

Next meeting: Tuesday, Nov 11 at 7PM at the home of Judy and Dan Goldin.

Adjourned 9:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jill Reiss



**The Nov. MNVCA Board meeting will be November 11, 2014 at the home of Judy and Dan Goldin 1101 Cold Cyn Road 818-983-1910 at 7:00PM**

**How to reach us:**

Send your email address to Jill Reiss, the MNVCA secretary, at [mnvcanewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:mnvcanewsletter@gmail.com), to receive announcements of meetings, community activities, and the time and location of our Board meetings.

President: Carrie Baltin 818-224-4696  
Vice Pres: Joan Slimocosky 818-591-1082  
Treasurer: Judy Goldin 818-983-1910  
Secretary: Jill Reiss 818-222-1995

**Contributions to the newsletter can be sent to the editor Mary Helen Young at [youngsmh@earthlink.net](mailto:youngsmh@earthlink.net)**

*Addendum—Reprint of Text of LVHF 2012 Newsletter item regarding  
Vintage Properties on Piuma*

## **30-YEAR-OLD TRACT IN MONTE NIDO SHOWING SIGNS OF LIFE**

The controversial 22 lot Quaker-Ross subdivision along Piuma Road in Monte Nido has remained undeveloped and out of the limelight since it was first approved by the Coastal Commission in 1983, but recently there have been conversations between a new owner, developer Matt Osgood, president of Vintage Communities of Irvine, Supervisor Yaroslavsky's office, and the Monte Nido Valley Community Association about the possibility of building out the old tract.

The mile-long, 150-acre former Quaker-Ross property stretches along both sides of Piuma Road from the Saddle Peak Lodge to the colorful, rugged cliffs of Saddle Peak above Monte Nido. State Parks originally wanted to purchase all of Quaker-Ross for the Backbone Trail Corridor, but Ross refused to sell more than 40 acres and, instead, used his political clout in Sacramento to pressure the State, the Coastal Commission, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy into approving development of the property. In the end a settlement was reached in which Ross sold about forty acres to State Parks and agreed to donate 70 more acres if the Coastal Commission would approve development on at least 22 building sites on the rest of the property. Over the strenuous objections of the Monte Nido Valley Community Association, the Coastal Commission approved the 22-lot tract in July, 1983, but only after requiring some strict mitigation- including the 70-acre donation.

A majority of the approved lots were rough-graded in the late 1980's, but development came to a halt shortly after that, and no houses were built for the next twenty-five years.

State Parks, for obscure bureaucratic reasons, never picked up Ross's offer to dedicate the 70 acres, which included much of Dark Canyon and some of the most scenic peaks and cliff faces on Saddle Peak above Monte Nido. It looked like the 21-year offer to dedicate the 70 acres might expire before the state got around to taking title to the land.

At last, over twenty years after the original Coastal Commission approval, with the offer to dedicate about to expire, the Santa Mountains Conservancy stepped in and picked up the 70 acre dedication. Meanwhile, the rest of the 22 Quaker- Ross lots had gone into foreclosure and reverted back to the bank. The bank put up a big "for sale" sign and tried to sell off the lots individually, but with very limited success. One lot was sold and developed with an oversized house, but the rest of the 1983 lots have remained undeveloped and the building pads graded over twenty-five years ago are slowly eroding and reverting back to nature.

In order to see the Quaker-Ross property, turn off Las Virgenes Road just before the Malibu Creek bridge and head east on Piuma Road with Malibu Creek on your right. After about half a mile, you will cross Cold Creek, then pass through a wooded area and climb a gentle slope past the Fire Station and the Saddle Peak Lodge. At this point the aging graded pads of the original Quaker-Ross development will begin to appear among the oaks on both sides of the road, while the magnificent pink and orange sandstone faces of 2800-foot Saddle Peak can be seen rising above Dark Canyon a mile to the east, forming one of the most spectacular scenic vistas to be seen anywhere in southern California.

Between the Saddle Peak Lodge and the base of Saddle Peak itself, Piuma Road passes under the arching branches of the live oaks that shade the road. The graded pads that have largely reverted back to nature are intermingled here with the live oaks.

Further on, the graded pads fall away behind you and you will come to a very sharp hairpin turn where Piuma Road begins to switchback up the east flank of Malibu Canyon. At the hairpin turn the State Backbone Trail will cross Piuma Road and climb up a draw to a low ridge that overlooks Dark Canyon. Most of the year, Dark Creek, a year-round stream, can be heard rushing through the wooded canyon below the ridge, while the sandstone faces of Saddle Peak dominate the view high above the canyon. There are five approved but ungraded and undeveloped lots close to the hairpin turn on Piuma Road that are among the 22 lots approved by the Coastal Commission at the time of the 1983 Quaker-Ross approval. Development of these already approved lots would involve unsightly grading along the Backbone Trail and into Dark Canyon and would interfere with the function of the Backbone Trail Corridor as the only east-west "wildlife corridor" in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Developer Matt Osgood, president of Vintage Communities in Orange County, is planning to develop the approved but still undeveloped lots remaining from the 1983 Coastal Commission approval.

In meetings with the Monte Nido Valley Community Association (MNVCA) Board of Directors Osgood has assured them that he does not plan to build oversized mansions like the ones in the nearby "Monte Nido Triangle". Rather, he says he wants to build modest 2500 to 3000 square foot early California-style ranch homes. Osgood also sent a letter to MNVCA indicating he would dedicate the 5 ungraded lots near the hairpin turn on Piuma to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in consideration for building out the graded lots. That would of course become a condition of approval. If he follows through on this, it would go a long way toward protecting this vulnerable section of the Backbone Trail, keeping development out of unspoiled, scenic Saddle Peak and Dark Canyon, and allowing the Backbone Trail Corridor to continue to be used as an east-west habitat linkage. This donation would also eliminate the need for a debris basin, which is a key benefit.

However, there are many unanswered questions and problems that prevail here. One involves fire clearance. At the time of the 1983 Quaker-Ross Coastal Commission approval, the Coastal Commission mapped and approved a building pad site on each lot. The lots were conditioned to require as little as a 50-foot fire clearance setback from these approved pads and the native vegetation. Today the County Fire Department typically requires full clearance or at least major thinning of any native vegetation within 200 feet of any flammable structure.

Denuding the landscape and leaving a massive 200 foot scar around a development project of this magnitude (15 home subdivision) in this sensitive and integral habitat area is not acceptable. An adequate brush clearance plan would have to be worked out in advance with LA County Foresters, etc.

In addition, the State Park ownership for the Backbone Trail Corridor in Monte Nido south of Piuma Road is only 150' to 200' wide in many places, and the only building sites permitted in this area under the conditions of the July, 1983, Coastal Commission approval are sometimes only 50' to 100' from dense native vegetation on the adjoining state--owned Backbone Trail Corridor. Development of homes on these lots could cause the Fire Department to demand major brush clearance on State Park land that is part of the Backbone Trail Corridor, again further narrowing the east-west habitat linkage.

Osgood and Vintage Communities have also built other projects in the area, including a home tract next to Peter Strauss Ranch. His company is also a principal in a Monterey Downs LLC group led by local developer Brian Boudreau. Their proposed project is a horse park development at Ford Ord in Monterey which encompasses a reported equestrian sports center, 730 homes, a 6,500 seat arena, offices, 400 apartments and a 200-room hotel.

Stay tuned for future updates on the potential awakening of this 30-year old tract in Monte Nido...we will be watching.

Preservation of this irreplaceable viewshed of oak savannahs & sandstone peaks is paramount.