



VA Santa Ynez Valley Alliance

“We need to think, plan, and act as a Valley. We expect governments and surrounding communities to respect our autonomy and unique characteristics when considering regional issues. We want greater local input into the decisions that impact our region.”

- The Valley Blueprint pg. 39

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The Valley Faces A Severe Test

In October of 2009, Santa Barbara County adopted the Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan, a document that guides growth and development in the Santa Ynez Valley for 20 years. The Plan reflects almost 10 years of research, outreach, millions of dollars spent, and extensive hearings and citizen input.

Valley residents were understandably shocked to hear that less than 1-1/2 years after the Plan's adoption, the Chumash intend to try to unilaterally remove 1400 acres from the Plan, the County regulatory system and tax rolls. The Camp 4 property (named by Fess Parker) is currently zoned for agriculture and is located at the juncture of Hwy 154 and 246.

Removing the 1,400 acres from the tax rolls comes at a great cost to local government at a time when it can least afford to lose those dollars.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS A conservative estimate of property tax loss to local governments over a 5 year period exceeds \$30 million. These are funds that go to support local schools, water districts, sewer districts and cities. These funds also support independent fire districts and flood control. Further loss of property taxes will impact our children's education, our ability to maintain our infrastructure, public safety, parks and critical services to the poor and needy. Impacts to local business will be significant as the Tribe does not collect or pay sales tax giving them an advantage over other local enterprises.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS The Camp 4 property is host to unique and irreplaceable natural resources. The Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan notes the presence of valley needle grass, non-native grassland, oak savanna and woodland, wetlands, buck brush chaparral and coastal scrub. These habitats support a variety of mammal species, including ray fox, coyote, mule deer and bobcat as well as a broad range of bird species and raptors.

WATER The Valley has finite water resources need to be allocated carefully. It is hard to estimate the amount of water needed to serve a project that has not been fully disclosed. One is hard pressed to assume the Tribe is only looking for 140 housing units. We assume the project Fess Parker had in mind is probably closer to actual. This not only included stand-alone housing but a resort, golf course, and condos. An overburdened aquifer places the availability of water for the balance of the built communities into question.

The Valley Alliance believes that land use planning should follow the regular processes of local public jurisdictions for the sake of good planning, public involvement, transparency, environmental protection, resource conservation, public services, fiscal integrity and social equity. We oppose anything that undermines the process.

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The Chumash have achieved financial success because the voters of California, including those in the Santa Ynez Valley, voted to allow them the opportunity to do so.

Now is the time for the Tribe to show respect for their neighbors. It is incumbent upon the Tribe to act responsibly within our Valley community.

Equally important, it is time for the Tribe's neighbors to voice their concerns to each other and to their elected representatives. We ignore the current annexation threat at our own peril.

Airport Expansion Plan Up For Review (Again)

At long last, the Santa Ynez Airport Authority has resubmitted an application to the County for its scaled down expansion project. It has been well over two years since the County informed the Airport Authority that its original proposal would require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report. While this new project is significantly reduced from the prior project, questions remain about some aspects of the current proposal. In short, the Airport is applying for nine new hangers, eight new tie down spaces, an equipment shed airport office addition, electrical vault, fencing ramp area expansions and road abandonments.

It is unclear why the Airport is requesting additional tie-downs since at the public hearing held in 2008, it was indicated that many of the existing 118 tie down spaces were perpetually unoccupied. It is also unclear as to whether or not the original Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), which is now being amended, will be re-circulated and if so, if a public hearing will be held to take testimony on the MND. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is unclear as to whether the Airport's Layout Plan (ALP) will be amended to be consistent with this Conditional Use Permit (CUP) request. If the ALP is not being amended, then all of the objectionable components, such as the heliport, runway extension, additional highly visible hangers) will remain in the Plan. This is simply not acceptable as it could lead to piece-meal planning. The ALP must be amended to make it consistent with the CUP.

The Valley Alliance has submitted these and other questions to County Planning staff and will continue to closely monitor the proposal to expand the airport to ensure that it is consistent with the wishes expressed by the community at the well-attended public hearing held regarding the original project.

Around The Valley

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The Valley Alliance continues to monitor the processing of the proposed resort. The County has hired LSA Environmental to prepare an Environmental Impact Report that may be released at the end of the year. The project still entails substantial impacts including parking, traffic, abandonments of public right of way and wastewater. Although the developer seeks to construct a private wastewater treatment system the Regional Water Quality Control Board appears unwilling to grant the waiver that would allow him to sidestep Special Problems Area restrictions that apply to Los Olivos. The Valley Alliance has provided comments regarding issues the EIR should study.



PHOTO COURTESY MARK OLIVER

LOS OLIVOS SEWER STUDY

Due to its reliance upon septic systems, a high water table, and historic contamination problems, Los Olivos has been identified as a Special Problems Area for decades. Commercial property owners who are most limited by this constraint have lobbied for new systems, whether private or public. Whilst residents, who are concerned with cost and potential growth, have been more reluctant to support a sewer system. Recently the County initiated a process that proposes to provide Los Olivos with a public wastewater treatment system. The consultants working on the project are nearing completion of the first and most difficult part of the report, describing alternative systems. They have received comments from the County, the Regional Water Quality Control Board and some property owners. The Valley Alliance will continue to follow this important process.

ETAM / ESTELLE AGRICULTURAL SUBDIVISION

This large agricultural subdivision located at the intersection of Roblar Ave. and Brinkerhoff Rd. is scheduled to be heard by the County Planning Commission on November 9th. The Valley Alliance has monitored the review process to ensure that the more stringent standards of the Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan are met. Our comments, along with those of others, resulted in considerable changes to the environmental review document and an additional traffic study to evaluate traffic generation and the operation of the Roblar Avenue and Highway 154 intersection. This project and others impacting traffic in the Valley, demonstrate the need to develop the Santa Ynez Valley Traffic Improvement Plan (SYVTIP) that is mandated by the Community Plan. The SYVTIP identifies infrastructure improvements that are necessitated by future growth and how they will be funded.

County Winery Ordinance To Be Updated in 2012

The intent of the Winery Ordinance, passed by the Board of Supervisors in 2004, was to offer predictability and efficiency to the industry while protecting the environment and the rights of the surrounding neighbors.

Fast forward to 2011, the number of wineries has exploded in the Santa Ynez Valley. The predictability and efficiency of the permit process seems to be working for the industry. However, protections for the surrounding neighborhoods are lacking.

There are concerns about increased traffic on inadequate roads resulting from the number of new tasting rooms in those areas, noise and parking problems related to wineries that do not adhere to their permitted number of events and wineries that have incorporated uses into their facilities that are not allowed on agricultural lands, e.g. restaurants, cooking classes, etc.

The Santa Ynez Valley Alliance supports an update to the Winery Ordinance that emphasizes protection of neighborhoods.

We want to see:

- The existing required findings that “roads are adequate and properly designed” to carry the new traffic generated by new facilities – enforced!
- The existing required finding that the proposed project be “compatible with and subordinate to the agricultural use” – enforced!
- The existing required finding “that the proposed project will not be detrimental to the” comfort, convenience, general welfare, health and safety of the neighborhood – enforced!
- Special Events must be related directly to the marketing of the ag product.
- No parties for profit. Charitable events must be part of the total granted to a permit holder and the non profit not charged for facility use.
- Retailing of products other than wine must have a limited percentage of space in any tasting room. Retail sales belong in the retail sectors of our communities.
- Food service on a limited basis (finger food) to balance impacts of alcohol. could be permitted, however a “meal” would not be permissible.
- The new updated ordinance must provide a clear enforcement mechanism for offenders with appropriate, meaningful fines levied at the staff level.

The Santa Ynez Valley Alliance supports agriculture and wants to promote real ag and the long-term viability of ag. This increasing problem is not caused by the growing of grapes, it is caused by the negative impacts of non-agricultural, commercial activities being conducted at wineries.

We acknowledge that there may be areas in the Valley unsuitable for any retail component or visitor serving activities, e.g. tasting rooms and therefore supports the inclusion of overlays for areas inappropriate for a full range of winery activities.

Williams Featured Speaker at 5th Annual Meeting

35th District Assembly member Das Williams was the guest speaker for the Santa Ynez Valley Alliance Annual Meeting held at the Grange in Los Olivos on September 11th. The well-attended gathering was a valuable opportunity to hear Williams speak about current happenings in Sacramento and issues affecting Valley residents. Williams described bills he sponsored in the legislative session just ended and answered questions about the state budget, hydraulic fracking, and the Chumash plans (see cover article) to annex the Camp 4 property with the fee-to-trust process. President Mark Oliver and Vice President Lansing Duncan reviewed some of the many issues addressed by the Valley Alliance during the previous year. Although state redistricting will reconfigure the Assembly district, the Santa Ynez Valley will continue to be in the 35th.



PHOTO COURTESY CARLA FRISK
Keynote speaker 35th District Assembly member Das Williams, former Santa Barbara County 3rd District Supervisor Gail Marshall, and current 3rd District Supervisor Doreen Farr.



*Santa Ynez
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Our Mission

The mission of the Santa Ynez 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 seeks to fulfill its Mission by working with residents, community groups, county and city governments, special districts, tribal government, and state agencies. We support The Valley Blueprint as a collaborative vision of the Valley's future that protects the quality of life for all residents.



PHOTO COURTESY MARK OLIVER

Valley Blueprint “Progress Report” Announced

The Valley Alliance has embarked upon an ambitious project to create a Santa Ynez Valley Blueprint “Progress Report.” The Blueprint was created ten years ago to provide residents with a planning vision for the next 20 years. It formed the basis for the Valley Community Plan. We are now midway through this 20 year period. The Valley Alliance is reviewing the goals set forth in the original document and assessing how well those goals have been met, and noting new issues that have arisen in the last ten years.

Ultimately, this study will provide the community with information that will aid in achieving or adjusting the goals noted in the Blueprint. In addition, this study can act as an important unofficial informative adjunct to the Community Plan, providing decision-makers with more timely data with which to make informed decisions. We intend to present the report this winter, both in published form, and in public at the Santa Ynez Valley High School Little Theater. The date will be announced at a later time. — Mark Oliver, President
