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Rachael Ferrell,
City of San Diego Development Services Center,
1222 First Avenue, MS 501,
San Diego, CA 92101

Sent via e-mail to DSDEAS@saniego.gov
CC: Councilman Joe Lacava, joelacava@saniego.gov

Dear Ms. Ferrell:

Sierra Club San Diego opposes the plan for the La Jolla View Reservoir Project (hereafter the Project) described in the DEIR (**Project No. 331101**). Instead the Sierra Club favors two alternatives described in the DEIR: the “No Project Alternative” is our preferred choice and the “Encilia Drive alternative” is our next choice. Both are superior to the primary Project that creates a number of extensive problems.

In general, Sierra Club San Diego opposes park land being used for reservoirs or any other public facility or structure other than park amenities. We recognize that a tank currently exist on the site but restoring the park to its original state should be the goal of the city and is the Goal of Sierra Club San Diego.

Insufficient and Inconsistent Case for the new Reservoir

The DEIR presents an insufficient case for the need for a reservoir. First, water pressure from the old tank is at or a fraction (.57 PSI below the recommended 40 PSI) below the City’s required pressure level. Does that small increment justify the environmental damage and cost to the city of this Project? We don’t think so. Second, the DEIR is silent on another solution: pumps. Could pumps not restore the needed pressure levels? Such a solution is used in many communities in San Diego County. Third, the current tank appears to be currently functional. The DEIR states, “The existing La Jolla View Reservoir could continue to be operable, but with

severely limited function, for a period of time.” Fourth, it is obvious from the DEIR that water and water pressure is available from other sources. One of the reservoirs, The Exchange Place reservoir was decommissioned in 2002 so it is not presently relevant. The DEIR states, “Use of the existing La Jolla View Reservoir is very limited due to water system changes.” The DEIR fails to describe how water is provided to the La Jolla Community if the use of the current reservoir is “very limited.” These inconsistencies and deficiencies in the DEIR need to be corrected before a case supporting the Project and the need for a new tanks can be supported.

The Project Would be Environmentally Detrimental

The Project would have substantial and potentially long lasting impacts to the environment of the La Jolla Heights Natural Park. This is a unique park because few such natural areas exist along the urbanized coastal area of Southern California. The potential impacts are serious and numerous. Sierra Club San Diego has great concerns about damage to plant and animal habitat. The DEIR states: “The majority of the park is undeveloped and supports native vegetation, primarily consisting of southern maritime chaparral, along with some areas of Diegan coastal sage scrub.” Many of the plants are endangered or threatened including the Ashly Spike Moss, the Coastal Barrel Cactus, and Nuttall’s Scrub Oak. Many of these sensitive plants would be lost for many years and revegetating vegetation the park its former state will be difficult or impossible. Indeed, the DEIR admits that, “The location of both the existing and proposed reservoirs in an environmentally sensitive area would result in some adverse impacts to these areas. Impacts would, however, be minimized to the extent feasible.” Unfortunately many of the impacts are not feasible to mitigate,

A multiyear construction project would disrupt wildlife corridors and bird habitat. The EIR admits that the Project area “does serve as a local wildlife corridor and a stepping stone corridor for avian species.” The Pacific Coast Flyway is a major corridor for migratory birds. The DEIR is deficient in that it makes no mention of and provide no analysis of the Park’s role as part of the Pacific Coast Flyway. According to the Audubon Society (<https://www.audubon.org/pacific-flyway>) “Each year at least a billion birds migrate along the Pacific Flyway, but these birds are only a fraction of those that used the flyway a century ago. Habitat loss, water shortages, diminishing food sources, and climate change all threaten the birds of the Pacific Flyway.” These birds depend on diverse parks and open space during their migratory journey. Along the flyway migratory birds need wooded places to rest and shelter as well as food sources in natural habitats. Clearly, a multiyear construction project with noise, dust, and habitat lost would not be suitable as a migration stop.

Several endangered or threatened bird species will be negatively impacted. Although the 2015 brief survey found no evidence of the California gnatcatcher the DEIR added: “Note that surveys are now considered expired, however, and the [California Gnatcatcher] species is considered potentially present.” Similarly, the DEIR survey found that the endangered Least Bell’s Vireo was observed on the project site. The DEIR notes that other threatened or endangered species likely inhabit the Project site.

Given the steep terrain in the park, disturbing the natural floral will create a substantial chance of erosion. Appendix C1 of the DEIR says "The Project occurs within a natural open space park with steep hillsides which are subject to the City's Steep Hillside Guidelines" Additionally, Appendix C1 of the DEIR states that the Project is "located on a possible landslide, Susceptible to collapse of the overstep and poorly retained uphill slope [and] Susceptible to instability of the filled pad west of the reservoir. Ground disturbance during construction also has the potential to result in accelerated erosion." Erosion is a threat to the neighborhood, the park, and to the flora and fauna that live in or migrate through the park.

Accordingly, Sierra Club opposes a haul road through the canyon in the heart of the park that removes sensitive plants and disrupts the habitat for animals and birds who inhabit or migrate through the park. Indeed the draft DEIR concludes that the project would result in: "significant and unavoidable environmental impacts with regard to Land Use and Noise." The DEIR also notes that, "The majority of the park is undeveloped and supports native vegetation, primarily consisting of southern maritime chaparral, along with some areas of Diegan coastal sage scrub." It is chaparral and coastal sage scrub that is most threatened by development; in the past decades 90% of these ecosystems have been lost.

Sierra Club San Diego is also concerned that noise and dust will impact the natural parkland as well as the surrounding community leading to a degradation of community environment and community character. Appendix C1 of the DEIR states: "The Project would entail extensive demolition, earthwork, and facilities construction activities with the potential to generate dust and noise." The DEIR is deficient in that it mentions community character but never does any analysis of the impact of several years of excavation, bulldozing, blasting, and truck trips on the community character. Despite this oversight, the DEIR does conclude that "The draft EIR concludes that the project would result in: significant and unavoidable environmental impacts with regard to Land Use and Noise" Moreover many of acoustic impacts would take place at night. The EIR states, "The Project would result in significant and unmitigable impacts related to conformance to environmental goals and objectives of applicable local land use plans, specifically in association with noise impacts during nighttime construction activities." The duration of the excavation and its extension into nighttime hours is also a concern as indicated in the DEIR: "Pouring of concrete for portions of the reservoir, however, would occur continuously (up to approximately 18 hours per day) for a maximum of 20 days. These extended construction hours would result in significant and unmitigable noise impacts."

The DEIR concludes by stating: "With regard to biological resources, the Project would result in impacts to southern maritime chaparral, Diegan coastal sage scrub, and jurisdictional drainages, as well as potential impacts to coastal California gnatcatcher and nesting birds. These impacts would be reduced to below a level of significance through the identified mitigation requirements." Sierra Club San Diego is doubtful that these many negative impacts can be reduced through mitigation. For instance how do you mitigate for erosion into the streets of La

Jolla or migrating birds that were impacted? To believe that this can be fully mitigated is pure fiction.

Substantial Noise Impacts

The DEIR indicates that substantial noise will be produced impacting both the quiet and pristine environment of the natural park and the surrounding La Jolla community. The DEIR states: "The most substantial noise generation from demolishing the existing La Jolla View Reservoir would occur during the break-up of the concrete slab that borders the tank to the east." Some of the impacts would be significant and unmitigatable. For example the DEIR indicates that the "use of a concrete saw or breaker during the demolition of the existing reservoirs...would exceed the City Noise Ordinance construction threshold of 75 dBA LEQ (12 hour) at the nearest residence, and impacts would be potentially significant." Additionally the DEIR suggests, "use of construction equipment during pipeline installation in this phase...would exceed the City Noise Ordinance construction threshold of 75 dBA LEQ (12 hour), and impacts would be potentially significant."

Although the Project would install noise quieting devices and will erect a 16 foot high barrier to prevent the most significant levels of noise that could be acoustically harmful, nonetheless, the impacts to the community and the quiet park will be substantial during a several year period. Some of these impacts would occur at night and many are considered "significant" in the DEIR. The Sierra Club opposes such impacts, particularly since much of sound could not be mitigated and its impacts would last over months and years.

Greenhouse Gas Increase

The Project would substantially increase Greenhouse Gas (GHG) by extensive construction equipment and thousands of truck trips. The DEIR deceptively and irrelevantly attempts to hide the impacts of the Project on GHG by employing the City of San Diego Cap checklist which is inapplicable and irrelevant to this type of project. Of course it is absurd and obvious that a water tanks would not utilize: "Green Roofs, Energy in residences, Per capita water conservation, Plumbing, Transportation after construction, EV charging, Parking for residences or Bicycle parking" because the City CAP checklist was designed for new home construction not for capital projects like this one. There is a deceptive attempt in the DEIR to ignore the impact of the project on GHG and to apply irrelevant standards that were designed for different types of projects.

However, the goal of the City's CAP is clear as expressed in Policy CE-A.2 to "reduce the City's carbon footprint" and to "develop and adopt new or amended regulations, programs and incentives as appropriate to implement the goals and policies set forth" related to climate change. Similarly various state laws starting with AB32 and SB32 are applicable here. As the DEIR states "The quantitative goal of AB 32 is to reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and the goal of SB 32 is to reduce GHG emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030." Clearly this Project would produce a massive amount of GHG. The DEIR indicates that the

project consume huge amounts of fuel and thus will produce similarly large amounts of GHG. The DEIR reports that off-road Construction Equipment will consume 155,096 gallons of diesel fuel and on road construction equipment will result in 145,460 Vehicle Miles Travelled. The result, according to the EIR will be that over 23 **Billion** BTUs of energy will be consumed by vehicles on this project with huge, but uncalculated amounts of GHG.

Thus, Sierra Club San Diego make two requests that are consistent with City and State GHG goals. First, a revised EIR should make a good faith estimate of the total GHG resulting from this project. Second, that a revised EIR provide a plan for mitigating GHG on at least a 1 to 1 basis and preferably a 2 to 1 basis. Consistent with the California Court rulings, such mitigation should occur in San Diego and be real, additional, measureable, and enforceable.

The No Project Alternative

The “No Project” alternative in the DEIR appears to be a viable and superior choice compared to the Project. According to the DEIR: “The No Project Alternative would avoid significant and unmitigable impacts related to nighttime construction noise, including associated conflicts with the General Plan Noise Element. It would also avoid significant, but potentially mitigable, impacts to biological resources and potential impacts to cultural and paleontological resources.” Indeed, the No Project Alternative is identified as the environmentally superior alternative. “This alternative would not result in a contribution to significant impacts related to land use, noise, biological resources, cultural resources, and paleontological resources, which would occur with the Project.” Sierra Club San Diego favors the no project alternative.

Encelia Drive Alternative appears superior

Sierra Club San Diego believes that if a new tank must be constructed, the Encelia Drive alternative is superior. Under this alternative, a temporary access road between Country Club Drive and the new reservoir site would not be constructed and excess soil from excavation of the reservoir would not be stockpiled on site. Rather, a temporary access road would be cut from Encelia Drive down to the tank pad. The DEIR states: “The Encelia Drive Construction Access Alternative would reduce significant, but mitigable, impacts to biological and potential cultural resources, due to the reduction in the areal extent of grading. Less-than-significant impacts to visual resources and hydrology/water quality also would be reduced under this alternative.” Sierra Club recognizes that the alternate access route would increase the distance traveled by each haul truck by approximately one-half mile per trip along residential streets and represents a trade-off in the impacts of the project. Nonetheless, we believe it is the environmentally superior alternative.

Alternative Locations

The EIR is deficient in that it fails to consider other alternative for the reservoir. There are numerous alternative location outside of a natural park on which to situate the reservoir. There

are other locations on both public and private land that could provide the location for a reservoir if it is really needed.

Conclusion

In sum, the DEIR demonstrates no substantial need for the project, reveals extensive environmental problems, provides questionable attempts at mitigation, and contributes significantly to increased and unmitigated Greenhouse Gas. Sierra Club San Diego opposes the Project.

Respectfully Yours,

Dr. Peter A. Andersen, Vice-Chairperson
Conservation Committee
Sierra Club San Diego

George Courser, Chairperson
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