

**SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY**

RAMIREZ CANYON PARK  
5750 RAMIREZ CANYON ROAD  
MALIBU, CALIFORNIA 90265  
PHONE (310) 589-3200  
FAX (310) 589-3207



February 26, 2007

Ms. Andrea Ozdy  
County of Ventura  
Resource Management Agency, Planning Division  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, California 93009

**Subdivision of Parcels Within Tierra Rejada Valley  
Including Case Nos. SD06-0047 and AD07-0006**

Dear Ms. Ozdy:

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) is the principal State planning agency for the Tierra Rejada Valley area. The regional significance of the valley as an inter-mountain range habitat linkage hub has been well documented by The Nature Conservancy (Edelman 1990), the South Coast Wildlands Project (Penrod *et al.* 2006) and by researchers for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). The significant, ongoing erosion of the viability of the valley to continue to function as a regional habitat linkage is at a crisis point. To the Conservancy's knowledge, not a single acre of open space between Tierra Rejada Road and Olsen Road within one mile of the 23 Freeway has received permanent open space protection. The purpose of this letter is to begin and sustain a dialogue between the Conservancy and Resource Management Agency staffs to ensure that permanent protection of this unique resource is maximized through the conditions of every relevant discretionary permitting and planning action. The intent of the Tierra Rejada Greenbelt Agreement should be upheld by all the relevant jurisdictions.

The Conservancy is aware of two proposed subdivision projects in the Tierra Rejada Valley (Case Nos. SD06-0047 and AD07-0006) that can contribute to this permanent protection. The first project (Case No. SD06-0047) involves the re-subdivision of 86 acres into two parcels. The second project (Case No. AD07-0006) involves the subdivision of 82.36-acres into 10-acre parcels. Both projects border State Highway 23 (see attached map).

The SMMNRA staff has been monitoring wildlife movement along State Highway 23. There are three culverts along State Highway 23 that serve as wildlife crossing structures. According to SMMNRA staff, culvert B (see attached figure) is the most utilized crossing

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structure by bobcats, coyotes, racoons, and various smaller mammals. The subdivision of Case No. AD07-0006 has the potential of directly impacting wildlife movement through culvert B. We urge the County to condition these projects and/or request the voluntary contribution of conservation easements that permanently maintain adequate wildlife movement. In addition, all relevant California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents should show the remaining open space linkages surrounding all relevant projects. This analysis is critical in order to avoid foreclosing habitat linkage opportunities and to design functional conservation easement boundaries that coordinate with constraints on surrounding properties. The incorporation of agricultural areas into conservation easements is both welcomed and essential. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority is generally always receptive to the negotiation and acceptance of conservation easements.

The Tierra Rejada Valley not only serves as an inter-mountain range habitat linkage hub, but has the potential to support native grassland, coastal scrub, and vernal pool habitat. The species that could benefit from these types of habitat include animals and plants already monitored by SMMNRA staff, including California Orcutt grass, Lyon's pentachaeta, round-leaved filaree, white-tailed kite, Riverside fairy shrimp, and western spadefoot.

Please provide the CEQA documents on all relevant projects in the Tierra Rejada Valley to our staff. In addition, if there are any preliminary plan submittals to review, we respectfully request an opportunity to provide timely input.

Please direct any correspondence and questions to Paul Edelman of our staff at the above address and by phone at (310) 589-3200, ext. 128.

Sincerely,

ELIZABETH A. CHEADLE  
Chairperson

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**Literature cited**

Edelman, P. 1990. Critical Wildlife Corridor/Habitat Linkage Areas Between the Santa Susana Mountains, the Simi Hills and the Santa Monica Mountains. Prepared for The Nature Conservancy. December.

Penrod, K., C.R. Cabañero, P. Beier, C. Luke, W. Spencer, E. Rubin, R. Sauvajot, S. Riley, and D. Kamradt. 2006. South Coast Missing Linkages Project: A Linkage Design for the Santa Monica-Sierra Madre Connection. South Coast Wildlands and National Park Service. June.