



## **Statement from Tejon Ranch Co. Regarding Lawsuit Filed against Los Angeles County over Approval of Specific Plan for Centennial at Tejon Ranch Master Planned Community**

May 28, 2019

TEJON RANCH, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--May 28, 2019-- The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), an extremist environmental organization headquartered in Tucson, Arizona, has, as expected, announced it has filed a legal challenge over Los Angeles County's approval of the specific plan for Centennial at Tejon Ranch, a master planned mixed use residential community.

Centennial is part of the overall Tejon Ranch master conservation and land use plan, an agreement Tejon Ranch Co. successfully negotiated with respected environmental organizations such as Audubon California, Endangered Habitats League, Natural Resources Defense Council, Planning and Conservation League, and the Sierra Club. As required by this plan, 90% of the Ranch's 270,000 acres will be permanently conserved, with the remaining 10% reserved for development in areas with both existing infrastructure and lower resource values—as determined by leading scientific experts.

Centennial will be built in one of those lower-resource-value areas and the site is already zoned for residential and commercial development as part of the Antelope Valley Plan approved by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in 2015.

Notably, CBD sued Los Angeles County to overturn the approval of the Antelope Valley Plan but lost at both the superior and appellate court level. To sue again over the same issues is unconscionable and a waste of taxpayer dollars.

To stand in the way of an approved development that will bring thousands of much-needed price-attainable homes to Southern California families who are struggling to find housing they can afford is yet one more stark example of CBD's "my-way-or-the-highway" mentality.

CBD's intransigence is not surprising. It participated in the negotiations that led to the historic Tejon Ranch Conservation & Land Use Agreement that permanently conserves 90% of Tejon Ranch—240,000 acres, only to, after participating in the negotiations for more than a year, walk away from the table just before the agreement was reached.

It's worth noting that all the participants in the negotiations indicated in advance that the outcome of negotiations would result in some real estate development on Tejon Ranch, and it was representatives from CBD who proposed the 90% conservation--10% development ratio. Now, CBD says it's opposed to conservation agreements. Clearly, CBD would rather retain the opportunity to sue (and presumably collect attorney's fees on the chance it was to prevail) rather than compromising to achieve a guaranteed positive conservation outcome.

It's clear that this latest lawsuit by CBD is simply another blatant attempt to delay development of Centennial, which has already been subject to four environmental impact reports: two as part of its inclusion in the Southern California Association of Government's Sustainable Community Strategies, another as part of the Antelope Valley Area Plan, which was litigated and upheld twice, and the latest with the approval of the specific plan.

For CBD to raise the issue of wildfires, as it did during the Centennial hearings and in their complaint, exposes CBD's hypocrisy. CBD opposed Governor Newsom's emergency declaration streamlining 35 wildfire mitigation projects that would help protect 2.2 million Californians in over 200 communities from future wildfires, claiming it would undercut environmental protections. CBD said the best measure to protect homes against wildfire isn't thin forests and remove dead and dying brush from nearby at-risk communities, but to retrofit houses to current building standards and create defensible space around them.

But the prescription that CBD claims is the best defense against wildfire is exactly the plan called for in Centennial. Though, at Centennial, instead of needing to retrofit homes, houses and other buildings will be constructed from the very beginning based on the most stringent fire codes and building standards in place at the time. These plans have been reviewed and approved by all appropriate State and County Fire authorities. The defensible space standards at Centennial also far exceed state requirements.

The tactics employed by the extremists at CBD to litigate, delay and obstruct, are a significant contributing factor to the housing crisis in California. After all, the co-founder of CBD, Kieran Suckling, has stated that a primary goal of the organization is to inflict severe economic pain. As CBD pursues its agenda, that economic pain is ultimately being felt by countless numbers of Californians who find adequate housing increasingly unavailable and unaffordable.

For the reasons stated above, and more, we believe the lawsuit is completely without merit, and as we have with the seven prior legal actions CBD has filed in an attempt to prevent us from doing our part to help Governor Newsom achieve his goal of the building the housing needed to solve California's housing crisis, we will work with Los Angeles County to vigorously defend ourselves in this latest legal action as well.

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