

Jacqueline R Onciano  
Monterey County Resource Management Agency  
Planning Department  
168 W. Alisal St., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Salinas, CA 93901

February 28, 2008

Dear Ms. Onciano,

I am currently a student at University of California, Berkeley. I am writing to urge you to oppose the proposed Rancho Canada Village development. I graduated from Carmel High in 2006. I attended Carmel Middle School. One of the most powerful learning experiences I received in Carmel Unified School District was learning in the Hilton Bialek Habitat. This Habitat is an award winning, unique, powerful addition to the regular classroom curriculum. Learning to plant food and native plant species, composting, studying the water, soil, insects, reptiles, and birds are only a few of the inspiring and invaluable skills taught at the Habitat. I have been inspired to recycle and think about green, sustainable alternatives. This vital learning will serve me for the rest of my life. The Habitat has inspired me to pursue an environmental course of study.

While this project presents an opportunity to promote smart development that would ultimately contribute positively to the local economy and potentially reduce development impacts on the Valley, under the current proposal, the development fails to respond adequately to the inherent biological and qualitative changes it will bring to the river and its associated flora & fauna. Moreover, the current proposal drastically encroaches on the neighboring school site, and, in particular, unnecessarily compromises the parcel of land currently in use as an award-winning environmental education center, the Hilton Bialek Habitat. The Habitat is home to over 175 species of birds, many small mammals, countless reptiles and insects, and amphibians, including the red-legged frog.

Below is a detailed analysis which I agree with wholeheartedly about why I strongly oppose the proposed Rancho Canada Village development.

Among the Environmental Goals listed in the executive summary of the draft EIR, more than one of these goals is in flagrant conflict with the actual proposed development:

- ***“Integrate the surrounding native habitats into the open space within the community.”*** According to the current plan of the community, there is very little common, park-like space within the layout of the streets that would in any way mimic the surrounding native habitats or provide adequate ecosystem services to any of the wildlife or plant species currently on the land. Furthermore, the proposed development eliminates a significant wildlife corridor between the Carmel River, the Hilton Bialek Habitat, and the open space north of Carmel Valley Road. Numerous studies indicate the importance of corridors of native vegetation to the survival of species. The elimination of such corridors leads to fragmentation of habitat and isolation of species, which impacts long-term survivability, especially of larger species. **NOTE: *\*The question of wildlife***

in the Valley. Additionally, RCV impacts mature riparian habitat, altering or eliminating it irreversibly.

- **Water Quality:** there is no attempt in the RCV plan to curtail urban run-off pollution, one of the leading sources of contaminants in the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary.
- **Operational Noise, Construction Disruption, Operational Air Quality Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** The current proposed location of RCV is unnecessarily close to an existing and established school site, and presents unnecessary environmental and health risks to the students, teachers, and staff. In addition, the increased noise and construction disruption will negatively impact the learning abilities of countless students for an undisclosed period of time.
- **Cultural resources:** While archeological remnants are surely present on-site, the openness of the Valley itself and the integrity of the flood plain represent and cultural and biological resource that we have a duty and obligation to protect for future generations.

Among the alternatives considered, as outlined in the DEIR, *Alternate 2 "East Golf Course" would remedy most of the afore mentioned problems.* By locating the development farther east, above the flood plain and at a considerable distance from the school, the impacts on wildlife, hydrology, and environmental health and quality will be mitigated, and the long-term outcome will benefit a greater number of people who live and work in the area. I strongly urge the county and the developers of this project to consider this alternative.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
*Camille Bishop*  
Camille Bishop

