

MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS
FROM: JOEL ROJAS, AICP, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
DATE: JULY 6, 2010
SUBJECT: BORDER ISSUES STATUS REPORT
REVIEWED: CAROLYN LEHR, CITY MANAGER
Project Manager: Kit Fox, AICP, Associate Planner

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file the current report on the status of Border Issues.

BACKGROUND

The following is the regular bi-monthly report to the City Council on various "Border Issues" potentially affecting the residents of Rancho Palos Verdes. The complete text of the current status report is available for review on the City's website at:

http://palosverdes.com/rpv/planning/border_issues/2010/20100706_BorderIssues_StatusRpt.cfm

DISCUSSION

Current Border Issues

Chandler Ranch/Rolling Hills Country Club Project, Rolling Hills Estates and Torrance

On June 17, 2010, the City received the attached notification that portions of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the *Chandler Ranch/Rolling Hills Country Club* project were being recirculated. This is due to the incorporation of notable new information in the DEIR regarding the project's environmental impacts with respect to air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, and hydrology and water quality. Our previous DEIR comments of June 22, 2009, focused upon the impacts of the proposed removal of the Horse Overlay on the semi-rural quality of life on the Peninsula, and the project's traffic

MEMORANDUM: Border Issues Status Report

July 6, 2010

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impacts upon Palos Verdes Drive East. These aspects of the proposed project have not changed in the recirculated portions of the DEIR. As such, Staff does not intend to offer additional comments on this project. However, it should be noted that comments on the recirculated portions of the DEIR will be accepted by the City of Rolling Hills Estates until August 4, 2010. Staff will continue to monitor this project in future Border Issues reports.

New Border Issues

There are no new Border Issues on which to report at this time.

Attachments:

- Notice of Recirculation for *Chandler Ranch*/Rolling Hills Country Club DEIR (received 6/17/10)
- *Daily Breeze* article regarding cultural resource impacts of the *Chandler Ranch*/Rolling Hills Country Club project (published 6/5/10)
- *Daily Breeze* article regarding recirculation of the *Chandler Ranch*/Rolling Hills Country Club DEIR (published 6/27/10)



**CITY OF ROLLING HILLS ESTATES
NOTICE OF COMPLETION/NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF
RECIRCULATED PORTIONS OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

RECEIVED

JUN 17 2010

PLANNING, BUILDING AND
CODE ENFORCEMENT

Project Title: CHANDLER RANCH/ROLLING HILLS COUNTRY CLUB PROJECT
Planning Application No. 29-07 • State Clearinghouse No. 2008011027

Project Location – City, County: Cities of Rolling Hills Estates and Torrance, County of Los Angeles

Project Location – Specific: The project site consists of the existing Rolling Hills Country Club, Chandler's Palos Verdes Sand and Gravel facility (Chandler's), and adjacent vacant land. The 228-acre site is irregularly shaped and is located along the east and west sides Palos Verdes (PV) Drive East between Pacific Coast Highway and PV Drive North in the Cities of Rolling Hills Estates and Torrance, Los Angeles County, California. The Country Club and Chandler's facility are respectively located at 26311 and 27000 PV Drive East. The site is located on the Torrance 7.5-Minute United States Geologic Survey (USGS) Topographic Quadrangle and Map Page 793 of the Los Angeles County Thomas Guide.

Intent of Document and Guidance for Reviewers/Responders: The Recirculated Portions of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) document has been prepared to (1) identify the portions of the Draft EIR that have been modified with notable new information; (2) recirculate/disclose that notable new information to interested persons, organizations, and agencies; and (3) accept comment on the recirculated portions of the Draft EIR.

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines § 15088.5(f)(2), the City of Rolling Hills Estates respectfully requests that reviewers limit their comments to the revised chapters/sections of the recirculated EIR. There is no need for reviewers to resubmit comments that were submitted on the previously circulated Draft EIR.

Recirculated Portions of Draft EIR: The Recirculated Portions of the Draft EIR document consists of the following revised chapters/sections of the Draft EIR:

- Chapter 2 - Project Description (reflecting changes to the proposed storm water quality and drainage plan)
- Section 3.2 - Air Quality (incorporating additional and revised air quality analyses)
- Section 3.3 - Biological Resources (reflecting additional analysis and coordination with the California Department of Fish and Game)
- Section 3.4 - Cultural Resources (reflecting the presence of a recently recorded offsite but nearby archaeological site)
- Section 3.7 - Hydrology and Water Quality (reflecting additional information regarding the Total Maximum Daily Loads for Machado Lake and related revisions to the proposed storm water quality and drainage plan)
- Chapter 4 Alternatives (reflecting the updated impact analyses noted above)

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: In brief summary, the proposed project consists of redeveloping/reusing the existing Chandler's facility and the adjacent Rolling Hills Country Club with the following:

- 114 single-family homes (33.77 acres of residential lots), 113 of which would be within a new residential community;
- A reconfigured/relocated 18-hole golf course (151.86 acres);
- A new clubhouse complex (10.16 acres) that includes a 61,411-square feet (ft²) structure; and
- 3.9 acres set aside as natural open space.

In addition to these uses, the proposed project includes: pocket parks and overlook lots within the residential community (1.39 acres); an internal network of residential streets (10.42 acres); maintained slopes (16.45 acres); and internal infrastructure improvements. For stability purposes, the proposed homes would be built on existing golf course land and the displaced portions of the golf course would be relocated atop the reclaimed Chandler's facility.

The proposed project would require a variety of discretionary entitlements, which generally include the following:

- City of Rolling Hills Estates: Vesting Tentative Tract Map, General Plan Amendments, Zone Changes, Zone Text Amendment, Grading Plan, Development Agreement, Conditional Use Permits, Neighborhood Compatibility Determination, and Annexation/Deannexation.
- City of Torrance: Zone Change, Division of Lot, Conditional Use Permit, and Annexation/Deannexation.
- Los Angeles County Local Agency Formation Commission: Annexation/Deannexation.



JUN 17 2010

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RECIRCULATED PORTIONS OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

The Significant Effects on the Environment, if any, Anticipated as a Result of the Project: The Recirculated Portions of the Draft EIR document evaluates the project's potential to cause environmental impacts in regards to the following topics: air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, and hydrology and water quality. In addition to these topics, the previously circulated Draft EIR evaluated the project's potential to cause environmental impacts in regards to the following topics: aesthetics, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation and open space, transportation and circulation, and utilities and service systems. The Draft EIR identifies that all of the project's potentially significant impacts can be mitigated to a less than significant level except for the following:

- Construction of the project would generate Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) in excess of the South Coast Air Quality Management District's Mass Daily Thresholds (Impact AQ-1 of the Draft EIR).
- Construction of the project would generate Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) in excess of the South Coast Air Quality Management District's Localized Significance Thresholds (Impact AQ-2 of the Draft EIR).
- Noise generated during construction of the project (temporary and periodic noises) would impact existing nearby sensitive receptors and future onsite residents (Impact NOI-1 of the Draft EIR).
- Noise generated by maintenance of the reconfigured/relocated golf course would impact existing nearby residents (Impact NOI-3 of the Draft EIR).
- Noise generated by maintenance of the reconfigured/relocated golf course would impact future onsite residents (Impact NOI-4 of the Draft EIR).

The Recirculated Portions of the Draft EIR document does not change any of these conclusions regarding significant impacts and, in relation to the second bullet item above, adds that construction of the project would also generate Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) in excess of the South Coast Air Quality Management District's Localized Significance Thresholds.

Presence of the Site on Hazardous Waste-Related Lists: The project site is not included on any lists of hazardous waste sites enumerated pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the California Government Code.

Lead Agency: City of Rolling Hills Estates

Date, Time, and Location of Public Hearing, if any: Public hearings to consider the project will be held by both the Rolling Hills Estates Planning Commission and the Rolling Hills Estates City Council. No specific public hearings to consider the project have been scheduled to date. The City of Rolling Hills Estates will provide appropriate public notice when such hearings are scheduled. Regular meetings of the Rolling Hills Estates Planning Commission occur on the first and third Monday of each month; and regular meetings of the Rolling Hills Estates City Council occur on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. Regular meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. in the Rolling Hills Estates City Council Chambers, 4045 Palos Verdes Drive North, Rolling Hills Estates, CA, 90274.

Address/location where the Draft EIR is available for review:

City of Rolling Hills Estates City Hall

4045 Palos Verdes Drive North, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274

Hours: Monday – Thursday: 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Peninsula Center Library

701 Silver Spur Road, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274

Hours: Monday – Thursday: 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.; Friday: 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; Saturday: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; and Sunday: 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

City of Rolling Hills Estates Website

<http://www.ci.rolling-hills-estates.ca.us>

↳What's New tab; ↳Project Updates tab; ↳Chandler Ranch/Rolling Hills Country Club tab

Public Review Period: June 21, 2010 to August 4, 2010

Please send written comments to: Niki Cutler, AICP, Principal Planner, City of Rolling Hills Estates, 4045 Palos Verdes Drive North, Rolling Hills Estates, CA, 90274, fax: (310) 377-4468, email: nikic@ci.rolling-hills-estates.ca.us

DailyBreeze.com

Peninsula development battle ground?

By Melissa Pamer Staff Writer

Posted: 06/05/2010 12:50:54 PM PDT



Jacob Gutierrez, a Tongva descendent, prepares for a ceremony on a Rolling Hills Estates site believed to have been Tonqvan settlement. (STEVE MCCRANK)

PHOTO GALLERY

Intuition, along with a series of mysterious interactions with hawks, led Gary Johnson to the discovery that has become a kind of obsession for him and a provocation for others.

A longtime enthusiast of American Indian history and culture, the Rolling Hills Estates resident said he felt called to a grassy, brush-dotted hill not far from his home.

Hiking the horse paths in the Linden H. Chandler Preserve about five years ago, Johnson heard the screeching of hawks, seemingly speaking to him.

"I would walk on these trails ... and I would gradually start seeing these hawk feathers, almost like they were laid out for me like 'Hansel and Gretel,'" Johnson said. "I got this overwhelming feeling that there was something I was supposed to find up there."

At the edge of a trail, he found what he says was either a chert knife or projectile point - a handcrafted ancient tool. He began excitedly searching the ground, finding flakes of stone that he believes show the area was a site where American Indians created hunting and cooking implements.

Since then, he has spent a lot of time at the place he calls Thunderhawk Hill, an appellation chosen for an honorary American Indian name that Johnson said was given to him by a Oglala Lakota medicine woman.

Having found state records showing previous archaeological

discoveries nearby, Johnson has come to believe the area was once a significant settlement for local Tongva people. He compares it to Malaga Cove, long known to have been an American Indian village location.

"There's no reason this site couldn't be as important. Nothing has been excavated," Johnson

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said. "We have no idea what's underneath there."

The discovery - which Johnson likened to a "spiritual experience" - has now taken on a life of its own, becoming entangled in one of the most controversial issues in the affluent, bucolic city.

Critics of a luxury-home development proposed for the area next door to Thunderhawk Hill - on the site of Rolling Hills Country Club and a former rock quarry - have rallied behind Johnson.

The residential project, known as Chandler Ranch, has long generated frustration among local equestrians who are worried its lack of horse amenities will alter the nature of horse-friendly Rolling Hills Estates.

Now, along with a local Tongva representative and a Long Beach archaeologist, some equestrians are calling for further exploration of decades-old archaeological sites before the stalled 114-home subdivision can move forward.

"Everyone wants the development to go through. The equestrians certainly do, but what they want is it to be done in an environmentally responsible manner," said Vic Otten, a board member with the Palos Verdes Peninsula Horsemen's Association. "You don't just show up with bulldozers and start knocking (stuff) down."

First raised with the city about seven years ago, the Chandler Ranch project is a complicated, expensive vision for the last remaining

developable land in Rolling Hills Estates.

The 228-acre site is occupied by the country club's golf course and by Chandler's Palos Verdes Sand and Gravel Co., a massive rock quarry that's now a landfill for construction waste. The company and the country club have jointly proposed the development.

The project would require about 3.2 million cubic yards of grading and fill to replace the quarry with a new championship-quality golf course - set to be designed by golf legend Arnold Palmer's company. The current golf course would become the site of the luxury homes.

Expected to cost upward of \$300 million, the project involves a land swap between Torrance and Rolling Hills Estates.

It would also take the land out of a city "horse overlay" designation, and would not include the completion of long-planned horse trails, much to the consternation of local equestrians.

As required by state law, an environmental review for the project that was released last summer examined the existence of "cultural resources" in the area.

It stated that, in 2006, a consultant found state records for four recorded archaeological sites within the project boundaries. Testing was done for artifacts, and consultants suggested a full-time archaeological monitor and a Tongva representative be present during demolition and

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grading.

Johnson and his supporters have said the testing was inadequate and should be performed more thoroughly in light of the discovery of Thunderhawk Hill.

They said the combination of archaeological sites in the vicinity - which include the decades-old finding of human remains and other evidence of habitation - give credence to the theory that a village may have once existed in the area.

"The idea that there are little isolated sites is ridiculous. We know that there's one site," Johnson said. "We just want to make sure there's nothing down there that's going to be destroyed."

In response to Johnson's discovery, the city and proponents of the project have been either tight-lipped or skeptical.

Michael Cope, the project manager for Chandler Ranch, did not return calls for comment.

Mayor John Addleman said he was meeting with project officials later this month to discuss a planned update to an environmental report on the project. As for the potential impact of Thunderhawk Hill, Addleman refused to speculate.

"I wouldn't want to comment on it until a whole lot more comes out that is factual," Addleman said.

The Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy, which co-owns the Chandler Preserve with the city of Rolling Hills Estates, has tried to remain quiet about Thunderhawk Hill. The 29-acre preserve property was both sold and donated to the conservancy by the heirs of the Chandler family, the owners of the quarry and landfill operation.

"We would prefer less publicity than more because we don't want people pot-hunting on the site," said conservancy board member Allen Franz, a professor of anthropology at Marymount College. "A number of our sites do have cultural resources and we have in our management strategy to preserve them. We don't want people traipsing around looking for arrowheads."

Through a representative, Rolling Hills Country Club General Manager Greg Sullivan declined to speak about the potential impact of Thunderhawk Hill.

But he issued a written statement defending "extensive" studies performed for the environmental report.

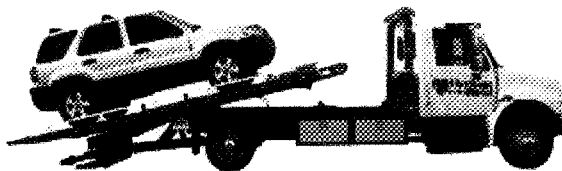
"There is no evidence whatsoever to support claims that there are unknown archaeological artifacts or remains buried beneath Rolling Hill Country Club or Chandler's Sand and Gravel Facility. Statements to the contrary are unfounded and misleading," Sullivan wrote. "Rolling Hills Country Club has and will continue to abide by all environmental impact guidelines

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outlined by the city of Rolling Hills Estates and its neighbors."

Lacking below-ground exploration, evidence is slim that Thunderhawk Hill was the important area for local Tongva people that Johnson believes it was.

A piece of obsidian Johnson found on that site was tested to suggest habitation 3,000 years ago, he said. But no other scientific work has been done at the site.

However, with the help of an anthropology professor at California State University, Long Beach, Johnson has registered Thunderhawk Hill in a state database of archaeological sites.

"I didn't find a lot of stuff, but it certainly seemed like there was potential to find more," said professor Carl Lipo, who teaches archaeological methods and visited the site at Johnson's urging.

In March, Lipo wrote a letter to Rolling Hills Estates criticizing the Chandler Ranch environmental review.

The project "warrants additional consideration," Lipo said.

He called for deeper core samples to be taken from the golf course site, and for the use of ground-penetrating radar, among other techniques.

A Rolling Hills Estates official overseeing the project said portions of the report are being rewritten and the revision will be released in coming months. The official would not say whether archaeological concerns would be taken into account when the report is reissued.

Meanwhile, Johnson and Jacob Gutierrez, a representative of the Gabrielino/Tongva band of the San Gabriel tribe, have built a "medicine wheel" or "gathering circle" at Thunderhawk Hill, which overlooks the country club and has views to downtown Los Angeles.

Tribal ceremonies have been held there.

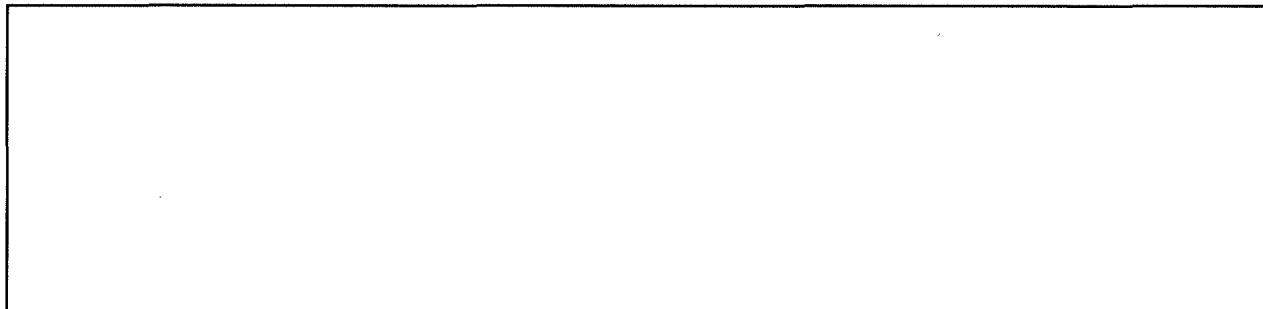
"If you spend any time here at these sacred sites, you will feel the power and the energy here," said Gutierrez, who founded San Pedro-based nonprofit Keepers of Indigenous Ways. "This is like a church for us. There's voices here that speak to us. When the developers go over this land with their tractors, they silence our voices."

Johnson said he'd like to see an interpretive center on the site. His efforts to put up a sign he designed for Thunderhawk Hill were thwarted by the land conservancy.

"We know that it's more than likely part of this huge settlement," Johnson said. "But I've run into a lot of people who haven't believed me."

melissa.pamer@dailybreeze.com

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Chandler review avoids key issue for many in Rolling Hills Estates

By Melissa Pamer Staff Writer

Posted: 06/26/2010 08:31:33 PM PDT

RHE: Development's draft ER looks at drainage, not horses.

By Melissa Pamer

Staff Writer

Seven years after it was initially proposed, a complicated, divisive luxury home development in Rolling Hills Estates is a bit closer to realization.

The city in recent days released a revised environmental review of the project, signaling a step toward public hearings on a proposed 114-home subdivision known as Chandler Ranch.

The new report makes some minor changes to the project without addressing the overriding concern among some local residents that the development's lack of horse amenities will betray the longstanding equestrian lifestyle of Rolling Hills Estates.

The project, expected to cost more than \$350 million, would include a new championship-

quality 18-hole golf course and clubhouse for Rolling Hills Country Club. It would fill in a massive 73-year-old former rock quarry that's now a construction-waste landfill owned by Chandler's Palos Verdes Sand and Gravel Co.

The development would take 228 acres out of a city "horse overlay" - meaning residents could not keep horses - and wouldn't include the completion of a long-planned equestrian trail.

"The issue of equestrian overlay is probably the most sensitive issue on the project, we certainly recognize that," said project manager Michael Cope of Chandler's. "There's going to be a lot of public discussion, obviously."

Dale Allen, president of

the Palos Verdes Peninsula Horesmens Association, said his group had just begun to review the report and was not prepared to comment. The group has previously criticized the project.

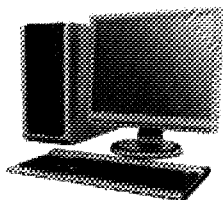
The development, first proposed jointly in 2003 by the country club and Chandler's, involves a 32-acre land swap between Rolling Hills Estates and Torrance.

Various proposals for homes to be erected in place of the dusty quarry have been floated since at least 1981, according to Daily Breeze archives. The current proposal would require 3.2 million cubic yards of grading and fill to even out the site.

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The draft environmental impact report, released Monday, updates several sections of a state-required document originally issued in April 2009.

The biggest change is a new plan to create a drainage system that would let stormwater runoff percolate below the project site, rather than draining into polluted Machado Lake down the hill in Harbor City. That change was made to address regional water quality regulators' recent and ongoing effort to update pollution standards for the lake, according to a consultant overseeing the environmental report for Rolling Hills Estates.

The new drainage plan - which includes an underground 10,000-square-

foot gravel "infiltration pad" - would mimic current conditions, in which storm runoff flows into the quarry.

Two debris basins would direct runoff from the project and neighborhoods uphill into the infiltration pad, eliminating runoff to Machado Lake except in the most extreme storms. The system would help Rolling Hills Estates comply with new water quality standards for the lake, Cope said.

"Our position is that it's a tremendous benefit to the city," Cope said.

Runoff from the project was a concern that had

been raised by local equestrians, along with worries about the implications of Indian artifacts found on the project site and nearby.

Allen and others had promoted the findings of a local Indian enthusiast, Gary Johnson, who believes he found an important Tongva archaeological site in a nature preserve next to the planned development. Johnson named his find at the Chandler Preserve "Thunderhawk Hill."

He and his supporters had called for further exploration of the neighboring golf course site - which covers several previously recorded archaeological finds - before construction would begin on Chandler Ranch.

The new review takes that into account, saying additional underground testing known as "trenching" needs to be done before grading.

Cope said he did not know why that measure was added.

"We've done extensive archaeological research on the project," Cope said. "To my knowledge nothing was found."

Johnson said he was surprised and happy with the change, though he expected to have further specific comments from an archaeologist friend.

"This is certainly, certainly a step in the right direction," Johnson said.

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Other changes in the environmental report include an updated air quality analysis and several changes to hydrological plans.

The project now includes a small riparian habitat on the golf course that would replace lost habitat that currently forms at the bottom of the quarry during the rainy season. Also planned is maintenance of about 1.4 acres of wetland habitat in a proposed water treatment basin.

Comments on the revised portions of the report are due to the city by Aug. 4. A final report, including responses to the comments, will be issued in coming months.

Cope said he hopes to see public hearings begin in autumn.

Find out more

A new environmental review for a proposed development of 114 luxury homes in Rolling Hills Estates is available at [ci.rolling-hills-estates](http://ci.rolling-hills-estates.ca.us).

[ci.us](http://ci.rolling-hills-estates.ca.us) or at City Hall, 4045 Palos Verdes Drive North. Comments must be submitted by Aug. 4 via mail, e-mail to [nikic@ci.rolling-](mailto:nikic@ci.rolling-hills-estates.ca.us)

[hills-estates.ca.us](http://ci.rolling-hills-estates.ca.us), or fax to 310-377-4468.

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