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Request for Coverage

San Geronimo Valley Alliance ("SGVA") is pleased to announce that a settlement agreement has been finalized between SGVA and the developer of the proposed Hills of Castle Rock development located ten miles northwest of Helotes.

SGVA is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the rural ambience and environmental integrity of the San Geronimo Valley area which includes portions of northwest Bexar County, northeast Medina County and southeastern Bandera County. For more than three years SGVA, under the leadership of President Randy Johnson, has been working to oppose the initial Hills of Castle Rock development proposal which called for a high density development in a sensitive rural area within the contributing zone of the Edwards Aquifer. The initial plans for the 1766 acre development proposed by the developer, BP Real Estate Investments, Ltd. and its affiliate BP 1766 San Antonio, Ltd., included proposals for the construction of 3,500 homes, an elementary school, a fourteen story hotel, commercial development, the withdrawal of 1724 acre-feet of water per year from the Trinity Aquifer, and a sewage treatment plant that would dump treated sewage effluent into the San Geronimo Creek.

In addition to concerns regarding aesthetics, traffic congestion, leapfrog development, the vulnerability of the Trinity Aquifer to excessive pumping, and the water quality of the San Geronimo Creek and area water wells, SGVA has been concerned about the potential threat posed by the development to the purity of the Edwards Aquifer. Given that the San Geronimo Creek contributes a significant amount of annual recharge to the Edwards Aquifer (Veni, 2004), SGVA felt that it was especially important that the water quality of the San Geronimo Creek be protected from the degradation threatened by this development.

To combat these threats SGVA intervened in proceedings pertaining to this development before the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality ("TCEQ") and the Medina County Groundwater Conservation District ("MCGCD"). SGVA was joined in the TCEQ case by the City of San Antonio and the San Antonio Water System ("SAWS") which also opposed the granting by TCEQ of a wastewater discharge permit to the developer. In addition the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance under the energetic leadership of Annalisa Peace provided invaluable assistance and financial support in carrying this fight forward.

SGVA is delighted that the efforts of all of those who worked for the protection of the San Geronimo Valley and the water resources enjoyed by the residents of the greater metropolitan San Antonio area have finally borne fruit. The settlement agreement, effective as of February 8, includes the following safeguards:

- (1) Dismissal with prejudice of developer's application before TCEQ for a wastewater discharge permit and the agreement that no sewage treatment plant will be constructed in connection with the development property;
- (2) Development of the property shall be restricted to single-family residences with the exception of a neighborhood amenity center and appurtenances;
- (3) The density of the development shall be limited to 550 homes with the average minimum lot size being no less than 3.0 acres and the absolute minimum lot size being no less than 1.1 acres;
- (4) The development shall include a minimum of 700 acres of greenspace;
- (5) A 40 foot greenspace buffer shall be maintained around the perimeter of the development property;
- (6) Impervious cover shall be limited to no more than 15%;
- (7) The developer shall amend its application before MCGCD for a water withdrawal permit reducing the requested water allocation from 1724 acre-feet per year to 425 acre-feet per year;
- (8) In the event that SAWS extends a water line to the development property, the MCGCD water withdrawal application or permit shall be amended to reduce the permitted water allocation to 25 acre-feet per year.
- (9) The sale or transfer of groundwater from the development property is prohibited.
- (10) Various architectural requirements for homes constructed on the development property have been agreed upon including the requirement that external lighting will utilize dark sky lighting fixtures.

A copy of the full settlement agreement and pertinent exhibits may be accessed at the following online link: www.aquiferalliance.org.

SGVA is deeply grateful for the able assistance it received from its attorneys in reaching this outcome: Eric Allmon, Rick Lowerre and David Frederick of the Austin law firm of Lowerre, Frederick, Perales, Allmon & Rockwell and Douglas McNeel of the San Antonio law firm of Barton, East & Caldwell, LLP. SGVA also owes a special debt of gratitude to all of its members and supporters for their contributions to this result and to Annalisa Peace and the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, who have worked tirelessly for the protection of the Edwards Aquifer.

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