

The **vision** of the Conservancy is the permanent protection of the Gaviota Coast's unique natural, scenic, agricultural, recreational, and cultural resources.

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Naples in Peril

As many have read and heard, our Gaviota Coast had a "town" called Naples, named after its Italian counterpart. Well sort of. In 1888 a businessman from the East bought 500 acres of very cheap farmland from the owner of the Dos Pueblos Ranch. His plan was to divide the land into lots of several acres or less and call it a "town." He would then await the completion of the Southern Pacific coastal train route and sell the lots. His scheme faded when the railroad was delayed and he passed away.

Lots in the Naples Township grew in legal stature when they were recorded with the newly formed Santa Barbara County. More recently, land speculators purchased the property with the intention of maximizing development, contrary to the general plan and local coastal plan policies. The County had long maintained that none of these lots could be developed unless they were "merged" into single lots meeting the modern 100-acre minimum zoning requirement. The speculators disagreed. After numerous court decisions, the California Supreme Court ruled against the County's merger ordinance, although the court did not rule on the question of whether or what type of development could occur.

The speculators sold the property to the new owner and developer of Naples, Vintage Properties of Orange County, who has proposed to build up to 55 homes on the property. Now that sounds better than the 400+ lots that the previous owner claimed possessed development rights. It's also better than the 233 lots the County agreed existed, but are not necessarily developable. However, these large homes, sprawling over the entire property (with nine proposed for the bluffs), are contrary to existing policy intended to protect the rural character of the Gaviota Coast.

Working together, the environmental community has fostered the **Naples Coalition**, a group



The coastal portion of the Naples property.

Photo by Jim Chapman

composed of the GCC, Sierra Club, Surfrider Foundation, Citizens Planning Association, Audubon Society, Citizens for Goleta Valley, and the League of Woman Voters. The goal of this working group is to represent and protect the public interest at Naples. The coalition recognizes that some development may be inevitable, but we resist the idea that the major criteria for development should be to maximize the economic return to land speculators.

The developer and the County of Santa Barbara are finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as we go to press that divides the development into two projects: the larger coastal project and smaller inland project located outside the coastal zone. The inland project will require less scrutiny, can be processed faster, and will generate cash flow sooner for the developer. Unfortunately, the inland project will become the "tail that wags the dog," setting design standards and an infrastructure framework that will become defacto standards for the larger portion of the project. Additionally, the MOU violates policy 2-13 of the County's Local Coastal Plan that specifically states that the County must make every reasonable effort to implement a transfer of development rights program at Naples before considering any development proposal. The County has not yet undertaken this effort. The Naples Coalition has undertaken this effort. The Naples Coalition has received two separate legal opinions that ►

Dos Pueblos Links

President's Message

America's coastlines are getting a lot of attention lately. The Pew Oceans Commission (www.pewoceans.org) recently released a report documenting that population growth and urban sprawl are threatening coastal ecosystems across the country. More than half of the nation's people live in coastal areas, while coastal counties comprise only 17% of the total area of the contiguous United States. The California Department of Finance recently announced that the State's population grew to 35 million. The four largest cities, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose, and San Francisco, are all coastal cities.

There is little doubt that this burgeoning population threatens the Gaviota Coast, the last safe harbor in Southern California for many of our threatened and endangered plants and animals. The potential development at Naples and Dos Pueblos Links is the direct evidence of urban sprawl. The Gaviota Coast Conservancy is dedicated to being a voice for permanent protection of our coastal heritage. Thank you for your support and donations, which enable that voice.

Naples *(continued from page 1)*

analyze this and other legal issues, and has retained the Environmental Defense Center to present our concerns to the Board of Supervisors.

If some development must go forward at Naples, we have asked the developer and the County to conduct public participation workshops where a facilitator will guide participants in a process culminating in a vision and site specific plan to meet the needs of the developer and the interests of the public.

Naples will not go away. However, we are hopeful that this contentious situation can become a model for community dialogue and cooperation.

The final approval of the Dos Pueblos Links Golf Course is poised to be considered by the California Coastal Commission as we go to press. This project will require the grading of 310,000 cubic yards of earth, in some places changing the natural elevation by 25 feet. Approximately 40,000 square feet of new buildings will be constructed. Over 300 parking spaces will be paved. We will continue to oppose this project, allied with the unanimous support of local environment organizations.

There are many reasons why the environmental community has intensely opposed this project for over 10 years.

- ❖ The 208-acre property is a conversion of agricultural land and lies on the rural side of the county urban limit line.
- ❖ The project has the potential to negatively impact threatened/endangered red legged frogs and tidewater gobies, seasonal wetlands, several populations of the rare southern tarplant, roosting monarch butterflies, and a nesting pair of white-tailed kites — a spectacular species in decline.
- ❖ The cumulative impacts of the Bacara Resort and Spa and the proposed mansionization of Naples, the "book-end" properties of the golf course, will overwhelm

the natural habitat and forever change the rural character of the coastline.

There is a sorry history of government support for this project. In 1993 the owner secured the essential Conditional Use Permit from the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors, to convert agricultural land to commercial development (this board was composed of a majority of pro-development supervisors; Stoker, Staffel, and Chamberlin). Then in 1994 the Coastal Commission, in a highly unusual move, reversed its decision to deny the development, immediately after the appointment of a pro-project commissioner.

The story of Dos Pueblos Links is an illustration of the failure of government to provide permanent protection to the Gaviota Coast. Political will of elected bodies has a short "half-life," often that time span until the next election. Moving forward, the permanent protection of the Gaviota Coast will require persistent vigilance and citizen actions to formulate strategies impervious to the pressures of the next election. There are many lasting alternatives to growing development pressures; conservation easements, public purchase of sensitive habitats, creation of conservation districts, special zone districts created by the electorate, etc. There is hope, but not without hard work.

Our new web address:

www.gaviotacoastconservancy.org

What's Happening on the Coast?

Conservation Successes! Over the past 3 years, 6,700 acres on the Gaviota Coast have been acquired for public benefit, or have been protected in conservation or development easements. Thanks should be extended to the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County and the Trust for Public Land for their great service in brokering these transactions.

- ❖ The 600-acre **Freeman Ranch** at the mouth of Refugio Canyon was placed in a conservation easement that precludes future speculative development.
- ❖ The long-time owners of the **La Paloma Ranch** placed their working ranch in a conservation easement and extinguished one building right.
- ❖ **Rancho Dos Vistas**, adjacent to the Reagan Ranch at the top of Refugio Canyon, was placed in a conservation easement, 11 of 14 building rights were extinguished, and a 2.5 mile trail easement was created.
- ❖ California State Parks is purchasing 2,600 acres of **El Capitan Canyon** at a discount to market value for addition to El Capitan State Park. This addition will provide immediate hiking access from the coast to the National Forest via the new Bill Wallace Trail. Additionally, the owners of El Capitan Campground have extinguished at least 2 building rights and placed conservation easements on the 600 acres that they retain. Chuck Blitz

and Roger Himovitz, the owners of Ranch Dos Vistas and El Capitan Canyon, have created a power entrepreneurial model for land conservation efforts.

- ❖ **Arroyo Hondo Canyon** was acquired by the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County and is open to the public on a managed access basis. Public entry to this spectacular coastal canyon is limited in numbers and days, but is free to those that make reservations. Contact the Land Trust at 567-1115.

National Park Service Gaviota Coast Feasibility Study: The NPS plans to publish their Draft Feasibility Study Report and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at the end of February 2003. This study will include a description of the coast's natural, cultural, and recreational resources, a statement on the national significance of the study area's resources, and an EIS considering the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of each protection alternative. A 90-day public comment period will follow the publication date during which time the Park Service will hold public meetings in the local area. You can contact the NPS for further information or to be placed on their mailing list at www.nps.gov/pwro/gaviota or PGSO_Gaviota@nps.gov.

Ellwood Mesa: UCSB, Santa Barbara County, The city of Goleta, and the developer of the proposed Monarch Point housing project are



Arroyo Hondo

© Clyde Butcher 2000

negotiating a plan to concentrate planned University and private housing next to already developed areas while ensuring contiguous coast bluff open space from Isla Vista to the Sandpiper Golf Course. These discussions will hopefully provide a positive compromise to the contentious development proposals for Ellwood Mesa. Trust for Public Land has agreed to broker the transaction.

The California Coastal Trail was formally recognized by legislation at the end of 2001. Senate Bill #908 authorized the State Coastal Conservancy to coordinate the development of the California Coastal Trail and to submit the plan to the legislature no later than January 31, 2003. This trail could follow the route of the de Anza expedition of 1775-6, the first overland exploration of Alta California by the Spanish. The NPS has formally recognized the de Anza Trail and has placed several roadside markers recognizing the trail.

Coastal access was solidified when the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear arguments on the complaint of Wendy P. McCaw, owner of The S.B. News-Press, that The California Coastal Commission illegally extracted a beach easement from a previous owner of Ms. McCaw's Hope Ranch estate. The inaction of the Court let stand the California Supreme Court ruling against Ms. McCaw.

Help Preserve the Gaviota Coast...

If you can join or make a gift, please use the enclosed envelope.

The Conservancy is funded by tax-deductible memberships, gifts, and grants. We are very efficient in the utilization of your contributions.

We anticipate incurring increased legal expenses next year to help fund the activities of the **Naples Coalition** (*see article page 1*).

We promise to do all in our power to realize our shared vision of the permanent protection of the Gaviota Coast!

Our new web address is:

www.gaviotacoastconservancy.org

Download our 18 page Gaviota Coast Resource Book (complete with 3 maps), review frequently asked questions (FAQs), take a visual tour of the coast with photos by Rich Reid, browse news reports of coastal issues, and more!

Newsletter Contributors: Linda Burns, Bart Francis, Bob Hazard, Mike Lunsford, Phil McKenna and Megan Miley (design).




People Make the Difference


Introducing Linda & Mike Burns

Linda Burns joined us this summer as our part-time office administrator. Her 35 years of varied office experience and keen attention to detail have added tremendously to our efficiency. Her husband, Mike, joined us this fall as a volunteer Webmaster for our web site at www.gaviotacoastconservancy.org. He has a Webmaster Certificate from UCSB Extension, and works on a corporate intranet as his real job.

www.gaviotacoastconservancy.org

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