

20 March 2004

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3/22/2004
53

Mr. Thom McCue
Monterey County Planning and Building Inspection Department
Coastal Office
2620 First Avenue
Marina, CA 93933

Dear Mr. McCue,

I am writing in response to the Draft E.I.R. as it pertains to the proposed development within the Del Monte Forest, particularly in regards to the relocation of the Equestrian Center from its present site to the Sawmill Gulch area. Several factors which influence the Sawmill site need more specific attention than is given in the current document. The fact that two man-made wetlands areas (3.3-28 lines 35-29) exist within the site should not restrict future recreational use by the Equestrian Center. Drainage problems in the Sawmill area are the result of mining operations which have degraded the site. Regrading could correct these problems and would be a more appropriate measure than permanent use restriction. In addition, two scenic easements now affect the Sawmill site. (ES-7 lines 26-34); therefore, the proposed Equestrian Center could not be built without approval of both the Coastal Commission and Monterey County. Given these existing conditions, and the fact that the Equestrian Center could be denied permission to be developed at Sawmill Gulch, the omission of an alternative site for the Equestrian Center within Pebble Beach is striking and significant.

The Draft E.I.R. makes little reference to the trails system and continued access to the trails surrounding the present Equestrian Center during construction of the proposed Golf Course. Trails in the Huckleberry Hill Nature Area are discussed (3.3-14), but trail erosion is wrongly attributed to equestrian use and proposed mitigation is severely over-restrictive. Trail degradation is largely the result of mountain and motorized bikes which are prohibited from use on the trails because of safety and environmental concerns. The trails system within the Forest is designated for equestrian and pedestrian use only--and in fact, equestrian access to the trails discourages the use of bicycles and motorized vehicles, thereby lessening negative impact. Equestrian use of the trails has never in the history of Pebble Beach been restricted and should not be in the future. An active Riding and Trails Association works in concert with the Pebble Beach Company to ensure the maintenance and improvement of the trail system.

Restrictions on operations procedures for the relocated Equestrian Center need to be re-addressed. The present Equestrian Center currently maintains an effective and environmentally sound method of manure removal to an appropriate facility for composting. Meanwhile, the proposal to utilize only weed-free feed at the new Equestrian Center is inappropriate given that no such feed is currently available in the area and given that the threat of invasive non-native vegetation is addressed by other mitigations.

Should the proposed development plans for the Del Monte Forest be approved and allowed to proceed, and should the Pebble Beach Equestrian Center be forced to relocate, it is of utmost importance that the Equestrian Center continue to operate in the method and manner which it has enjoyed within the Forest for the better part of a century.

Sincerely,


Stefano Cacace
Pebble Beach