



M E R I T  
Post Office Box 665  
Campo, CA 91906

Sponsor Group meeting 7PM  
August 28 Campo Community  
Center -  
Be there

**UNSUBSTANTIATED  
ALLEGATIONS  
OR LEGITIMATE  
CONCERNS <>  
YOU DECIDE**

PRSR STD  
ECRWSS  
U. S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 4

POSTAL PATRON  
CAMPO, CA 91906

# MERIT

## Mountain Empire Resources Information Taskforce

Post Office Box 665

Campo, CA 91906-3106

Newsletter #3 - 2 August 2000

MERIT – our mission is to provide education and information to local citizens, to help protect and maintain natural and cultural resources, to promote responsible use of groundwater, and to preserve the rural character of the community. What is MERIT? Campo residents, property owners, young adults with children, seniors, working people, retired (and still working), wildlife enthusiasts, business owners. Most of these people came to Campo to escape the city environment. They enjoy privacy, yet many are involved in a broad scope of volunteer activities in the community. A variety of religions are represented. Most have lived in Campo for more than ten years.

MERIT has no interest in engaging in verbal slugfests. On the contrary, we are very interested in building a coalition of concerned backcountry residents to protect and preserve our way of life. We were disappointed, therefore, by the divisive and accusatory tone of the recent PromiseLand Ranch newsletter. Rather than focusing on addressing the concerns raised by their project, the newsletter framed its message in a truth-lies context, complaining of “unsubstantiated allegations” and labeling community concerns as “myths”. This defensive stance is not helpful. It certainly cannot be seen as “establishing and nurturing positive relationships in the Campo community”!

What Campo needs and wants are straightforward answers to some very legitimate and troubling questions about this project, without being attacked or belittled. For instances, the “myth” of the possibility of water depletion by this project can’t be so farfetched if SVDP is spending \$750,000 to determine if water is there or not. We may all be facing a disaster (including SVDP) if our current drought continues, not only from dry wells, but from uncontrolled and unstoppable fires. Where will they go if the water fails? Where do you put 250 foster children in emergencies? These questions should be asked.

The concerns about the population of children this project hopes to serve are also understandable. This community is rightly confused about the nature of the children SVDP wants to bring here. We have received contradictory information about the ages to be served, about their previous experiences, if any, in the foster care system, about their emotional stability. And, from where are these children coming? San Diego County? Imperial County? From private contracting? And is an amusement park-like setting with recreational facilities like skateboarding parks going to give children the responsibilities and benefits one would find living on a true country ranch? Can these children and staff be evacuated safely if threatened by fire? These questions should be asked.

The list goes on. What about the impact on roads, the impact on our relatively untouched natural setting? How will this project benefit Campo and its residents? What about the federal lands they want to use exclusively for the project? These questions should be asked.

SVDP wants to place their facility in our community. They should come ready and willing to answer all our questions. Asking for our input would have gotten them much further than a defensive and accusatory reaction, as expressed in their newsletter, to a community’s understandable concerns.