



MERIT  
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**Are you concerned about the  
massive developments proposed for  
Campo and Lake Morena?  
We are!**

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## MERIT

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### MERIT - MISSION STATEMENT

“The primary objectives and purposes of MERIT shall be to provide education and information that will  
1) protect and maintain the natural resources, 2) promote responsible use of ground water, and 3)  
preserve the rural character of the community.”

### **Major Developments Threaten to Change Forever Campo/Lake Morena As We Know It**

Many of the proposed developments for our area are discussed in the following sections of this newsletter. However, examining individual projects obscures what is happening to Campo and Lake Morena. The deluge of large projects will bring urban development and suburban sprawl, threats to water supplies and lots of traffic and, if the developments are not greatly downsized or cancelled, will destroy Campo/Lake Morena as we know it. More than 1,100 homes and the accompanying commercial developments will drastically change Campo.

MERIT recognizes that change is a constant. Things will change. Campo today is different than Campo in 1980 and Campo in 1950 was a more rural and smaller community. MERIT believes in growth and change but only at a rural pace - slow gradual steady and rural. From year to year that growth has been families building single family homes on the parcels they have purchased. We believe change should respect our community and that dropping a large Chula Vista or Escondido type housing development in the middle of Campo Creek Valley is not the right thing.

We can not agree with the developers and the minority of residents who embrace their ideas that Campo is not a very good place to live and needs to be changed - and that any change is better than what we have now. The developers are hypocrites. In meetings they tell us how beautiful the area is and how they have fallen in love with it. Then they turn around and tell us they will change everything with their wonderful development which will make our life better and that we need to support their project. We can all relate to the friend or spouse who says you are great BUT. And the “but” is always all the things wrong with you.

We are annoyed and irritated by the few who denigrate the reasons so many of us moved here and have chosen to continue living here. We are irritated and annoyed by the few who tell us it was wonderful in the old days but that is no longer the case and if you let us build lots of houses and shopping complexes Campo will again be wonderful. If some people do not like it here, they should move away to Ramona or Poway or Alpine. They can have their Wal Mart and McDonalds. We do not like developers profiting at the expense of the community’s quality of life and rural character. We find it ironic that the Business Association has adopted the slogan “Campo - Just Country” while many of the members want just the opposite - developments that are anything but country.

So - **what do you want?** You should give serious thought to that question if you have not already done so. And you should take action to support your vision for our future. If you do nothing, it is a safe guess that our population in 2015 will have grown to 7,500 or more from 2,850 today. You will not recognize Campo and Lake Morena so if you love it now, work to keep what makes it home.

It is important you make your decisions soon regarding what you want. Most of the developments that will have such large impacts will be going through the approval process in the next 2-3 years. Now is the time to make your opinions known to the Planning Group, to the Department of Planning and Land Use, to the Planning Commission and to the Board of Supervisors. They all need to

know how you feel. Attend meetings, write letters, talk to people, work with your friends and neighbors.

The future of this community is in your hearts and in your hands.

### **Miller Ranch**

A purchase agreement for \$2,200,000 was executed last month for the purchase of the 480 acre Miller Ranch. This property was in the Miller family for many years. The ranch is accessed off of Old 80 and is located in the northeast portion of the Planning Area. It is located just north of Clover Flat (see Circle F below). The purchaser, George Carroll, is planning to build at least 80 homes on the property. The San Diego Mountain Ranch development of 1,058 acres (see below) is on both the south side and the west side of Miller Ranch. This beautiful ranch is part of a very large undeveloped expanse of several thousand acres located between Highway 94 and Old 80/I-8. Large land holdings and large areas of federal lands make Miller Ranch part of a major wildlife corridor and habitat area. While the sale has not been finalized, it is expected to be completed shortly and a subdivision should move ahead quickly.

### **San Diego Mountain Ranch**

This 1,020 acre group of parcels is mostly owned by the Heimburge family of La Jolla and is known to many residents as the Universal Boot Shop properties. An additional 38 acre parcel on the north side of Highway 94 was purchased by a resident of Rancho Santa Fe who is a partner in the development. That parcel was purchased to increase the frontage on Highway 94 and the 38 acres sold for \$225,000. The 1058 acres runs from south to north for about three miles and has the Circle F Sand Mine on the west side, Miller Ranch on the north side, Highway 94 on the south and is close to the Campo Reservation on the east.

The owners have already assembled a development team and the team came to the July 27, 2005 Planning Group meeting to present their plans. They are proposing a destination resort. The developer was so anxious to move ahead that they asked to come back to the PG meeting the following month. They failed to return. However, the plan is still active. The developers are proposing 100 homes for the area north of a commercial development they would locate on Highway 94. That development would have a "destination" resort hotel (read that to be very expensive) with a 100-200 rooms on 110 acres. Included with the hotel would be equestrian and hiking trails, an equestrian facility, two sit-down restaurants, a winery and a vineyard, wine tasting rooms, a food court, shops, spa, movie theater, conference rooms, a central square, putting green, childrens camp, swimming pool and tennis courts. And the 100 homes north of the development.

While we have not heard from the developer, the plan is active and we expect this group to return to the Planning Group shortly with a final plan they will be asking the PG to approve.

### **Circle F Ranch Sand Mine/RCP Block Property**

The owners of RCP Block (Finch family) purchased the 800+ acre ranch in Clover Flat (formerly Spencer Ranch) about three years ago for approximately \$1,400,000 - definitely a below market transaction. Miller Creek runs south through Miller Ranch, through part of the San Diego Mountain Ranch property and then through Circle F before running in to Campo Creek. The property is just east of La Posta Road and the railroad is on three sides.

RCP Block has submitted their Major Use Permit application to the County for a sand mine. This mine would involve excavating Miller Creek to a depth of 45 feet and cover 115 acres. The impact on groundwater and especially groundwater in Campo Creek Basin is unknown. Gaining approval for a sand mine or other extractive use is a long complicated process with a number of additional requirements over and above the normal MUP. Warren Coalson, the consultant working for

RCP has made multiple presentations to the Planning Group and continues to work hard on moving the approval process forward. Since this project has been submitted to DPLU it is in the initial stages of the review. There will be some additional opportunities for community comment. Absent any community opposition the mine could be operating by 2010 with more than 20 truck loads of sand moving every day. These trucks will be moving on Highway 94 and then up Buckman Springs adding to the already substantial amount of sand truck traffic that concerns us all. The initial estimate of the groundwater used in the mining operation was approximately the equivalent of 131 homes.

#### **Circle F/Miller Ranch/San Diego Mountain Ranch**

Just these three projects total approximately 2,400 acres or slightly less than 4 square miles. That is 8% of all the privately held property in our community planning area and covers the entire eastern part of our planning area.

#### **Legacy Ranch**

This 160 acre development is on both sides of La Posta Road immediately north of the SEALS training facility. Nine (9) homes in the \$600,000 to \$750,000 range are planned for this property. The developer has submitted to DPLU their request for this subdivision and have made a number of presentations to the PG. There are many issues with this project including safety questions because of the driveways entering directly on to La Posta Road, the large section of the property that contains sensitive species that requires dedication for open space, the conflict with the SEALS training facility and requirement by the County to substantially widen a short distance of La Posta Road.

The owners of the property want to retain their ranching operation on the property while maximizing the development of the property. This seems to be a recurrent theme in Campo - keep on ranching but develop to the maximum level possible. There is a possibility that this project will be redesigned with fewer homes all on the east side of La Posta Road. A redesigned project would be a substantial improvement and would eliminate many of the problems they now have.

#### **La Posta Ranch**

Well not all is bad news. A map was submitted to subdivide this 320 acre parcel just west of La Posta Road and south of the La Posta Microwave/SEALS Training Facility site. Theodora Davis purchased the land from the developer and sold it to The Nature Conservancy with a final disposition that the land would become part of the BLM lands used by the SEALS as a buffer zone against encroachment. This is one development that will not happen.

#### **Tom Dyke Ranch/PromiseLand/ Saint Vincent de Paul**

This 427 acre parcel was donated to Saint Vincent de Paul in 1998 and was originally to be developed as part of Father Joe Carroll's foster home facility. The property is two miles north of Highway 94 on North Campo Truck Trail. Saint Vincent de Paul has had a number of false steps with this development and the community has not seen any current plans. We have been told the plan is for a camp for children from the city and that there might be an executive conference/retreat center. Current ranching operations will continue.

While the current plan is not available some neighbors were told recently that SVDP is close to completing their plans and submitting their Major Use Permit application. Until a plan is submitted we can only speculate. It is clear that the property will have some type of development and the use will be far more intensive than the current ranching operation.

#### **Buckman Springs Ranch/Harvest Glen**

This 285 acre development is located on the east side of Buckman Springs Road about two miles north of Cameron Corners. Currently it is a large field with a for sale sign. The property was sold to a Las Vegas developer early in 2004 for \$700,000. The owner then developed plans to subdivide the

ranch for a 39 home development. While the subdivision plans were being worked on, the owner has put it back on the market for \$1,750,000 as is (without an approved subdivision) and for \$2,750,000 once a fully entitled (all approvals and ready to build) subdivision is approved. That is why you see a for sale sign even though the developer has come to the Planning Group for approval for a subdivision.

When the PG submitted their comments to DPLU on this project, nothing happened. The developer stopped communicating with DPLU and with the community. One of the requirements requested by the PG asked for was a basin wide groundwater study because the project would use 20 acre feet of water a year. There is a major concern about the effect on neighboring homes. DPLU established deadlines for submission of the required studies including a basin wide groundwater study and paper work on the other impacts from the development. The deadlines were missed. An extension was given. The new deadlines were missed. Four months after the final deadline DPLU told the owner the project would be cancelled. The owner came in with a big story about how they had so many problems and DPLU gave them nine more months (until May 30, 2006) to submit the required data. The lesson here is that DPLU wants development and will go out of their way to keep a project alive.

The planned subdivision is 39 houses on this property with lots running from 4 acres in size up to 12 or more acres in size. If and when the information is submitted to DPLU May 30<sup>th</sup> the application will be processed by DPLU. The review process will include public review and comment and also a re-submission to the Planning Group for their recommendation.

This development will have a major impact on Buckman Springs Road. **The traffic from all the planned developments, including the 39 homes proposed by Harvest Glen, would generate over 10,000 additional automobile trips each day on Buckman Springs Road.**

#### **Vaughan Project**

This development of 13 homes on 81 acres is located just off Canvas Back Drive near the north end of Buckman Springs Road - west of BSR and south of Oak. The project is one of the smaller developments but is (with the exception of Campo Hills) the biggest development ever brought to the Planning Group. Subdivisions are not normal or usual for our area where growth has been very steady but very restrained. This developer has tried to ignore the Planning Group. However, the Planning Group was very concerned about the groundwater issues since this project is at a higher elevation than the rest of the BSR valley and is higher than the Lake Morena area and the subdivision could impact the water in both watersheds. DPLU has required the developer to conduct a basin groundwater study before considering approval. This study has not been completed and the subdivision is not yet approved..

#### **Flying A Ranch/ FatherJoe's Village/Childrens Village**

This project was originally proposed to operate in conjunction with the Tom Dyke Ranch parcel (see above) on 300 acres about a mile away on land north of Highway 94 and east of the railroad tracks. The initial proposal back in 2001 was for 500 foster children. This was later reduced to 250 foster children. The current project has been moved to the Flying A property which is on the west side of Lake Morena Drive and is the site of an old farm. The last iteration for the project was for 25 homes each holding 8 children and a supervising couple with their children. The number of foster children would be 200. A number of other activities and uses are planned including schools, a continued ranching operation and a church that would be used for outside activities which has raised concerns about parking and traffic.

Numerous presentations have been made to the Planning Group and the Major Use Permit application has been in the review process for many months. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) detailing all the land use issues with the project has been sent back to the consultant at least three times

for correction. The EIR has now been approved for release and is open for public review. The review date started April 20<sup>th</sup> and the EIR will be open for review for 45 days. The May PG meeting will devote time at the May 22, 2006 meeting for discussion and comment on the EIR. The details of the project are spelled out in the EIR along with some of the concerns of the community that were voiced when the Notice of Preparation of the EIR was reviewed. At the Planning Group your comments will aid the PG in their action on the EIR. This EIR report is in the Campo Morena Village Library and is available for your review. You can also request copies from MERIT. Comments on anything in the EIR including the plan and any concerns you might have should be submitted to DPLU within the 45 day comment period.

Like all Major Use Permits this MUP will be considered by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors who will decide if the project should go forward. Community input is extremely important in the Supervisors formulating their opinion and vote. You are encouraged to communicate to the PG and to the Supervisors.

### **Star Ranch**

A special Planning Group meeting was held on April 10<sup>th</sup> devoted solely to discussing Star Ranch. This is a more complicated development than any of the others and is far larger. But the same issues are in almost all developments - groundwater, traffic, impacts on community character and the way of life we enjoy, impacts on the environment including dark skies, wild life, visual landscapes, sewage and/or septic, growth, etc. Star Ranch involves an Specific Plan Amendment which affects the General Plan and involves Major Use Permits and Site Plans and Administrative Permits.. MERIT has made a videotape of the April 10<sup>th</sup> discussion at the Planning Group and will provide a copy to anyone who requests a copy. There will be additional meetings to discuss this project and future newsletters will have extensive comments.

Make no mistake - Star Ranch is the 800 pound gorilla on the development front. Currently Star Ranch is requesting 460 homes on their property and are talking about five (5) acres of commercial space. This massive development will completely change Cameron Corners and it will look like Alpine only more crowded. Houses are proposed for 8,000 square foot lots which is not much larger than Campo Hills. Substantial parts of the Campo Creek Valley would have houses. And the houses would be market rate houses which indicates they would be in the \$500,000 and up price category. While the property is 2,150 acres, Star Ranch wants to keep the ranch so the majority of the houses - possibly 400 would be close to Buckman Springs Road and would be on approximately 400 acres. In another newsletter we will provide exact numbers but you need to be aware of the size and extremely dense nature of this development.

### **Campo Hills**

Most residents know about Campo Hills and its 222 homes and the very expensive water and sewer. This project was originally a mobile home park targeted to senior citizens. It was approved in 1985 and the County allowed an additional 200 homes to be built in addition to the 22 that were allowed by zoning regulations. The additional homes were allowed in return for 50 homes being reserved for low income purchasers. The result is that many homes are on 4,800 square foot lots (60x80) and the average lot is 5,300 square feet. Homes are as close as 6 feet and do not have one hour fire walls.

Despite the fact that DPLU and Supervisor Jacob state this development would never be approved today, it was approved. The EIR ignored important matters like the growth inducing nature of this development and the fact the waste water is being transported out of the Campo Creek Basin and that there is a commercial propane tank in a residential neighborhood and there is an overlapping

Major Use Permit. It was approved and therein lies a lesson. If there are developments that are not compatible to the community, you should make that known to DPLU, Planning Group, Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. If you do not, the project will be approved and you will have to live with the results no matter how much you may not like them. There are still problems with Campo Hills that are not being addressed by KB Home.

### **Other developments**

We know of private discussions about two other developments that have not yet progressed to a submittal for a Major Use Permit and DPLU approval. The two projects involve more than 167 homes on approximately 286 acres. When the developments are submitted, MERIT will publish the information. The important thing here is to realize there are more developments than you have heard about that will only exacerbate the problems we face. And we all should realize there are additional developments being considered that none of us have heard about. Campo/Lake Morena is a prime target for future development in the County. More are on the way.

### **Conclusion on the Cumulative Impact of Developments**

Those developments that we know about total 5,648 acres or 9 square miles. This is 20% of the private land holdings in the planning area. The projects have an equivalent to 1,120 homes or more than 3,200 additional residents. That is more than the 2,800 who live here today. Large projects not yet finalized increase those numbers. Do you think this is a major threat to your lifestyle and the ambience of your community? We certainly do.

These developments are over and above the natural organic growth we have always had and which we encourage. All of us can see that growth with new homes on Buckman Springs Road and Shockey Truck Trail and in other areas. To project 7,500 residents by 2015 is very realistic if all these developments proceed as planned. Contrast that with the goal the community established at the start of GP2020 Update hearing. That goal was 4,600 residents by 2020 and even that was considered by some as too many.

We are talking about more than 10,000 NEW automobile trips each day on Buckman Springs. We are talking about a complete change in the community character of the community. Star Ranch participated in discussions on community character and now they want the committee reconvened to rework the statement so that it will better fit their project. And these are just some of the impacts. And the question of two commercial developments, one of which is 5 acres, is a separate question that needs to be considered. The County told us during GP 2020 discussions that our community already has more than twice as much commercial space that we will need by the year 2020. We do not believe it is hyperbole to say the community as we know it is threatened.

**What can you do?** Participate. Make your feelings known. Tell your neighbors. Tell elected officials. Tell the County. Tell the developers.

### **Campo/Lake Morena Planning Group- Next meeting 22 May 2006**

Your planning group meets the fourth Monday of every month at 7PM in the community center. Next month's meeting includes the Flying A-Childrens Village EIR for their MUP. This will be a very informative session. The agenda is posted in the community at various places and you can request an email copy by sending a request to [esry@aabol.com](mailto:esry@aabol.com) The meetings are well attended and very democratic and the debate is intelligent and informed. You can learn a lot and you can give a lot. This is the first place to make your feeling known about developments and all issues affecting land use in the community. You can also talk to PG members. They are Jean Bates, Bill Slaff, Joe Carmody, Larry Johnson, Bob Kreger, Pat Noblitt, Shirley Perkiss, Bev Esry and Bob Shea.

Planning Group members are elected by the community and there will be at least four seats for election in the November 2006 elections. In addition the PG has subcommittees that work on the very

important issues affecting us. These include the sand trucks and the railroad, Cell phone communications, groundwater issues for our area, trails and the airport site. You are also invited to come to those meetings and participate and to join in if you can. Most meetings are noticed.

### **Homemakers**

This group of hard working volunteers deserves the thanks of the entire community. They provide a service to all and use that to support the community. Last year they donated over \$13,000 to the community including \$7,000 in scholarships to graduating seniors at the high school. If you have donations of clothing and other items, please contact them. They are open Thursday and Saturday. Their limited space means they can not accept everything so asking is a good policy. And the shopping values are tremendous - excellent quality at very reasonable prices.

### **Campo Business Association**

The Business Association is only recently formed but is already a dynamic force. In a very short period of time they organized the first annual Campo-Lake Morena Roundup. Spearheaded by Gene Vick of Star Ranch, Dan Lawrence of SVDP and Wally Palmer, a recent resident (and aided and abetted by a number of others) this event went off on April 8<sup>th</sup>. It was a resounding success and surprised even the most optimistic supporter by clearing \$9,102 for supporting community endeavors. They did all this in less than two months and MERIT congratulates the Business Association on a job well done on an event that reflects what Campo is and has been.

### **Freedom Ranch Luau**

Freedom Ranch residents help throughout the community. Many of our senior citizens have found their help to be invaluable. We are very fortunate to have them. Each year they have a big luau and this year it is Sunday 23 April from 11 to 3. This a deep pit barbeque with all the fixings and raffles and prizes. The donation is \$6 for adults and \$4 for children. This is a great event with excellent food and we encourage you all to attend. And thank them for all they do.

### **MERIT Recycling Center**

The recycling center is open Sunday 10-1 and Monday 9-2. The site is donated and the workers are all volunteers. Revenues after expenses for transportation of the recyclables to San Diego are donated to the community. In addition to donations to various programs at the schools, disaster preparedness, VFW Easter Bicycle event, 4-H, Freedom Ranch, Backcountry Against Dumps, MERIT has added a scholarship for a graduating senior at the high school. The center has donated more than \$11,000 in the past few years. And we have saved the community approximately \$100,000 in fees at the transfer station.

The recycling center accepts for no charge any and all electronics including cell phones, the rechargeable batteries, copiers, scanners, stereo and radio equipment, conventional telephones and answering machines, computers, printers, monitors, TV sets, etc. We do not accept appliances which includes microwave ovens although we can advise you where to take those items for proper recycling.

### **Post Script**

It has been a while since we prepared a newsletter. But the newsletter is back to stay. If you have ideas about what land use issues and development issues we should address, please call Mike Thometz at 619.478.5740

And a closing thought. A member of the vocal minority who believes we need all this development was recently heard to say when a resident questioned something that was proposed "If they do not like it, tell them to move to Alpine or El Cajon." We think that is good advice. The majority who like - no who love Campo and Lake Morena would say we love what we have and what we gained when we moved here. Those who do not like it should stay in the city and or move back to the city.