

## **Cathy Woodbury**

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**From:** Carol Simon <carolfsimon@earthlink.net>  
**To:** <coast-eir@openspace.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 18, 2002 2:49 PM  
**Subject:** Comments on the Draft EIR

July 18, 2002

Cathy Woodbury

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

330 Distal Circle

Los Altos CA 94022

Ms. Woodbury:

I am writing to comment on several aspects of the Draft EIR relating to the annexation of the Coastsides.

As a resident of the Southcoast area, I am insulted by the dismissive conclusion in the report that all items noted are "less than significant". Several of the analyses are specious and narrow-sighted and illustrate a clear lack of understanding of the conditions and circumstances that affect our day-to-day life on the Southcoast.

### Land use:

Excerpt from the Overview, Page IV A-1

"Implementation of the proposed annexation project would be a benefit to preserving the existing rural quality of life and would provide more preservation, recreation, and stewardship opportunities in the Coastal Annexation Area."

According to the tabular analysis of Map 9, 42% of the land by area in the southern portion of the annexation area is already owned by state, county, or private land trust designated for open space use. This is more than sufficient for the preservation of open space and to protect and restore the natural environment, preserve the rural character, and to provide recreation, public education and enjoyment. 13.8% of the land is already designated for public recreation. 81% is currently designated as agricultural land. How much more rural does the area need to be? There are many forces already in place (LCP, Williamson Act, etc.) to maintain and preserve agricultural land. Annexation and acquisition of land by MROSD would likely remove land from active agricultural use, not promote it.

In the northern area, only about 20% of the land is now protected. Emphasis for the annexation should be on that area where there is, indeed, the possibility of increased growth and loss of open space and agricultural productivity.

### Housing:

From the EIR LU-7 would the project displace existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere? This is rated as "Less Than Significant Impact."

The EIR states: The project could displace existing residents on parcels that the District may acquire as open space preserves. However, the Draft Service Plan states that "Should the District acquire lands that contain

existing structures, these structures may be maintained and improved for uses such as staff or caretaker housing or for rental to others (such as farm laborers). Rental preference would be provided to other open space or recreation providers, such as the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Department, where use of such facilities would benefit public recreation or open space programs. Existing residents may also continue to live on the land through life estates. Structures may or may not be retained depending on their condition and potential for compatible use. If retained, structures would likely not be expanded."

This is really a hot button for our community. Because of the extreme stress the community is under from the FEMA restrictions, the LCP, and the general difficulty with getting permits to build or remodel, the removal of even a single housing unit in our community is a tragedy. What's more, giving preferences to District staff or other recreation providers after displacing a local resident is adding further insult to injury. The follow-on statements do not show that the District would be committed to maintaining or improving any housing units that are land that they may acquire. This shows a clear lack of understanding of the housing crisis in the Southcoast area.

#### Public Services:

The EIR completely downplays the impacts of increased number of visitors that new Open Space Preserves could bring into the area. The EIR only addresses the actual preserves. Visitors must travel to and from the preserves before and after their visits, through our community.

From the EIR: "The proposed annexation and subsequent acquisition of land would not result in an increased demand on public services... Development of a field office, infrastructure and low intensity recreation has the potential to create police and fire protection service calls from the District lands. The additional demand for these services would not be significant. Opening up areas to the public could cause a slight increase in fire risk. Any fires would likely receive response from California Department of Forestry (CDF). The County Sheriff's Department also anticipates a need for additional responses to preserves. Both agencies require access to future preserves. The lack of adequate emergency access would be a significant impact. This section recommends adding an Implementation Action to the Service Plan to ensure adequate emergency access. Compliance with the proposed Draft Service Plan Guidelines, Policies and Implementation Actions and with mitigation measures proposed in this section would ensure that District actions within the proposed Coastal Annexation Area would not result in significant impacts to public services and infrastructure. "

I am particularly concerned with increased traffic, parking problems, and the strain on emergency services. The EIR used bogus logic in analyzing the amount of traffic that would be generated. The monitoring team monitored two of the preserves on Skyline for the number of vehicles entering and exiting the parking areas. They then extrapolated the number of vehicles that would be generated over a period of time based on the *NUMBER OF ACRES* in the preserves, i.e. so many vehicles per acre. This is ridiculous. Visitors chose to come to a preserve not because of its size but because of the attractiveness of the area and the special features of the preserve. A small preserve of 10 acres is just as likely to generate x number of visitors as a preserve with 1000 acres. Witness the 55,000 visitors that come to Ano Nuevo every year to visit a very tiny area because of the elephant seals or the thousands that came to the lighthouse every year, which is a miniscule area. This section completely does not address the issues that visitors will likely come into Pescadero village after visiting a preserve to get something to eat or to buy gas, aggravating the amount of traffic that will clog the already congested town streets on the weekends. From my experience as a docent at both state park sites, I can testify that one of the most frequently asked questions by visitors is where is a good place to get something to eat around here.

The treatment of parking impact is also questionable. The report states that there will be sufficient parking at all of the trailheads for the preserves. That's not the issue. The issue is the same as noted above. Visitors will likely come into Pescadero either before or after a visit to a preserve straining already scarce parking resources.

The EIR states that opening areas to the public could cause a slight increase in fire risk. Living where I do, I accept the fact that it will take CDF about 15 minutes to arrive for both response to fire and medical emergencies. I don't like it but I accept it. Having more visitors in the area can only aggravate that situation. It could mean that CDF might then take 20-25 minutes to respond to my neighbors and me because they have more demands on their services. Access to the preserves for emergency services is not the issue. The issue is the strain on the resources of the emergency responders.

I feel that this whole section is way off base and shows a callous attitude toward our community.

While I can also offer several emotional objections to the report and the proposed annexation, I will limit my comments to those stated herein. I am totally opposed to the annexation of the Southcoast into MROSD and will work towards stopping it.

Sincerely,

Carol F. Simon

721 Madrone Ave., Pescadero CA 94060

Butano/Gazos representative to the  
Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council