



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
Ramirez Canyon Park
5810 Ramirez Canyon Road
Malibu, California 90265
Phone (310) 589-3230 Fax (310) 589-3237

July 12, 2006

Mr. Rick Farris
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Ventura Fish & Wildlife Office
2493 Portola Road, Suite B
Ventura, California 93003

Opposition to Tejon Ranch Company's Application for Permit to Harm Condors

Dear Mr. Farris:

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) opposes the Tejon Ranch Company's application for a permit to harm condors as part of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The MRCA is concerned with the direct relationship of the project site to the ecological sustainability of the major Southern California bioregion, and specifically the survival of the federally endangered California condor. The MRCA is dedicated to the preservation and management of local open space and parkland, watershed lands, trails, and wildlife habitat. The MRCA is actively involved in protecting key habitat areas in the southern California bioregion to allow for the continued survival of native wildlife species, including endangered and threatened species.

As you know, the California condor is an imperiled species that still hovers on the brink of extinction, and reintroduced condors face a variety of threats including habitat loss, oil and gas drilling activities, lead poisoning, shooting and collisions with power lines. The public has made a tremendous effort to recover the condor and has invested over \$40 million in the condor reintroduction program. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) should not issue any take permit to harm or kill endangered condors.

Much of Tejon Ranch has been designated by the Service as critical habitat for the condor, areas essential for the recovery of the species. The Service's Condor Recovery Plan identified protecting key roosting and feeding areas on Tejon Ranch as one of the most important recovery actions for condors. The Tejon HCP should not allow types of development or degradation of this habitat that is known to harm condors.

Tejon Ranch land has long been at the core of the condor's habitat and was one of the last places wild condors inhabited before all remaining birds were captured for the ambitious captive-breeding program. Today, reintroduced condors use the remote open spaces of

Mr. Rick Farris
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Opposition to Tejon Ranch Condor Application for Take Permit
July 12, 2006
Page 2

Tejon Ranch as essential foraging and roosting areas. The ranch contains important condor flight pathways and the only significant feeding habitat close to the Sespe-Piru condor nesting area. Tejon Ranch is also important habitat for the Tejon deer herd, a forage source for the wild condor population.

The Service should not issue a take permit to the Tejon Ranch Company (TRC). Its actions show that it has opposes condor reintroduction and recovery efforts. TRC has recently proposed Tejon development projects that will allow inappropriate densities of development and human activity in condor critical habitat and inappropriate building heights in condor flyways.

The Service should not grant a permit to harm or kill condors to a company with a poor track record and one that is attempting to develop condor critical habitat.

We urge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to work with Tejon Ranch to modify its activities and projects to ensure the continued existence of this species. Please add our agency to the mailing list for any public review documents for this project. If you have any questions, please contact Judi Tamasi of our staff at (310) 589-3230, ext. 121, or by email at judi.tamasi@mrca.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Michael Berger
Chairperson