

San Dieguito Planning Group
P.O. Box 2789
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December 19, 2023
J. Andrew Murillo
Development Project Manager
Planning Department
City of San Diego
jmurillo@sandiego.gov

RE: OPPOSITION to PRJ-1105341 Surf Sports

Dear Mr. Murillo:

The San Dieguito Planning Group (SDPG) has followed with interest the development of the San Dieguito River Valley area along El Camino Real and Via de la Valle, locally known as the Polo Fields. Our Planning Group area is immediately adjacent to the river valley bordering on the north side of Via de la Valle, thus many of our residents are greatly impacted by the development occurring here.

The SDPG, several area HOAs, neighbors, and the Fairbanks Polo Club Homeowners Association (FPCHA, successor to the Grantor for the Grant Deed on the Polo Fields land) have asked the City repeatedly over the past several years to curtail the increasing activities at this location due to its numerous deleterious effects on the neighboring community, including traffic, noise, environmental damage, lighting, illegal water pumping, and more. The complaints have been ignored and the unconscionable disregard of the surrounding neighborhood and Grant Deed prohibitions have continued, resulting in the FPCHA filing a lawsuit earlier this year.

The City's tenant on the former Polo Fields land, Surf Cup Sports (now d.b.a. Pioneer Sports and Entertainment), purchased the adjacent parcel bordering it to the north last year, located at 3975 Via de la Valle. They are now attempting to develop a mega sports complex along Via de la Valle in the environmentally sensitive San Dieguito River Valley. The previous owner of this parcel had planned to develop senior housing but abandoned the project after years of unsuccessfully obtaining environmental and planning approvals from the city. The recent permit application filed by Pioneer Sports proposes a two-story building on the 24-acre parcel of wetlands adjacent to the fields.

The San Dieguito Planning Group is OPPOSED both to the project and the Conditional Use or Site Development permits for Pioneer Sports for several reasons:

- This site is sensitive agricultural land, long reserved by City planners for open space.
- Traffic in the area has already exceeded the capacity of the local roads and existing infrastructure. A commercial development of this size and use would greatly exacerbate the problem. *No additional approvals should be considered until the current traffic problem is solved and an EIR with comprehensive traffic study is completed.*
- The community has waited years for the expansion and widening of the El Camino Real bridge project to ease the traffic congestion in this area. This vital infrastructure improvement *should not be impeded or delayed* by a *potential* new sports complex because the new road segment crosses the west side of the property.
- The site renderings show a very large building with an elevated finished floor height, likely to avoid flooding due to its location on a wetland area. This area frequently

floods during the rainy winter season. The parcel is not zoned for such a development, nor is the building in keeping with the rural character of the surrounding community in bulk, mass, scale, or architectural style.

- The adjacent San Dieguito Community Plan area has a Dark Sky policy requiring downward-directed or shielded lights, low lumen, 2200-2700 Kelvin, no up-lighting and no lighting of sports courts (public or private). The huge floodlights depicted in the project rendering are incompatible with this rural area and will negatively impact neighbors, commuters, and wildlife.
- This massive project has no benefit to the local community that will bear the brunt of its impact.
- Since signing the lease for the Polo Fields in 2016, Surf Cup Sports and its various shell companies have been poor neighbors and stewards of the land that they use. Despite promising to restore portions of the adjacent Coast to Crest Trail in 2016 as part of their lease, they have yet to do so. They have received fines and civil penalties for illegal grading, illegal pumping of stormwater into the San Dieguito River, illegal parking on the wetlands, and committed numerous other violations of the lease and grant deed on their adjacent parcel. This entity should not be rewarded with access to expand its use and destroy more of our sensitive wetlands.

In summary, this use is not consistent with the rural character of the neighborhood, and it negatively impacts the preservation of the sensitive lands of the San Dieguito River Valley. The current infrastructure surrounding this site does not support this usage and its overuse has created a public safety and nuisance hazard. This land was clearly intended to be preserved as Open Space, not to be developed into a major sports and event complex imposed on a quiet rural residential community.

The San Dieguito Planning Group requests that you DENY the CUP and SDP.

Sincerely,
Douglas Dill
Chair, San Dieguito Planning Group

CC:

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