

April 25, 2001

Hon. Rusty Areias
Director
California State Parks
PO Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

Dear Director Areias:

We have joined together to request acquisition of these San Diego County properties with park funding approved last year in Proposition 12. These properties best meet the criteria in the bond to both protect important habitats and enhance the State Parks system.

Proposition 12 designated \$50 million for "the acquisition of land from willing sellers that are a high priority for both the State Parks system and for habitat purposes, with priority given to projects that protect habitat for rare, threatened, or endangered species pursuant to a Natural Community Conservation Plan" (5096.323.) This provision was included in the bond at the urging of San Diego County legislators who successfully argued for the need for additional funds for conservation purposes within the NCCP planning area.

Proposed Additions to Anza Borrego State Park

San Felipe Ranch (7,500 acres)

Located in the San Felipe valley near Scissors Crossing, this high desert property includes mountain slopes, washes, a flood plain and valley. Vegetation on the property consists of riparian habitat including sycamore and willow, coast live oak and Muller oak, and Mojave yucca and blackbush. This property would make a valuable addition to the State Park and provides a link to lands already in public ownership such as recreational trail linkages to Volcan Mountain Preserve and the San Dieguito's Joint Powers Authority lands, or lands proposed for public ownership such as the adjoining Rutherford Ranch. The San Felipe Ranch includes habitat for bighorn sheep on the eastern mountain slopes. The federally listed least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher occur within the property. Features include a historic ranch house (which could serve as an interpretive center to highlight the historical aspects of the region's cattle ranching), the Butterfield Stage route, the Southern Immigrant Trail and a Native American village site.

Vallecitos Creek Ranch (4,084 acres)

Located on State Highway 2 along Vallecitos Creek, this property contains at least 51 pairs of least Bell's vireo, the largest population of nesting pairs in San Diego County, in a lush desert riparian area surrounded by mountains. The ranch is also habitat for the bighorn sheep and the listed desert unicorn plant. Approximately seven miles of the Historic Butterfield Stage Route

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pass through this property following traces of the earlier 1840's Mormon Battalion and Kearny's army of the West. A major Native American habitation site occupied the valley prior to the establishment of the stage station.

Mason Valley (2,400 acres)

Located Northwest of Vallecitos Ranch, this area is prime recreational land and provides significant resources that are a natural extension of state parklands. The area transitions from valley floor with creosote bush to a Jeffrey pine forest and alpine meadow. The property contains habitat for bighorn sheep and mountain lions, and provides access to the Oriflamme and Rodriquez Canyon portions of the State Park. A riparian habitat with Fremont Cottonwood is within the property. The property also contains a portion of the Southern Immigrant route and 20 recorded archeological sites.

Proposed Additions to Cuyamaca Rancho State Park

Tulloch-Cuyamaca (2,110 acres)

Located at the junction of highways 79 and S1 at the North end of Lake Cuyamaca, this property includes a wet montane meadow and vernal pool habitat surrounded by mixed oak and pine woodlands. Preservation of this property will enhance the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park and help link the park to the Anza Borrego Desert State Park. Preservation of this property also creates a protected east-west wildlife corridor that stretches between the desert and the Cleveland National Forest. This property supports a broad range of wildlife including mountain lions and golden eagles. Three state-listed reptiles and four state-listed plants inhabit the property. Four listed birds including the bald eagle are found in the immediate area.

Maggio Ranch (107 acres)

Located near the rural community of Descanso adjacent to the southern boundary of the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park and to Highway 79, the Maggio ranch property includes oak woodlands, chaparral and riparian communities. Purchase of the ranch could provide new trailheads, a picnic area and a year-round horse camp for park users.

Proposed Ramona Grasslands State Raptor Reserve

Public Resources Code Section 5019.65 defines State Reserves as "areas embracing outstanding natural or scenic characteristics of statewide significance." The purpose of a State Reserve is to "preserve its native ecological associations, unique fauna or floral characteristics, geologic features, and scenic qualities in a condition of undisturbed integrity." The largely undeveloped 5,000-acre Ramona grasslands, located in the Santa Maria Valley west of the growing community of Ramona, provide a tremendous opportunity to establish a State Reserve that both meets and surpasses the intent of the law.

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Page Three

Only one percent of the state's grasslands remain and less than five percent of the grasslands remain in San Diego County. Creation of the Ramona Grasslands Raptor Reserve will guarantee that a significant foraging area for large birds of prey, including golden and bald eagles, ferruginous hawks, Swainson's hawks, red-shouldered hawks, peregrine and prairie falcons, and burrowing owls is maintained in a natural state in perpetuity.

In addition to raptors, migratory waterfowl depend on these seasonal wetlands, as do mule deer, bobcats, mountain lions, long-tailed weasel and spade-foot toads. Endangered species dependent on the grasslands include the Steven's kangaroo rat and arroyo southwestern toad. The endangered San Diego fairy shrimp and several rare species of flowering plants are found in vernal pools that dot the grasslands.

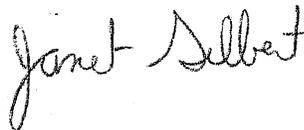
Preservation of the grasslands as a State Reserve would also protect the state's investment in adjacent lands. The grasslands connect the eastern slopes of Mt. Woodson with the open space of the Iron Mountain Preserve; they also provide a western wildlife linkage down Bandy Canyon to the San Pasqual Valley and the San Dieguito River Park. By strategically linking existing public lands, we can better ensure the long-term viability of the region's unique biological communities.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request. For additional information, please feel free to have your staff contact Ann Van Leer of The Nature Conservancy at 619-209-5832 or at avanleer@tnc.org or contact any of the signatories below. Correspondence can be directed to The Nature Conservancy, 3500 Fifth Ave Suite 308, San Diego, CA 92103.

Sincerely,



Bill Leahy
Southern California Area Director
The Nature Conservancy
3500 5th Ave Ste 308
San Diego, CA 92103
949-300-5859



Janet Gilbert
Public Relations Chair
Ramona Grasslands Committee
20061 Sunset Oaks Dr
Ramona, CA 92065
760-789-7305

Hon. Rusty Areias
April 25, 2001
Page Four



Geoffrey Smith
Conservation Coordinator
Sierra Club, San Diego Chapter
3820 Ray Street
San Diego, CA 92105
619-299-1741



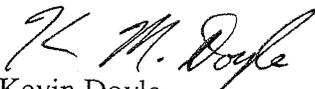
Allison Rolfe
Executive Director
San Diego Audubon
2321 Morena Blvd Ste D
San Diego, CA 92110
619-275-0397



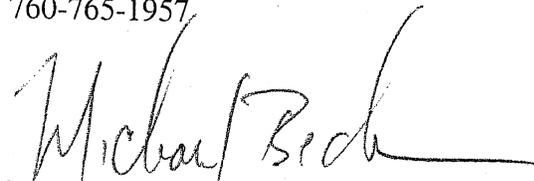
Molly Jean Featheringill
President
Cuyamaca Rancho Foundation
PO Box 212
Descanso, CA 91916
619-445-8377



Dave Bittner
Director
Wildlife Research Institute
PO Box 2209
Ramona, CA 92065
760-765-1957



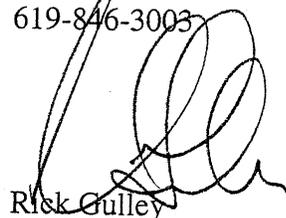
Kevin Doyle
Western Regional Director
National Wildlife Federation
3500 5th Ave Ste 101
San Diego, CA 92103
619-296-8353



Michael Beck
San Diego Director
Endangered Habitats League
PO Box 1509
Julian, CA 92036
619-846-3003



Greg Schuett
President
Volcan Mountain Preserve Foundation
PO Box 1108
Julian, CA 92036
(760) 765-3000



Rick Gulley
President
Anza-Borrego Foundation
PO Box 2001
Borrego Springs, CA 92004
760-767-0446

Hon. Rusty Areias
April 25, 2001
Page Five



Dick Bobertz
Executive Director
San Dieguito River Park
18372 Sycamore Creek Road
Escondido, CA 92025
858-674-2275



Mary Anne Pentis
President
The Vernal Pool Society
PO Box 2154
Ramona, CA 92065
760-789-4085

cc: Hon. Members, San Diego Congressional Delegation
Hon. Members, San Diego Legislative Delegation
Hon. Members, Board of Supervisors
Glynnis Vaughn, Office of Gov. Gray Davis



DIANNE JACOB

CHAIRWOMAN
SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Del Cerro
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Dulzura
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Guatay
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Lakeside
Mount Helix
Mount Laguna
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Cuyapaipe
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Mesa Grande
Santa Ysabel
Sycamore

DATE: November 1, 2000
TO: Board of Supervisors
SUBJECT: FUNDING FOR ACQUISITION OF RAMONA GRASSLANDS (District 2)
SUMMARY:

COPIES
2000 OCT 26 AM 11:34

Overview

The recommended action will direct the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Grassland Preservation Project to seek potential sources of funding for the acquisition of grasslands in Ramona, within the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) North County planning area.

Recommendation(s)

CHAIRWOMAN DIANNE JACOB:

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the citizens' group, Grassland Preservation Project, to identify potential sources of funding and willing sellers of land for the acquisition of grasslands in Ramona, within the MSCP North County planning area.
2. Authorize the Chief Administrative Officer and County's Washington, D.C. and Sacramento representatives to work with the County's delegation and other interested parties to secure funding for acquisition of grasslands in Ramona.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact related to this proposal.

Business Impact Statement

N/A

Advisory Board Statement

N/A

SUBJECT: FUNDING FOR ACQUISITION OF RAMONA GRASSLANDS (District: 2)

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BACKGROUND:

San Diego County has experienced rapid population growth in recent years, which is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Associated with the increased population figures is the loss and fragmentation of native habitats displaying high levels of biodiversity, including grasslands. Grasslands, especially native grasslands, consisting of perennial grasses and herbs have suffered from heavy cattle grazing and agricultural activities that have led to the invasion of non-native species and the loss of the original vegetation communities. Native grasslands are now rare in San Diego County and it is estimated that six percent of the County's grassland remain. One of the remaining large tracts of grassland, which includes a native grassland component, is located west of Ramona.

Ramona's grasslands support a broad variety of species from raptors to rare plants. The federally protected Golden eagle and endangered Arroyo toad have been observed in Ramona's grassland, and also the San Diego horned lizard, Steven's kangaroo rat, bobcats, mountain lions, and mule deer. Flora of interest include spreading navarretia, southern tarplant, and little mousetail, all of which can occur in vernal pools. These unique seasonal wetlands contain biological resources only known in San Diego County, such as the San Diego Fairy Shrimp and 94-97 percent of the naturally occurring pools have been lost to development. Vernal pools are high priority conservation target habitats. Avian species in the area include ferruginous hawk, Cooper's hawk, Swainson's hawk, and northern harrier. Migratory birds also utilize this area, as it is located within a recognized wildlife corridor for fowl and birds of prey.

A citizen's group, the Ramona Grasslands Project, has been formed to address the protection of the Ramona grassland habitat. They have developed a report proposing that approximately 5,000 acres of grasslands in Ramona be protected (see map - Attachment A). It is recommended that County staff work with this group to identify funding sources and willing sellers of land in the grassland area and work towards developing a viable grasslands preserve.

A grasslands preserve in this area would also be of great benefit to the North County Subarea Plan of the MSCP currently under preparation. As noted above, there are several listed species that depend on grassland habitats. The creation of a grassland preserve would assist in getting coverage for these species in the North County MSCP and provide benefits not only for the species but also for other property owners with similar habitats.

Opportunities for funding land acquisition exist at both the Federal and State levels. This month the Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 Interior Appropriations bill was passed providing a six-year funding stream for land conservation entitled *Land Conservation, Preservation, and Infrastructure Improvement*. This would provide \$1.6 billion in FY 2001 increasing to \$2.4 billion in the final year. Title VIII of this bill will provide valuable funding sources for land acquisition projects such as the Ramona grasslands. Also, Proposition 12, a \$2.1 billion bond act for parks and open space, and Proposition 13, a \$1.97 billion bond act for water safety, flood protection and watershed management were passed in Spring 2000 which provide further potential sources of funding.

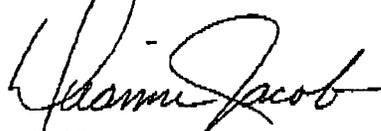
SUBJECT: FUNDING FOR ACQUISITION OF RAMONA GRASSLANDS (District: 2)

13

As more details regarding these new funding sources become available, it may be determined that the acquisition of grasslands does not meet the funding criteria. In that case, the County's Washington, D.C. and Sacramento representatives are requested to seek alternate funding sources for this purpose.

I urge your support.

Respectfully submitted,



DIANNE JACOB
Chairwoman

*****RAMONA COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP*****
POST OFFICE BOX 803, RAMONA, CALIFORNIA, 92065

June 3, 2000

To: Ramona Grasslands Coordinating Committee
Dianne Jacob, Second District and all County Supervisors.
Dianne Feinstein, U.S. Senate
Duncan Hunter, 52nd District, U.S. House of Representatives
Charlene Zettel, State Assembly 75th District
All Interested Parties.

Re: The acquisition of grasslands in Ramona.

At the June 1, 2000 meeting of the Ramona Planning Group a presentation was given by the locally formed organization Ramona Grasslands Coordinating Committee. This committee seems to be made up largely of Ramona citizens and other interested parties supporting preservation of grasslands. The presentation was professional, orderly, and provided clear reasons to act upon the future acquisition of grasslands in Ramona. The presentation consisted of over an hour of public testimony of those in favor of this proposal.

It was clearly stated that the acquisition of these grasslands would be accomplished through willing sellers and monies they raise for the purchase of the lands.

In their introduction, the group stated that "Ramona's open space is facing a developmental crossroads. The question is whether this crossroads offers an opportunity or creates a crisis. The fate of thousands of acres of grasslands is at stake. This proposal offers an alternative vision of Ramona, a vision aligned with the forward thinking now taking place throughout the state".

The intent of this letter is to convey that the Ramona Community Planning Group supports and advocates this action and also asks for your support. It is our desire that as the committee moves forward that the RCPG be involved in the process, and that this approval be contingent on the public having access to the area via trails and trail heads after the acquisition of the grasslands.

Thank you for consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Brenda Foreman, Chairman RCPG
760-788-1456

*****RAMONA COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP*****
POST OFFICE BOX 803, RAMONA, CALIFORNIA 92065

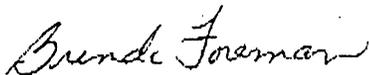
August 4, 2000

Re: 2020 Process/Update for Ramona

Please include in the Ramona Community Plan Update/ Plan document a goal that reflects the following motion that was approved at the August 3 regular meeting:

Motion to support the concept of purchasing the Ramona grasslands and that the Ramona Planning Group be involved in the process. Also that the approval be contingent to the public having access to the area via trails and trail heads after the purchase of the grasslands.

Sincerely,



Brenda Foreman, Chair RCPG



San Diego Office
3500 Fifth Ave., Suite 308
San Diego, California 92103

TEL 619 209-5830
FAX 619 209-5835
www.tnccalifornia.org

November 2, 2000

Ms. Janet Gilbert
20061 Sunset Oaks Drive
Ramona, CA 92065

Dear Ms. Gilbert:

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) applauds you and your colleagues for your work on the Ramona Grasslands Greenbelt proposal.

TNC is an international conservation organization dedicated to saving the world's last great places to safeguard our precious biodiversity and natural landscapes. In California our efforts are dedicated to threatened biologically-rich large landscapes.

We agree that the Ramona Grasslands are an important conservation priority for San Diego. TNC recognizes the critical role grasslands serve as an important habitat type, and that they are a natural community disappearing from California, and especially San Diego, at an alarming rate. In addition, their location proximate to both the Iron Mountain region and to Rancho Guejito, both areas TNC has identified as high-priority for conservation, makes them key wildlife linkage corridors.

TNC has worked in other parts of California to preserve grasslands, most proximately the Santa Rosa Plateau in southwest Riverside County. To find out more about TNC's activities in California, please contact our website at: www.tnccalifornia.org. We can be reached at our San Diego office at 619-209-5832.

We look forward to working with you and others in Ramona to protect this incredible resource.

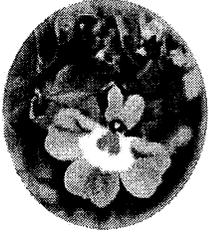
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AV", followed by a horizontal line.

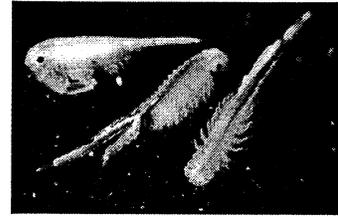
Ann Van Leer
Coastal San Diego Project Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Leahy", with a stylized flourish underneath.

Bill Leahy
San Diego Mountains Project Director



Mary Anne (& Al) Pentis
VERNAL POOL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 2154, Ramona, CA 92065
760/789-4085 — 760/789-4085 FAX
maryanne@pentis.com
al@pentis.com



August, 2000

re: Ramona Grasslands &
Lake Hodges Watershed.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This statement is to record and provide information developed and received during meetings and conversations with San Diego water department scientists with regards to the importance of the Ramona grasslands as a prime watershed for the Lake Hodges area. Lake Hodges is a prime water source for the City of San Diego.

On many occasions during 1998 and 1999 the undersigned had discussions on the above topics with Mr. David Gibson, San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board watershed biologist, and Mr. Bob Collins, City of San Diego realty biologist for watershed purchases, and discovered that these scientists wholeheartedly agreed that everything possible should be done to preserve the grasslands area as a necessary watershed which is desperately needed to supply the city of San Diego with water at present and in the future. Especially considering the bleak outlook regarding availability of limited water resources as our population continues to explode, it is logical.

Developing a plan to make the grasslands as part of a water park both for preservation and recreation was discussed but not finalized.

Mary Anne Pentis

Al Pentis, biologist

Back Country Coalition

Post Office Box 1638 • Alpine, CA 91903 • (619) 445-4067

November 1, 2000

Supervisor Dianne Jacob, Chairwoman
San Diego County Board of Supervisors
1600 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA 92101

RE: Ramona Grasslands Greenbelt Project

Dear Supervisor Jacob:

As you know, the Back Country Coalition (BCC) is dedicated to preserving natural, cultural and scenic resources throughout San Diego County.

We are pleased to add our support for the Ramona Grasslands Greenbelt project to that of many other environmental organizations throughout San Diego, as well as the Ramona Planning Group. We believe that protecting this unique and almost-vanished ecosystem in a passive wilderness park would enhance not only the integrity of the MSCP's habitat corridors, but would become an asset as a regional park to all San Diegans. Additionally, the acquisition of the 5,000 acres of grassland proposed as a passive park would enhance property values throughout Ramona and adjoining communities.

We know you have been apprised of the incredibly valuable resources contained within the acreage being proposed for a preserve and hope you also will support this important project. Please request the participation of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and ask that they request Congress for National Wildlife Refuge status for the land as well as seek funding for its acquisition.

Thank you for your past leadership of environmental projects in the county. We appreciate all you have done to preserve large tracts of valuable habitat lands within San Diego County as these actions improve quality of life for everyone.

Sincerely,


Bonnie Gendron
Coordinator

cc: Supervisors Cox, Slater, Roberts, Horn
Ken Berg, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
✓Janet Gilbert, Ramona Grasslands Greenbelt Project



DIANNE JACOB

CHAIRWOMAN
SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

April 5, 2000

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Cuyamaca
Dehesa
Del Cerro
Descanso
Dulzura
Eucalyptus Hills
Fernbrook
Flinn Springs
Gerrit Hills
Imperial

Ms. Janet Gilbert

Ramona, CA 92065

Dear Ms. Gilbert:

Thank you for your letters regarding our native grasslands. As always, I appreciate you sharing your thoughts on this important issue.

I have a good working relationship with Mike Spear and would welcome the opportunity to show him our region's valuable grasslands. I know that properties such as Cumming Ranch and Montecito Ranch contain critical habitat. If the property owners mentioned in your letter are interested in selling their land for open space conservation, I would be eager to work with them.

Preserving our important open space is one of my highest priorities. I have been personally active in acquiring over 15,000 acres in areas ranging from Volcan Mountain in Julian to the Daley Ranch in Jamul. However, in acquiring these lands I have always worked with a willing seller. Interest from Ramona property owners must be communicated.

The development of the North County Sub Area of the Multiple Species Conservation Plan, which I co-chair, is an excellent opportunity to plan the preservation of Ramona's native grasslands. And, as projects move through the County planning process, I assure you I will be standing guard to make certain our conservation goals are met.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call me or David Barber of my staff at 619-531-5522 or www.diannejacob.com.

Sincerely,

DIANNE JACOB
Chairwoman

Harbison Canyon
Jacumba
Jamul
Julian
Lake Morena
Lakeside
Mount Helix
Mount Laguna
Pine Hills
Pine Valley
Potrero
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Rancho San Diego
Rolando
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Viejas

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504

July 25, 2000

Ms. Janet Gilbert
20061 Sunset Oaks Drive
Ramona, California 92065

Dear Ms. Gilbert:

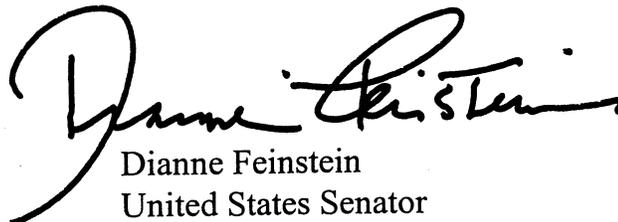
Thank you for sending me a copy of the Ramona Grasslands Greenbelt proposal. I read your proposal and commend your efforts to preserve sensitive grasslands in Ramona.

Please continue to work with the county Board of Supervisors and keep me informed as the proposal becomes more finalized. My staff will be happy to discuss your proposal with you and suggest ways we can get it funded in the near future.

Again, thank you for writing to me. If you have further questions, or need assistance in the future, please feel free to call my Washington, D.C. staff at (202) 224-3841.

With warmest personal regards.

Sincerely yours,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

DF:nw



DIANNE JACOB

CHAIRWOMAN
SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

January 4, 2000

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Cuyamaca
Dehesa
Del Cerro
Descanso
Dulzura
Eucalyptus Hills
Fernbrook
Flinn Springs
Granite Hills
Granville
Guatay
Harbison Canyon
Jacumba
Jambul
Julian
Lake Morena
Linda Vista
Mountain Helix
Mount Laguna
Pine Hills
Pine Valley
Potrero
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San Pasqual
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Mesa Grande
Santa Ysabel
Sycuan
Viejas

Ms. Janet Gilbert

Ramona, CA 92065

Dear Ms. Gilbert:

Thank you for your letter dated November 13, 1999, regarding Specific Plan Areas in Ramona and open space. I appreciate you sharing your concerns with me.

Western Ramona is included in the 172,000 acre Multiple Species Conservation Plan (MSCP). In fact, the County is acting on my request to purchase the 1200 acre Boulder Oaks Ranch as an MSCP acquisition.

The key, however, to acquiring these lands is if the property owners are open to selling the land for conservation. I have personally been involved in the acquisition of over 15,000 acres in East County, with another 6,000 acres under discussion, and all were negotiated with willing sellers.

The future of the lands you reference may also be included in the General Plan update. As I mentioned to you in an earlier letter, it would be beneficial to you if you directly participated in the process. I suggest you contact the Ramona Planning Group and/or the Department of Planning and Land Use at 619-694-2962.

You noted the importance of preserving native grasslands, and I couldn't agree with you more. I recently set in motion the preservation of 500 acres in Alpine because it is one of the few remaining large tracts of land that has native grassland. Sadly, only 6% of San Diego County's native grassland remains.

I appreciate your interest in preserving Ramona's natural resources and rural community character. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call me or David Barber of my staff at 619-531-5522.

Sincerely,

DIANNE JACOB
Supervisor, Second District

DJ:db