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Mitigation Agreement Will Provide Nearly \$1 Million for Habitat Preservation, Allow Staples Ranch Development in Pleasanton to Move Forward

SAN FRANCISCO— The Center for Biological Diversity and the Alameda Creek Alliance have signed a mitigation agreement with the Alameda County Surplus Property Authority allowing the proposed 124-acre Staples Ranch development in Pleasanton to move forward while providing up to \$925,000 in funding to enhance creek vegetation along Arroyo Mocho and acquire and protect habitat for rare plants.

The city of Pleasanton has proposed the annexation and development of Staples Ranch, located near I-580 and El Charro Road in Pleasanton and owned by Alameda County, which would contain a mix of residential and commercial uses. The property is home to rare alkaline soil habitat that supports a rare plant species, the San Joaquin spearscale.

The mitigation agreement resolves conservation-group opposition to the development by funding the protection of rare soil habitat and restoring 85,000 square feet of riparian habitat, likely along Arroyo Mocho, west of the project. This restoration will mitigate for the impacts of extending Stoneridge Drive across Arroyo Mocho.

“The improved mitigations in this agreement will enhance a significant reach of riparian habitat along Arroyo Mocho important for trout, pond turtles and other aquatic wildlife and will result in conservation of habitat for the Amador Valley’s unique alkaline plant species,” said Ralph Kanz, conservation director at the Alameda Creek Alliance. “With the terms of the conservation agreement included, the Alameda Creek Alliance supports the approvals and permits for the Staples Ranch project.”

Two tributaries of Alameda Creek, Arroyo Las Positas and Arroyo Mocho, flow together adjacent to the project site and provide important wildlife habitat and corridors. Alameda County and the Zone 7 Water Agency have planted riparian vegetation and completed other habitat projects nearby in Arroyo Mocho. The mitigation measures resulting from this agreement will add to these efforts, further improving wildlife habitat along the creek.

The city of Pleasanton approved the current Staples Ranch Specific Plan in 2009; it was challenged in court by the Center for Biological Diversity, Alameda Creek Alliance and neighbors over potential impacts of the development and road extension. The project was withdrawn, and under a settlement agreement the city prepared a supplemental environmental review of the project, including potential effects on sensitive plants and wildlife. The mitigation agreement resolves all remaining disputes over potential biological impacts.

The conservation groups and Safe Streets Pleasanton, a neighborhood group concerned about the planned extension of Stoneridge Drive through the project to El Charro Road, also signed a policy statement with the city of Pleasanton and Alameda County that incorporates the terms of the mitigation agreement. The policy statement also specifies the conditions for opening Stoneridge Drive to through traffic and includes various mitigations for potential traffic and noise impacts that satisfy the concerns of Safe Streets Pleasanton.

“We’ve been working with Pleasanton for five years to plan for the development of Staples Ranch,” said Patrick Cashman, Director of the Alameda County Surplus Property Authority. “With these agreements in place, we’re looking forward to final approvals from the City Council so that we can commence construction early next year.”

The Pleasanton City Council will consider approval of the Environmental Impacts Report for the Staples Ranch development and the associated Stoneridge Drive Specific Plan Amendment on August 24. A development agreement and development plans for a 45 acre senior continuing care community and a 37 acre auto mall will be considered for approval on September 7.