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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 25, 2018

O.C. Supervisors Consider Hillside Project In Fire Zone For a 3rd Time

Yorba Linda, California— The proposed 340 unit Esperanza Hills housing project in county territory above Yorba Linda is set to be considered for a third time by the O.C. Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, September 25 at 1:30 PM. A coalition of residents and conservation groups has twice successfully challenged the project in court. The Board has been ordered by both the Superior and Appellate Courts to overturn the approvals.

Residents formed a community group called Protect Our Homes and Hills. Together they have argued that the project is unsafe in that, in an emergency, it adds an additional 1,000 cars to a two lane street gridlocked in the 2008 Freeway Complex Fire. That fire ravaged 280 homes nearby. Residents also argue that the one daily exit for 340 homes is not adequate and the route itself is hazardous, with multiple hairpin turns and steep grade changes.

Indeed, the site is designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone by CalFire and has burned three times. The project shares a two-mile-long border with the permanent wildlands of Chino Hills State Park.

Co-petitioners include Hills For Everyone, Endangered Habitats League, California Native Plant Society, and Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks. The area is rich with endangered species and is a known mountain lion corridor. One measure of its remaining wildness is the presence of golden eagles.

The petitioners won the first lawsuit in Superior Court when the Judge found that the County had improperly delayed mitigation for greenhouse gasses. Residents appealed on other grounds and won on three more issues – water assessment, fire evacuation, and inadequate project description.

Marlene Nelson, representative of Protect Our Homes and Hills, stated, “We have asked for a reduced footprint with fewer units and two daily accesses to disperse traffic so that fewer cars will be on the street in the next fire. It is time the Board listened to us. We are not imagining a terrible scenario, we lived through one, although many of our homes did not.”

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Protect Our Homes and Hills is a resident-based group in Yorba Linda concerned about the safety implications of the proposed Esperanza Hills project.

Hills For Everyone is the non-profit founder of Chino Hills State Park.

Learn more at: www.HillsForEveryone.org or www.ProtectYorbaLinda.com