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Contact: Jeff Miller, Center for Biological Diversity, (510) 499-9185  
Ralph Kanz, Alameda Creek Alliance, (510) 535-9868

**Pleasanton Must Reconsider Staples Ranch Development**  
***Lawsuit Settlement Requires Environmental Study of Impacts on Rare Species***

PLEASANTON, *Calif.*— Conservation groups and neighbors have reached a settlement agreement with the city of Pleasanton after a lawsuit challenged an inadequate environmental review for the proposed Staples Ranch development and Stoneridge Drive extension.

Under the agreement, the city will study the project's effects on sensitive wildlife and the impacts of the extension of Stoneridge Drive through the project site; it may reconsider the project approvals.

"This agreement gives habitat for native wildlife species a fair shake during the Staples project," said Jeff Miller, a conservation advocate with the Center for Biological Diversity. "We will be looking for stronger protection of the creek corridor next to the arroyos and adequate mitigations for wildlife impacts after the additional study and Pleasanton's reconsideration of its approval of the development."

The Center for Biological Diversity, Alameda Creek Alliance, and Safe Streets Pleasanton sued the city in March 2009 under the California Environmental Quality Act for failing to properly assess and mitigate the environmental impacts of the proposed development and road extension. An environmental impact report certified by the Pleasanton City Council in February 2009 did not adequately address impacts to habitat for sensitive species such as the California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, western pond turtle, and an endangered plant, the San Joaquin spearscale.

"The project is adjacent to important aquatic and riparian habitat in Arroyo Mocho," said Ralph Kanz, conservation director for the Alameda Creek Alliance. "There should be adequate stream buffers and mitigation for aquatic species and San Joaquin spearscale habitat when the project is reconsidered."

The Staples Ranch, on 124 acres located at the intersection of Interstate 580 and El Charro Road, is currently owned by Alameda County, and under the development proposal would be annexed to Pleasanton. Two tributaries of Alameda Creek, Arroyo Las Positas and Arroyo Mocho, flow together adjacent to the project site. The arroyos provide important wildlife habitat and corridors. In 2003, when the Arroyo Las Positas/Arroyo Mocho realignment project was completed by Alameda County, fish ladders were installed in the arroyos to allow for the future passage of steelhead trout, and riparian vegetation was planted to improve wildlife habitat.

San Joaquin spearscale is a rare plant that occurs on the Staples Ranch site. The city claimed wrongly, in its environmental impact report, that the mitigations for spearscale from an adjacent 2003 Arroyos project would be adequate for the Staples Ranch project, even though existing plant habitat on the site would be destroyed. Habitat for California red-legged frogs, which are known to occur nearby, could also be degraded by the

project. Western pond turtles, a state species of concern, have been documented recently on the Staples Ranch site and observed in Arroyo Mocho.

The original environmental impact report did not analyze the impacts of the Stoneridge Drive Extension, which was added to the project at the last minute by the city of Pleasanton, on nearby residential neighborhoods and the environment. Residents affiliated with Safe Streets Pleasanton submitted comments pointing out that the draft report expressly and unequivocally assured the interested public that Stoneridge Drive would not be extended to connect to El Charro Road as part of this project — exactly what the city and county then approved.

After supplementing the environmental study, the city must reconsider the project approvals in light of its new information. If the city rescinds the project approvals it can either drop the project or adopt new or revised findings, an updated mitigation and monitoring program, and a revised Staples Ranch Specific Plan Amendment. If the city does not rescind the approvals, the conservation groups can re-file the lawsuit challenging the February 2009 approvals and the certified report, with the supplemental report not admissible in the case. The conservation groups retain the option of challenging any new or revised project approvals, limiting any claims to the extension of Stoneridge Drive through the project area, biological impacts, greenhouse gas emissions, and cumulative impacts associated with a nearby mining operation.

Pleasanton is prohibited from any ground-disturbing activities that would significantly alter the site (other than construction activities along the eastern edge of the project site associated with the development of Livermore's El Charro Specific Plan, such as the construction of El Charro Road) until 30 days after a final decision regarding the project, to give the groups a chance to assess and challenge the new approvals. The city will hold a new public hearing on the supplemental review and reconsider the project approvals in light of the new information.

*The [Center for Biological Diversity](#) is a nonprofit conservation organization with more than 240,000 members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.*

*The [Alameda Creek Alliance](#) is a community watershed group with over 1,750 members, dedicated to protection and restoration of the natural ecosystems of the Alameda Creek watershed.*