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Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

(AMENDED)

Subject: ESTABLISHING REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS TO TEST FOR TOXIC CONTAMINANTS IF THEY ARE WITHIN A 2-MILE RADIUS OF A ROCKET TEST SITE

Recommendation:

Direct Resource Management Agency staff to review the Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines and propose amendments to require proposed developments located within a 2-mile radius of a present or former rocket test site to perform soil and water tests for perchlorate and trichloroethylene (TCE), among other contaminants and substances as a part of the Initial Study Assessment phase of CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act). This testing requirement would apply to those projects that go through the normal CEQA review process.

Fiscal/Mandates Impact:

None.

Discussion:

Rocket test sites have a history of soil, ground and surface water contamination. Toxins produced by this use can migrate offsite impacting water and soil. For example, perchlorate has been found in levels exceeding the U.S. EPA's safety standards on Ahmanson Ranch, Runkle Canyon, the Brandeis Bardin Institute, and in Simi Valley. All of these sites are located within 2-miles of a known rocket test facility.

The Ahmanson Ranch and Runkle Ranch development projects are examples of how testing for toxic contaminants as part of the CEQA Initial Study review resulted in the requirement for mitigation measures to protect the public's health. In both cases contaminants were discovered during the CEQA initial study phase and mitigation measures were subsequently put in place to assure the developments would not impact human health.

The Process:

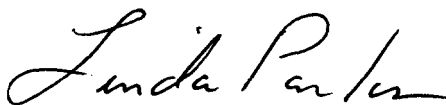
It is recommended that, whenever a proposed development is located within a 2-mile radius of a present or former rocket test site, tests for the toxins, including but not limited to, perchlorate and trichloroethylene (TCE) be performed as part of the CEQA Initial Study process for the new development project. These chemicals are the contaminants most directly associated with this land use that can migrate off-site.

The County can require that specific testing for the toxins listed above be made a part of the Initial Study phase of CEQA (i.e., Section VII. Hazards and Hazardous Materials of the Environmental Checklist Form) with regard to soil and water (both groundwater when it will be used for the development and surface water when it is on-site). Costs for testing would be borne by the developer or project applicant. It is estimated that boring for soil and groundwater would be in the range of \$3,000; tests for TCE and perchlorate would be in the range of \$250.

The State of California has established testing protocol that can be applied in the Initial Study phase of CEQA. Any detections of chemicals that can cause cancer must be reported to the state Department of Toxic Substances Control and/or the federal Department of Energy as required by Proposition 65.

If the Initial Study determines that toxins are present at a proposed development site, a plan of action to reduce potential exposure to humans would be part of the mitigation outlined in the CEQA document. Mitigation measures using EPA standards can be prescribed, ranging from laying thicker concrete pads to reducing grading, moving elements of the development to reduce human exposure, identifying alternate water sources, to removal of the contaminated soil.

Requiring testing of water and soil is a conservative public health measure that can also help avoid potential liability issues since sufficient data exists to suspect that perchlorate and other toxins may be present in developable land near present or former rocket test sites.



Linda Parks
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