

The time is NOW to decide our Valley's future



We're not out of the woods

Foxwoods Resort Casino in Connecticut.
Photo by Felix Stein, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

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COMMENTARY

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I am concerned when I read that the Santa Ynez Band of Mission Indians (Chumash) tells our county CEO that they have no plans to build another casino on the 1,400 acres of valley grazing land they bought from the late Fess Parker. I checked the "Cooperative Agreement" that the tribe submitted to the county (see the website www.polosyv.org) that clearly states that they can build whatsoever they want on this land once it becomes part of their reservation and "sovereign nation."

The moment that local control is surrendered, the tribe is bound by no agreements, building codes, taxes, environmental protection laws, or obligations to their valley neighbors. Anything and everything can be erected. I easily envision 20-30 story casino buildings with 50,000 daily visitors.

Local hotels, grocery stores and gas stations would go out of business, because they can't contend with a giant new competitor that pays no taxes to Sacramento and is not bound by state or federal minimum wage requirements for their bused-in, out-of-town employees. Out the window would go our

carefully crafted SYV Community Plan (10 years in the making) that sought to create a blueprint for a chiefly rural valley with slow, balanced growth.

If you have trouble imagining that scenario, you need just look at the example of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, who were given a reservation in a residential section of San Manuel (near Highland). Before state and county officials agreed to transfer land to the new reservation, they were promised that it would be used to build a soccer field and sports complex to benefit the community's youth. Instead, the neighbors got a multi-story casino in their midst and now have to deal with the traffic congestion, pollution, crime and decreased property values and quality of life that go with the gambling industry. Once land is transferred to a reservation, any local control is lost forever.

Think our valley is too small to support two casinos? If so, you will want to read *Without Reservation* by Jeff Benedict, in which he relates what occurred to the quiet farming town of Ledyard, Conn. (pop. 5,000). In 1992, the local Mashantucket Pequot tribe erected the massive Foxwoods

Casino next to the city. It quickly became the world's largest casino, grossing more than \$1 billion in revenues annually, as it lies on the Boston to New York corridor and draws gamblers from both of these cities and elsewhere. Within five years, the tribe built a second huge casino, the Mohegan Sun, just 7 miles from Foxwoods on land they annexed to their reservation. Today, little Ledyard sees 50,000 cars pass through its town daily. The town's population has already tripled.

In 1999, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians signed onto the California Tribal-State Gaming Compact, which allows them to build two casinos on their reservation land. As the only gambling reservation on the Los Angeles to San Francisco coastal corridor, our Santa Ynez Valley would become the magnet for gamblers on the West Coast. Are we ready for another 50,000 visitors daily?

I'm certain that the residents of San Manuel and Ledyard were given solemn assurances by state and county officials that the massive developments listed above would never take place. I care too much for my family and have invested too much in my property to trust the promises of any

transient politician.

The SYV Band officially disavows any intention of building a second casino. I, personally, find that difficult to believe based on their track record. What started as wanting to have "just a bingo hall" to lift them out of poverty has in a few short years become a full-blown multi-million dollar gambling industry in the formerly quiet town of Santa Ynez where each of the 154 tribal members receives just short of \$40,000 a month. As their chairman, Vince Armenta, recently stated, this is still not enough to assure his people of financial security. More development will be necessary.

Also, for years I have heard Armenta talk about "just" wanting to build a cultural center on the 6.9 acres across the road from the casino that the tribe bought. Supposedly, this is pending the transfer of this acreage to their reservation. But why haven't they already built it, if it is that important to them? Might it be that they would have to adhere to the local building codes and pay the taxes that every other property owner in the valley does? Or could it be that they never intended to build the center because they would just have to tear it down to erect

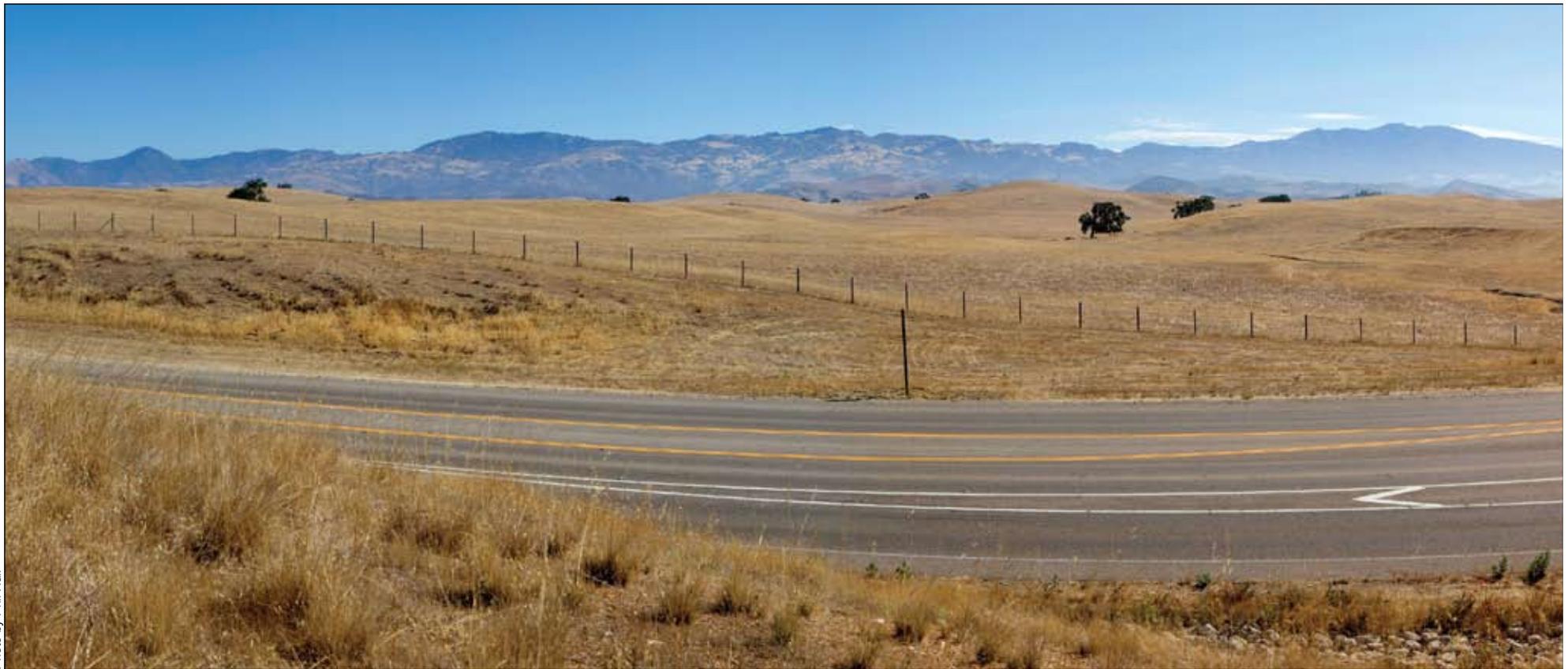


Photo by Phil Hall

The land, as it is now.

What are we going to do when the

By Cathie McHenry and Carol Herrera, Guest Columnists

In 2009, with adoption of the Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan, a communal sigh of relief was heard. The community felt the most important tool controlling our valley's future for the next 20 years was finalized.

We now had updated, thoughtfully created guidelines addressing the community's principal concerns:

- Impacts of expanding tourism

- Preserving viability of agriculture
- Careful development within our 72 sq mile geographical area
- Protection of our local natural resources, including our water supply

Of prime importance to local citizens is the availability of an adequate and safe water supply. A present land use issue has brought this concern to the community.

"Camp 4" is 1,400 acres, now owned by the Santa Ynez Band

of Mission Indians (Chumash), at the NE corner of highways 246 and 154, in the center of the Valley. It is agriculturally zoned, under Williamson Act contract, and within the Santa Ynez Uplands Groundwater Basin.

The Chumash are actively trying to remove this land from the Community Plan, and county or state control by legislatively annexing it to their reservation through the federal fee-to-trust process. If such a transfer should happen, the impacts are enormous.

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additional casino buildings once the 6.9 acres is annexed to their reservation?

We may be under the impression that America has never had to cede any of its national territory to another country, unlike numerous other foreign governments that have done so due to the fortunes of war. Yet our government is voluntarily surrendering sections of the homeland to another “sovereign nation” each time it relinquishes land to increase a tribe’s reservation. Land that is no longer taxable or subject to our laws. Any U.S. citizen that crosses onto reservation land to play the slots willingly surrenders all the constitutional rights for which our forefathers sacrificed so much to pass on to us. The Constitution, with its Bill of Rights, does not apply to the lands of the tribal “sovereign nation.” Are we willing to surrender more of our country to another “sovereign nation” simply because a politician has been influenced to do so?

My family and I plan to attend the Friday, Aug. 26, Town Hall meeting at the Veterans hall to hear about what we can do to save our valley. Join us.

*Rolf Richter
Los Olivos*

Santa Ynez 1,400 acres: Another Foxwoods or Mohegan Sun?

On April 20, 2011, Chandra Wallar, CEO of Santa Barbara County, met with Santa Ynez Band Chumash Casino tribal Chairman Vincent Armenta. On June 1, Ms. Wallar received a draft “Cooperative Agreement” regarding the Santa Ynez Band’s 1,400 acres at highways 154/246.

The agreement proposes that the Santa Ynez Band will pay the county some amount of money if the county will support their effort to put the 1,400 acres into federal “trust.” If this land goes into federal trust, the county will lose all control and oversight of development.

The ramifications of land in trust are both disastrous and extremely relevant because Chairman Armenta has publicly discussed expansion. In an April 1, 2007, interview (Santa Barbara News-Press), Chairman Armenta was asked about future plans.

He stated: “It means anything. Could it

mean a casino in Las Vegas? I don’t know. It could. You need to look at things like that. You need to look at hotels in larger cities. You need to look at opportunities. A lot of tribes are doing it. The Mohegan Sun (in Connecticut) is doing a good job of it. Foxwoods (owned by the Mashantucket Pequot in Connecticut) is, too. It’s something we need to look at, too. And we are. We have great examples out there to follow.”

Here are statistics about Foxwoods and the Mohegan Sun:

Foxwoods is the largest casino resort complex in the United States. It is located in Connecticut. It was founded in 1986 as a bingo hall. Together with the MGM Grand at Foxwoods, it is one of the largest casino complexes in the world. There are several restaurants, approximately 1,416 hotel rooms and two golf courses. 40,000

guests visit Foxwoods daily.

The Mohegan Sun is the second-largest casino in the United States and is 8 miles from Foxwoods in the woods of southeastern Connecticut. It is on 240 acres. It features the 12,000-seat capacity Mohegan Sun Arena. There is also 100,000 square feet of meeting and function room space, 1,256 hotel rooms, 364,000 square feet of gaming space, a number of restaurants, a golf course, and 130,000 square feet of retail shopping. In May 2011, they announced that the casino would be building a new 300 to 500 room hotel. Another developer will build and own the new hotel.

Several citizen groups will be hosting a Town Hall meeting at 6 p.m. Friday, Aug. 26, at the Solvang Veterans hall to discuss land in trust issues and the 1,400 acres.

— Staff report



Santa Ynez Valley’s well runs dry?

The community would be forced to accept the complications of uncontrolled development of the 1,400 acres with no government over-site or Community Plan consideration, while simultaneously losing any property revenues to mitigate the loss.

To take just one example, water. The vast majority of this agriculturally zoned 1,400 acres is used as grazing lands, requiring a small amount of water for the cattle.

In 2005, the Chumash and Fess Parker considered developing a portion of this property into another casino/hotel/golf course

development.

Using mid-range estimates, such a development could use 200 million gallons of water annually. The most likely source of this water is the Santa Ynez Uplands Groundwater Basin.

When asked, local water experts said they would anticipate the Chumash, would install deep wells and be very large water consumers, which presents the real possibility of compromising other wells using the Upland Basin. Development with no local control over our water supply is too great a risk for our

community.

Our water supply must remain within the control and influence of our community.

Attend a Town Hall meeting at 6 p.m. Friday, August 26, 6 p.m., at the Solvang Veterans Memorial Hall. Become informed about the federal fee-to-trust process and how our Valley land use rules protecting our environment and natural resources could be compromised.

— Women’s Environmental Watch

COMMENTARY

Tribal land expansion versus the Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan

Significant public concern has been generated by the recent publication of a proposed draft "Cooperative Agreement to Santa Barbara County." Santa Ynez Band of Mission Indians (Chumash) has requested that Santa Barbara County support their efforts to put their recently acquired 1,400 acres at Highways 154/246 ("Camp 4") into federal trust (fee-to-trust).

The extreme level of community concern this proposal has generated in the Santa Ynez Valley is valid.

When a tribal government gives the title of their land to the federal government to be put into trust for them (fee-to-trust), it is taken out of local jurisdiction, and development on that land is then excluded from local government oversight, as well as all local tax authority, zoning and land-use regulations.

Commencing in 2000 and over the next 10 years, the Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan was painstakingly crafted to reflect the development goals of the community. The objective of this plan is to intelligently manage growth in the Santa Ynez Valley while preserving the rural ambiance so cherished by our residents.

Should the 1,400 acres at Highways 154/246 –geographically as large as the City of Solvang – be transferred into fee-to-trust, as requested by the Tribe, the Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan would be rendered effectively useless.

Make no mistake: Once the 1,400 acres is transferred into fee-to-trust, anything can be built, at any level of density – and neither the Santa Ynez Valley Community nor Santa Barbara County government will have any input or control. Imagine high-density housing, a 30-story casino resort, a strip mall or who knows what at this gateway to our beautiful Valley, and you understand the rapidly increasing public concern on this issue.

Many people may not even know what a Community Plan is, or that our Valley has one. Excerpts from the plan will clarify:

What is a Community Plan?

Community plans focus on general planning issues pertaining to an identified geographical area or community.

They are commonly used in counties or large cities that contain a variety of distinct regions. They are adopted in the same manner as a general plan amendment and are similarly

implemented by local ordinances (e.g., zoning).

What is the Community Plan Process?

In 2000, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors directed the Planning and Development Department (P&D) to proceed with preparation of a community plan for the Santa Ynez Valley. The Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan (SYVCP) was designed to provide focused policy direction addressing issues and development trends specific to the Santa Ynez Valley for the ensuing 20 years.

The plan is the result of a multi-year effort by the community and county involving targeted research, data collection and analysis, extensive public involvement through a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC & VPAC), and community meetings, the drafting of goals, policies, and development standards, and numerous public hearings with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

Our SYVCP is intended to provide the general public, landowners and decision-makers with a framework for planning future development in the region.

Ref. http://longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/planareas/santaynez/syv_cp.php

Allowing the Santa Ynez Band of Mission Indians (Chumash), or any entity, to successfully transfer 1,400 acres into fee-to-trust would change the face of our Valley forever. Those who doubt this should visit other tribal developments in Southern California and around the United States. Negative consequences are inevitable when all parties in a community do not have to play by the same development and zoning rules.

I urge all citizens who oppose this fee-to-trust action to make their voices heard at the county, state and federal level. In addition, attend the Town Hall Meeting at 6 p.m. Friday, Aug. 26, in the Veterans Building in Solvang. We live in a participant democracy. We all have a voice and a vote. Now is a good time to remind our elected representatives of this fact.

*For more info, go to www.polosyv.org
or www.syvconcernedcitizens.com
Nancy Eklund-Hunsicker is a board
member of Santa Ynez Valley
Concerned Citizens.*

Goodbye Santa Ynez Valley, Hello Casino Town?

TOWN HALL MEETING

**Friday,
August 26, 2011
6:00 p.m.**

**Veterans Hall
Solvang, CA**

The Santa Ynez Band of Mission Indians (Chumash) desires to have their 1,400 acres at Highways 154/246 ("Camp 4") taken into federal "trust" via legislative Congressional Act therein bypassing and fast tracking the normal Bureau of Indian Affairs process. Land in federal "trust" is outside County planning and process and public participation. There would be no restrictions on density or development. They could build anything, including a second casino (as they envisioned with Fess Parker in 2005).

**COME TO THE TOWN HALL MEETING
TO HEAR A PANEL OF EXPERTS
AND LEARN WHAT YOU CAN DO
TO STOP THIS FROM HAPPENING.
SAVE THE DATE, AND SAVE THE VALLEY!**

*Meeting and ad sponsored by Santa Ynez Valley Concerned Citizens,
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