

PUBLIC COMMENTOR 205 - RICHARD CHARTER, SEPTEMBER 24, 1996

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My name is Richard Charter. I reside at 6947 Cliff Avenue, Bodega Bay, California. I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony today on behalf of myself, but also on behalf of friends of the Esteros I would like to incorporate in this testimony by reference detailed written comments which will be submitted prior to the close of the formal comment period.

Mayor Wright:

Thank you.

RICHARD CHARTER:

I would like to first address the issue of the lack of ready public access for the purpose of reviewing the DEIR/EIS. The central purpose of the CEQA and NEPA statutes with respect to requiring the preparation and public circulation of these documents has been effectively defeated by your agencies due to the cost of obtaining the documents. To put it bluntly, many people can't afford to purchase your document so they can afford to participate in this process.

There has not been a valid public circulation of the DEIR/EIS given the prohibitive cost to the interested public of both the paper hard copy version and the CD ROM version and the inadequate number of key volumes in the libraries closest to the various impact areas of your project. I would like to challenge some of the fundamental underlying assumptions and the questions that are asked in the DEIR/EIS.

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I think you're asking the wrong questions. The question is not what can we do. The question is not even how can the City prevail in court. The question is what kind of world do we want and what will nature require of us? In no measure does the DEIR/EIS ever seek to explore the ultimate carrying capacity of the Santa Rosa plain to support increasing urbanization. The DEIR/EIS refers only to general planned build outs, many of which will be nearly upon us by the time this project is built.

A good question to ask might be, then what? The DEIR/EIS fails to provide a meaningful ecological risk assessment from which decision makers and the public can draw realistic conclusions. The DEIR/EIS did not even consider the full range of possible disposal options.

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The focus of the document on identification of arbitrary levels of significance and the subsequent emphasis on designing hypothetical mitigation measures diminished theoretical significant impacts below the threshold of significance is a deception. You're looking at trying to diminish unmitigatable, in some cases, impacts, and having a don't worry be happy attitude about how those impacts and whether those impacts can be ever actually mitigated.

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A recent health effects study by the Washington department of health has reported seven possible cases of blue baby syndrome, a normally rare and sometimes fatal infant disease where drinking water wells are contaminated with nitrates which percolate down into the aquifer from nitrogen-based fertilizer applied to potato fields in the tri-city area of Washington state. The disease occurs when hemoglobin in the blood absorbs a nitrate molecule in place of oxygen. And infants, especially ones who drink infant formula and are under four months of age, are at the greatest risk of getting the disease. 040

The disease occurs when infants ingest nitrates in concentrations of as little as ten parts per billion in the water. The DEIR/EIS fails to consider nitrate impacts on the domestic drinking water wells and the shallow perched water table of the two rock-Bloomfield-Valley Ford area which would inevitably result from wastewater storage and spraying, or from applications of newly required fertilizers on the so-called high tech cultivated crops which the City proposes to impose on the land owners of the West County. [This don't worry, be happy approach of the DEIR/EIS to problems like that -- and I just give you one example of things that were just missing completely from your document, state of the art knowledge that's out there -- does not offer a reasonable look at how the world around us looks or how it will be inevitably affected by your decisions. It is not enough to say we know a lot if we don't apply our knowledge. We need to apply what we know and to apply it in such a way as to tread lightly on our surrounding ecosystems. We have before us a document which feeds the colonizing mind. By colonization, I mean that we're basing our decisions on plunder, and plunder is an inherently violent and wasteful process, and that's a fact that our civilization and unfortunately our own community has been slow to acknowledge. The antidote to colonization is discovery. We need to discover how the world works to know better our place in it. Thank you.] 041

Mayor Wright:

Dick Shannon, followed by Joe Tresch, followed by Rue Furch.