



Tejon Ranch Co. Decries False and Misleading Campaign Organized by Opponents to Recently-Approved Centennial Master Planned Development

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Demands extremist groups remove knowingly false, inaccurate and misleading material and video from websites

TEJON RANCH, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--May 16, 2019-- Tejon Ranch Co. demands that the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) remove material, including a video, from an anti-Centennial website which Tejon Ranch believes contains recklessly, if not knowingly false, inaccurate and misleading material. California Native Plant Society has partnered with the Tucson, Arizona-based Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), a longtime litigant against Tejon Ranch projects, in opposition to Centennial and this latest action to mischaracterize Centennial is true to form for both groups.

"90% of Tejon Ranch—240,000 acres—will be permanently conserved. Amazingly, that is not enough for some extremist groups," said Michael R.W. Houston, Tejon Ranch Co.'s General Counsel. "We call upon them to cease and desist their campaign of presenting false, inaccurate and misleading statements to the public in an effort to undermine Los Angeles County's recent approval of Centennial, as well as their efforts to damage the overall Tejon Ranch Conservation and Land Use Agreement, which is supported by major respected conservation groups like Audubon California, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club, Endangered Habitats League, and others."

The video falsely accuses shareholders of Tejon Ranch Co. of engaging in unlawful activity. Here is a portion of the text from the video:

The Tejon Ranch Corporation is a Wall Street traded company owned primarily by a large group of Hedge Fund looters

The video summary claims the building of Centennial would destroy 6,000 acres of wildflower habitat, leaving the impression that all the landscapes shown in the video are from the Centennial site. This is not accurate.

California Native Plant Society
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Photographer Richard Dickey captures the magnificent beauty of Tejon Ranch, where LA County has just approved a new city of 55,000. More than 6,000 acres of wildflower habitat will be destroyed.

In fact, most of the landscapes shown in the video are not from, or do not show the Centennial planning area, and a significant percentage of the land depicted in the video is not even part of Tejon Ranch.

Given that the author of the web-article in which the video appears claims to have spent over "200 days on Tejon Ranch", and the photographer/producer of the video claims to have spent 30 years photographing the area, it is appalling that both the author and video producer would so recklessly insinuate, if not blatantly assert, that the land shown is located either on Tejon or in the Centennial project area – when much of it is not.

Depicting locations that are either not on Tejon Ranch or not located in the Centennial project, while representing such sites are located in those locales, is false, severely misleading and fraudulent. This sort of deceptive activity is consistent with CBD's past practices.

CBD used a similar tactic against Arizona rancher Jim Chilton when it posted knowingly false and misleading pictures of his ranching lease on its website back in 2002. Chilton successfully sued for defamation and was awarded \$600,000 by a jury, which included punitive damages. The case shows the lengths CBD will go to in pursuit of its radical agenda. They clearly do not feel constrained by the truth, even asserting to the Arizona appellate court in Mr. Chilton's case that they had a First Amendment right to lie, an argument the court rightfully rejected as it affirmed the jury's verdict and damage award.

In addition to having a history of using false and misleading information to damage those they oppose, CBD appears to spend most of its time and its substantial resources on litigation, all designed, in the words of CBD co-founder Kieran Suckling, "to create severe economic pain." CBD has consistently and continually sued proposed housing developments in California, which does nothing to help, and actually exacerbates the housing crisis in California. Given its agenda to oppose, delay and obstruct, it's clear that the "economic pain" CBD wants to inflict is being felt by young and middle-class Californians who find decent housing to be unavailable and unaffordable.

Approved by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on April 30, 2019, Centennial addresses the serious need to provide additional housing that's within reach of middle-class families in Southern California. Centennial also creates a new job center for Los Angeles County as it gives companies the opportunity to locate in an area where their employees could afford to live. Centennial is expected to create 23,000 permanent jobs on site and nearly 25,000 construction jobs, with at least 30% of those jobs going to local residents. Centennial will offer price attainable homes and 18% of the housing units will be officially designated affordable units. With Governor Newsom proposing to build more than 400,000 homes a year, Centennial can be part of the solution to the housing crisis in California. All while still conserving 90% of Tejon Ranch.

CBD has initiated seven different legal challenges against Tejon Ranch over the last 16 years in both state and federal court. It should therefore come as no surprise that its representatives recently promised to sue Los Angeles County over its approval of Centennial. Given that CBD sued and lost, both at the superior and appellate court level, when it challenged Los Angeles County over its approval of the Antelope Valley Area Plan-- which designated the site where Centennial is located for future development, it would be simply rehashing issues on which it's already sued and lost. It's no wonder CBD has been called nothing more than a lawsuit-factory, spending much of its time and resources either in court or issuing press releases, rather than engaging in proactive conservation.

CBD had the opportunity to engage in proactive conservation on Tejon Ranch. It was initially involved in negotiations, along with respected

environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Audubon California, Endangered Habitats League, and others, that led to the historic and science-based Tejon Ranch Conservation and Land Use Agreement, in which 90% of Tejon Ranch will be conserved. This agreement was supported by two previous Governors' Administrations, and because of this agreement, Tejon Ranch can play a vital role in the building of residential units to help meet Governor Newsom's housing goals for California, all while conserving 240,000 acres in perpetuity.

Even though published reports indicate it was CBD representatives themselves who advocated for and demanded the 90/10 ratio of conservation to development, the organization walked away from the negotiations just months before an agreement was reached. CBD is recently quoted in a different publication saying it preferred to retain the right to sue (and presumably collect attorneys fees) than compromise, even if that compromise would result in a guaranteed positive conservation outcome.

If it does sue—again—over Centennial, it's likely to hypocritically raise the issue of wildfires, as it did in a recently-filed lawsuit against another housing development in Los Angeles County. In another instance of what clearly appears to be CBD taking whatever position best suits them, even if it's contradictory to other positions it's taken, CBD opposed Governor Newsom's emergency declaration streamlining 35 wildfire mitigation projects that would help protect 2.2 million Californians in over 200 communities from future wildfires, claiming it would undercut environmental protections. In that instance, CBD said the best measure to protect homes against wildfire wouldn't be to thin forests and remove dead and dying brush from nearby at-risk communities, but to retrofit houses to current building standards and create defensible space around them, something that clearly could not be accomplished before the next wildfire season.

But the prescription that CBD claims is the best defense against wildfire is exactly what the plan for Centennial requires. Though, at Centennial, instead of needing to retrofit homes, houses and other buildings will be constructed from the very beginning based on the most stringent fire codes and building standards in place at the time. These plans have been reviewed and approved by all appropriate State and County Fire authorities. The defensible space standards at Centennial also far exceed state requirements.

Tejon Ranch Co. calls upon CBD and CNPS to cease their false and misleading campaign against Centennial, to support the Ranchwide Agreement that permanently conserves 90% of Tejon Ranch, to respect the overwhelming community and state support it received, and to recognize the deleterious impact of their positions on the urgent need to produce more housing for thousands of families in California.

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