

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Saddleback Meadows Project, PA23-0119 - Hearing Date: January 28, 2026
Date: Wednesday, January 21, 2026 11:20:06 AM

From: dgermaine [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 11:23 AM
To: Duggan, Scarlet <scarlet.duggan@ocpw.ocgov.com>
Subject: Saddleback Meadows Project, PA23-0119 - Hearing Date: January 28, 2026

Attention: This email originated from outside the County of Orange. Use caution when opening attachments or links.

OC Development Services/Planning,

I wish to address a Board decision which will affect nearby communities and future generations of residents. This opinion is in opposition to allowing the proposed development continue as designed.

This project will be built on over 200 acres of open space in a high fire hazard severity zone (as designated by Cal Fire) at the north end of El Toro Road directly across from Portola Hills Elementary School, and adjacent to Hidden Ridge, the Vedanta Society Monastery, and connected to the Vedanta Wilderness and Cleveland National Forest. This location has experienced wildfire threats in recent years, most notably during the 2024 Airport Fire, and many residents have had their fire insurance dropped by their insurance companies.

Given the increased population in the El Toro/Santiago Canyon corridor since 2002 (over 1400 new homes), the primary evacuation route is inadequate and hazardous under current conditions, without considering that nearly all evacuation routes are subject to fire hazards. Additionally, there is a lack of current studies addressing impacts on traffic, schools, wildlife, or greenhouse gas emissions. The effects of climate change have been acknowledged as important factors, contributing to the increased frequency and intensity of wildfires in the state and this area. It is important to consider how this development might impact safe and quick evacuation during emergencies.

The developer is required to construct a one-million-gallon water tank to support the project. There are no revealed plans yet for the tank's location, and there is no analysis on the impacts of pipelines, grading, construction traffic, or views at the canyon gateway.

The proposed development does not align with the first goal of the Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan: "to preserve the rural character of the area and to provide a buffer between urban development and the Cleveland National Forest." It seems the Board predecessors had an overall plan responsible for all aspects of the community. Is that outdated or are we simply abandoning those plans to the detriment of our local residents. <https://ocds.ocpublicworks.com/sites/ocpwocds/files/import/data/files/22855.pdf>

With the environmental impact report originally approved 23 years ago! There are several new

and associating questions that should be discussed and answered before approving such a project:

- What is the increased fire risk impact to the area, considering the additional residents and resulting traffic?
- Is it reasonable to expect these residents will obtain the appropriate fire insurance, and at what cost?
- What happens if a major fire, i.e. Pacific Palisades or Paradise, engulfs multiple fire evacuation routes? Who will be responsible for the loss of life?
- What happens if a Pacific Palisades or Paradise type fire engulfs multiple fire evacuation routes? Who will be responsible for the loss of life?
- Should we rely on chance to determine how this development impacts safe and quick evacuation during emergencies?
- Are current impact studies on fire safety, traffic, schools, and wildlife needed and appropriate before a responsible decision is made?
- Where will the large water tank project take place and what are the impacts of this related project?
- What happened to prior Board assessments on preserving a community balance regarding fire safety, natural environment, traffic, and human habitation?
- The simplest question is... Does this development belong, or is it needed here?
- Is this project necessary for the betterment of the existing community or is it primarily for revenue generation?

Thank you for your time and consideration on these community concerns.

Darin Germaine

<https://ocds.ocpublicworks.com/sites/ocpwoeds/files/import/data/files/22855.pdf>

[Click here](#) to view a photo of the Saddleback Meadows during the Airport Fire, Sep 2024. Photo credit: Farh Semnani