



January 22, 2026

To: Orange County Planning Commission  
ATTN: Scarlett Duggan, OCPW

Subject: Opposition to PA23-0119 – Saddleback Meadows

Dear Commissioners:

Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHPB) is an Orange County nonprofit organization with a stated mission “to promote, protect, and enhance the harbors, beaches, parks, trails, open spaces, natural preserves, and historic sites in Orange County.” We respectfully submit this letter regarding the proposed Saddleback Meadows development.

The proposed project clearly does not meet a primary goal of the Foothill-Trabuco Specific Plan (FTSP): “to preserve the rural character of the area and provide a buffer between urban development and the Cleveland National Forest.” The proposed urban-style, dense housing project is just the opposite and is in a very high fire hazard severity area.

The proposed project area is also a critical wildlife linkage between two valued regional parks: O’Neill Regional Park and Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park. Mountain lions are known to exist in these areas and may soon be listed as “Threatened” under the California Endangered Species Act. We should not ignore the importance of preserving open space habitat in this fragile area, not simply mitigating the many impacts of the proposed project.

The 222-acre parcel has been on FHPB’s Green Vision Map for 20+ years and that it represents a priority open space acquisition goal. The old EIR approved in 2002 with subsequent “addenda” approved administratively (without public knowledge or input) is out of date and does not address all the changes in the area over the 20+ years. It is no surprise that this proposal has taken over 20 years – it is just the wrong project in the wrong place.

We urge the County to consider, as an alternative, to look for ways to facilitate acquisition of the property for conservation and park purposes, given the likely fire and traffic hazards, the relevance of climate change in the FTSP area, the public’s strong opposition to it, and its bucolic locale.

Thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Wellborn".

Michael Wellborn, President