

Good Morning Supervisors, my name is Nancy Eklund-Hunsicker, and I am here today representing Santa Ynez Valley Concerned Citizens and the Santa Ynez Valley Coalition. We recently co-sponsored a Town Hall Meeting in Solvang addressing Tribal Fee-to-Trust concerns, to which you were all invited. We had an overflow attendance of nearly a thousand people. I would like to publicly thank Ms Farr for sending a representative from her office to attend and observe.

The Santa Ynez Mission Indian Tribe recently acquired 1,400 acres of Williamson Act Agricultural Preserve land at the corner of Highways 154 & 246; the Gateway to Santa Ynez Valley. It is public knowledge that the Tribe has submitted a draft Cooperative Agreement to Santa Barbara County, requesting that the County support Tribal efforts to annex this land to their reservation. Tribal Chairman, Mr. Armenta, has stated that he plans to build tribal member housing on this land. However, he clearly does not wish to limit his development options by subjecting himself to the same zoning rules, taxation and Community Plan to which every other developer and voting citizen in Santa Ynez Valley is subject.

We in Santa Ynez Valley would like to reiterate the following: **No matter what is said or promised prior to Fee-to-Trust Transfer, in writing or verbally, once land is taken into trust, out of local jurisdiction and off the tax rolls, this land cannot be taken OUT of trust without Congressional Authorization.**

Unfortunately “bait and switch” tactics with respect to the fee-to-trust process have become all too commonplace in California. I am providing for you today a copy of a letter from the Department of the Interior to the Honorable Duncan Hunter in the House of Representatives. Mr Hunter had written to the DOI on behalf of the Dehesa Valley Community Council, addressing a fee-to-trust acquisition by the Sycuan Band. Let me read you an excerpt:

“The Dehesa Community would like the Department of the Interior to re-examine a fee-to-trust application for an 82.85-acre parcel of land that was taken into trust for the Tribe in 2004 because the actual use of the land (parking lot for casino) is different from the proposed use at the time of acquisition (housing). We understand that the Dehesa Community is very unhappy with what it is calling the “bait and switch” tactic employed by the Tribe. Although we understand the Community’s concern, once land is taken into trust, the Department is not authorized to reconsider its decision because land cannot be taken out of trust without Congressional authorization. In addition, current land acquisition regulations in 25 CFR Part 151 do not authorize the Department to impose restrictions on a Tribes future use of land which has been taken in to trust.”

Santa Barbara County is one of the most environmentally sensitive constituencies in the world. Uncontrolled development in Santa Ynez Valley will have an impact county-wide, particularly in Santa Barbara and Montecito. We in Santa Ynez Valley are asking our County Government to protect our communities. We ask that you not support any form of annexation or cooperative agreement. Please ensure that all real estate development be treated equally under the law and be subject to local zoning, taxation and Community Plans.