

January 1, 2021

Rob Peterson, CPUC  
c/o Tom Engels  
Horizon Water and Environment, LLC  
266 Grand Ave., Ste. 210  
Oakland, CA 94610

**RE: OPPOSITION TO SE-PLR-2, TEMPLETON / SO. RIVER ROUTE ALTERNATIVE**

Dear Dr. Engels,

Thank you for your kind attention to my letter and my concerns. Simply put ...

**I OPPOSE THE SOUTH RIVER ROUTE ALTERNATIVE** for the following reasons:

**#1 FIRE**

I have lived through a raging California wildfire. Our 2100-acre ranch burned virtually in its entirety in 3.5 hours despite the heroic efforts of 600 firefighters in 50 fire trucks, with 6 planes, many dozer operators, and others. That was with no wind when the fire started. It was catastrophic and I'm still scared.

Santa Ysabel Ranch is approximately 850 acres, less than half the size of our ranch.

Grassland fire travels on average, per CalFire's data, 14 miles per hour.

Santa Ysabel Ranch is approximately 3.5 miles across along South River Road.

Doing the math .. that means our entire community could be wiped out in approximately 15 minutes. And, that's with no wind.

**#2 WIND**

Before moving to Santa Ysabel Ranch, I had heard of the winds in the Templeton Gap. Until you live here day in and day out, especially through the summertime, you have NO CONCEPT of the strong, incessant, as "routine as clockwork" wind we have. Many, if not most, nights we can't sit outside unless tucked up into an alcove at our home. That wind terrifies me if a fire starts.

**#3 THE HOMELESS SITUATION**

Throughout this last summer (2020), there were dozens of fires set, it's said, by the homeless people living in encampments in the Salinas Riverbed, which flanks Santa Ysabel Ranch and is maybe ½ mile from our western border. Due to environmental concerns, the riverbed was not

cleared of these encampments because heavy equipment, etc. was restricted. After several homes were burnt, the mayor gave the environmentalists one week to rectify the problem or he would take matters into his own hands. He did. Within 2 weeks, the encampments were moved to a more secure environment for the people and the clean-up began. But, as you can imagine, that is not forever and the exact same danger faces us again. So, what does that mean for your project? Any fire started there could burn your power lines and, I imagine, potentially put hundreds of people at risk.

#### **#4 ESCAPE ROUTES**

Santa Ysabel Ranch has 3 exits.

- (1) The Main Gate, South River Road. This exit has four lanes total.... two outbound lanes (for fleeing residents) and two inbound lanes (for emergency vehicles). It would be directly beneath your high-power lines and, if those lines were down, this gate could potentially be closed.
- (2) The West Gate, Santa Ysabel Road out to South River Road. This exit has two lanes total ... one outbound lane (for fleeing residents) and one inbound lane (for emergency vehicles). Escaping residents could access ONLY South River Road from this gate and be directly beneath your high-power lines, and if those lines were down, this gate could potentially be unusable as an emergency exit.
- (3) Hanging Tree Gate, Hanging Tree Lane. This exit has only one lane that's approximately 20 feet wide. That means, in a panic situation, the residents of Santa Ysabel Ranch (90 homes X 2 vehicles / home = 180 vehicles) would be forced to use this exit if the other two (under your high-power lines) were blocked. 180 cars trying to get out the exact same lane, and ONLY 20 feet wide, that firefighters and emergency personnel were trying to get in. Note, eventually, the ultimate build-out of Santa Ysabel Ranch is 140 homes .. therefore 280 cars attempting to flee while emergency vehicles are potentially attempting to come in through THE ONLY ACCESS POINT AVAILABLE if your lines block the other two exits. Additionally, on an average day there are another 100 vehicles in The Ranch (constructions, landscaping, visitors).

**This exit then takes us to Neal Springs Road, directly under your other power lines. We have no other alternate routing.**

**If those lines were down, our entire community would be encircled by your downed power lines. Totally surrounded.**

#### **#5 OUR ONLY WATER SOURCE FOR FIGHTING FIRES**

Santa Ysabel Ranch has two very good wells that supply all our water... to our homes AND to our fire hydrants. At this time, I believe we have a full-time generator at one of the wells and a back-up generator at the second well, but each well is powered by electricity. Should the power be cut, as in a time of emergency or power lines are burned, again I believe someone would have to manually start the generators. I will verify this. But, in an emergency, I believe

people will be exiting The Ranch not running to start generators. Once our water source is totally depleted, which could happen by running ONE hydrant for 2 hours, it will take hours to replenish our sole water tank. And that's only if (1) there's power to the wells, or (2) someone activates the generator(s), or the internet link is not compromised that controls the system. All the while, Santa Ysabel Ranch must rely on the waterbomber planes, water tankers trying to get in as we are trying to get out, and possibly helicopters and firefighters drawing water from 40 pools, here in the ranch, as they have been identified to CalFire on their maps. Tankers for rural fires are, on average, 8' wide and 35' long.

Santa Ysabel Ranch Board of Directors, the Management Company and all the homeowners have worked tirelessly to make our community as fire safe as possible and have been commended by the firefighting officials for our actions. We've done a very good job. Our fire roads are cleared, trees are trimmed up 6' from the ground, brush has been eliminated and field grasses mowed but a fire will always find fuel.

My story of surviving a wildfire in the state of California is not unique. Many have escaped. Far too many have not because the terrain was a huge impediment. You cannot overlook or dismiss my points. They are defensible. They are valid. And, Dr. Engels, they are terrifying to anyone living here who fears transmission lines in our highly- dangerous wildfire area.

And, since moving to Santa Ysabel Ranch, I started the "Community Preparedness Committee" and have worked closely with local fire officials to keep our neighbors as fire-safe and informed as possible. And, they are. We've done all we can to be fire-safe, but a lot now rests on your shoulders.

Planes, movie theaters, offices, ships all have alternative evacuation routes in case of an emergency. These transmission lines could eliminate two of the three emergency evacuation routes we have at Santa Ysabel Ranch and that third one is, please remember, only 20 feet wide ... TWENTY FEET WIDE to accommodate terrified people fleeing the fire while heroic firefighters are attempting to come in to fight the fire. And that exit leads us to the shadows of the other high-power lines along Neal Springs Road.

This is only a recipe for disaster. If this was an airplane, you'd get off. We can't. This is our home.

We ask for your kind attention to our concerns.

Thank you,

