



For Immediate Release, March 9, 2022

Contact: Peter Broderick, Center for Biological Diversity, (503) 283-5474 x 421,
pbroderick@biologicaldiversity.org
Van Collinsworth, Preserve Wild Santee, (619) 777-8268,
savefanita@gmail.com
Richard Halsey, California Chaparral Institute, (760) 822-0029,
rwh@californiachaparral.org

California Court Rejects Sprawl Development Near San Diego

Fire Risks Cited in Fanita Ranch Ruling

SAN DIEGO— Citing wildfire concerns, a judge [ruled](#) against a 3,000-home development proposed for the city of Santee. The Fanita Ranch project would be built on more than 2,600 acres of fire-prone hillsides north of the city that serve as habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher, western spadefoot toad and other rare species.

The ruling found that the city's environmental review of the project was inadequate. The San Diego Superior Court held that the city did not adequately disclose how the development would affect wildfire evacuations and safety in the surrounding community.

"The court understood that in this never-ending fire season, developers can't hide a project's wildfire and community safety risks from the public," said Peter Broderick, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. "This is absolutely the right decision to protect the people and wildlife who call Santee home. This project should never have been approved, and officials across California need to stop letting sprawl drive up fire threats."

In 2020 the Center, Preserve Wild Santee, Endangered Habitats League and California Chaparral Institute sued the city of Santee for violating the California Environmental Quality Act when it approved the development.

"In acknowledging the need to protect people from the increasing risk of wildfire, the court has accomplished something California's political leaders have consistently failed

to do — say no to those who would profit by putting families in harm’s way,” said Richard Halsey of the California Chaparral Institute.

“Growing wildfire risks must not be ignored,” said Van Collinsworth of Preserve Wild Santee. “The court’s decision rightly requires the rising risks to be recognized.”

Today’s ruling follows a series of recent court decisions blocking sprawl development challenged by the Center in high fire-risk areas. In San Diego a court rejected the 1,100-home project known as [Otay Ranch Village 14](#) because of wildfire risks, greenhouse gas emissions, wildlife threats and other environmental concerns. Courts have similarly stopped sprawl developments in [Lake](#) and [Los Angeles](#) counties.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.7 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

[Arizona](#) • [California](#) • [Colorado](#) • [Florida](#) • [N. Carolina](#) • [New York](#) • [Oregon](#) • [Virginia](#) • [Washington](#)

[BiologicalDiversity.org](#)