

Sent: Monday, October 28, 2013 3:54 PM

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Subject: Cantinas Ranch Groundwater Exploration Advice

Ms. Carolyn Berg, E.I.T.

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Dear Ms. Berg,

Thank you for doing such important work. We would very much like your thoughts on the development planned for Cantinas Ranch. A number of neighbors are concerned and we would appreciate your advice.

I must say that Cantinas Camp looks nothing less than First Class. Mr. and Mrs. Hughes, the owners, have put a lot of consideration into the architecture and the concept. But most of the neighbors, including me, are worried about the anticipated use of so much ground water. We are concerned that this is not sustainable and could cause long term damage to our water table, on which our homes, livestock, oak trees and wildlife depend.

From what I can tell reading the reports generated by Cantinas Ranch, and by their own admission in their lengthy reports, the hydro-geologists they employed know very little about the aquifers in the area and about how drawing water from one area will affect other areas nearby. There seems to be a great deal of "hedging" in the report. Even as a lay reader, it is clear to me that the effect on the water table for Cantinas' neighbors won't be known until they begin pumping so much water on a regular basis, assuming this project is approved. By that time it will be too late. 30,000-50,000 gallons per day, every day, is a huge amount of water for this area where the wells and springs trickle rather than gush.

Christmas Cove is the most populated concentration of immediate neighbors and will likely be affected, but so will other ranches and properties in the area. While there are several large homes in the surrounding miles, this is not an affluent area and the people who live here could suffer unnecessary hardship. Stan Stewart, who lives just north of the Cantinas property, for example, has one well and several springs which serve not only his own very limited personal water use, but also livestock and considerable wildlife including some endangered or almost endangered species that are important to many of us in the area. Additionally, the magnificent Valley Oak trees in the area, which rely to considerable extent on the water table, have already been stressed by the dry years and dropping water tables. We don't want any of them to die because of over pumping of ground water in an area like ours where the water table is fragile.

The hydrology report does make it clear that while they don't know a lot, the scientists do suspect that the bulk of the water will be coming from uphill, from the north, which is the area that also feeds the springs and wells I mentioned. (Section 6 of the report). It would be a tragedy for the neighbors' springs and wells to go dry because Cantinas is pumping so much water for swimming pools and luxurious landscaping and water installations and potentially 300 showers a day, etc.

Here are some of my concerns with the Groundwater Exploration Program Report for Cantinas Camp in San Luis Obispo County, California prepared by Balance Hydrologics, Inc. on Sept 2011 (attached to e-mail) <http://www.balancehydro.com>

I do not feel that report reasonably determines the sustainability and recharge of the water table and the surrounding wells of the neighbors.

Balance Hydrologics did many test drillings; many came up dry while others were more successful. But the success of these wells remains in questions as they were not tested properly and in accordance with industry standards.

In their final survey of the report Balance Hydrologics explains that “**1 hour**” air tests were conducted on the wells. I do not believe Balance Hydrologics performed the industry standard of 3 to 10 day air tests to assess the reliability of the water supply. Balance Hydrologics mentions in their report that the purpose of their tests was to assess the water supply. I understand that a 1 hour test does not meet their obligations to the neighbors nor to San Luis Obispo County, where water use and conservation is such a priority. Even though the Balance Hydrologics report uses 1 hour air tests to determine the ground water recharge, I believe that that test is only designed to determine the size of the pump for the 3 to 10 day air tests, not to appropriately or accurately determine the viability and sustainability of the water table. I have been told that a 10 day air test will often suggest sustainable water availability of 50-75% less water than the 1 hour test optimistically projects.

There are several neighbors who about the Cantinas Ranch Project and their wells and springs are in the sphere of influence. Balance Hydrologics and the Cantina's Ranch have not made an attempt to map the wells and springs in the immediate area. Nor have any tests using Data Lockers been conducted to determine their drawdown while they perform these tests using Data Lockers on their own wells too.

There are four people who signed the report for Balance Hydrologics. They are Gustavo Porras, Barry Hecht, Mark Woyshner and Sarah Richmond. **Barry Hecht is the Only Certified Hydrogeologist on the team.** Mr. Porras, Mr. Woyshner and Ms. Richmond use the title of Hydrogeologist, but they are not certified as such.

Paso Robles and the surrounding areas do not have the water once expected to be relied upon and this is causing challenging water sharing issues. Indeed Paso Robles itself is in crisis as a result of overuse of ground water. I do hope that before this project is approved by the county that the authorities take great care and exercise due diligence.

I understand from one of the neighbors, Mr. Stewart, that Cantinas Ranch has determined to use three specific wells on the property. This could make additional testing easier. Stan obtained a map of the Cantinas wells from Kirk-Consulting (hired by Cantinas Ranch for the project). Jamie is representing the Cantinas Ranch. Jamie@kirk-consulting.net

Stan is very familiar with the area. He immediately observed that the Cantinas wells, the surrounding area springs and many neighboring wells appear to make a single straight line. If one extends this line past Cantinas Ranch, it appears that not only Stan's well, but wells to the south of the Cantinas border are on this same line. This might suggest to me that this is a fragile underground stream rather than a more robust aquifer. It is my guess that neighbors on both sides of Cantinas ranch would be willing to let the hydrogeologists air test their wells such that the hydrogeologists might have the ability to generate a more convincing report for the country to study, a report that will more responsibly address the long-term sustainability of our water table.

As a side note, our area is an unstudied Vaqueros formation. I do not know if that makes an underground stream possible or what this particular type of formation means for a 3 to 10 day air test. I know rainwater absorption is inherently slow on our soil with lots of runoff into Lake Nacimiento and its watershed. The original water report did not conduct any tests for rainwater absorption rates that I can find.

I would appreciate your advice and direction. It will help all of us gain a clearer understanding of the water sustainability for the Cantinas Ranch Project and its neighbors.

Best wishes and many thanks,

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PS. I contacted Kirk Consulting regarding these questions in July, 2013, and Rachel promised to get back to me. I have tried to reach her several times since then but without success. During our earlier correspondence with Rachel I pointed out that her report mentions something that could indeed be a solution for everyone concerned. If I understand the report correctly, it suggests that Cantinas will have meters on the wells, to pay a nominal fee for the water used, and that they can also do the same thing paying a nominal fee drawing water from the lake. The report makes it clear that Cantinas Ranch will have to treat any ground water to remove minerals and/or other elements from the water to make it safe for human consumption. Given the water treatment for the minerals coming from wells which the camp already has to do, what about simply drawing and paying for all the needed water from the lake and treating it instead of drawing any water from the ground? That would leave the precious ground water table intact.

cc:
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