

***Back Country Coalition***

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September 20, 2011

**Via Facsimile (916) 558-3160**

The Honorable Jerry Brown  
Governor of California  
State Capitol Building, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 833 (VARGAS) – SUPPORT  
Water Quality Protection in San Diego County**

Honorable Governor Brown:

The Back Country Coalition (BCC) is an organization dedicated to the protection of natural, cultural and scenic resources, promotion of responsible land use planning practices, and enhancement of quality of life throughout San Diego County.

BCC has followed the events surrounding the progress/regress of the Gregory Canyon Landfill (GCL) project over many years. We believe you should be aware of that the project has been continuously misrepresented to the public and decision makers, especially regarding the **water safety** issue.

The landfill would be located over a drinking water aquifer and the San Luis Rey River flows past the mouth of the landfill site. Two California Water Authority pipelines that supply drinking water to San Diego County are located within the landfill footprint and **a vital groundwater aquifer lies underneath the site**. A landfill in Gregory Canyon would unacceptably and certainly threaten the safety of these water sources.

As you know, Southern California is a semi-arid to arid environment, dependent on imported water for 90% of our needs. Those supplies have been cut back in recent years, making the 10% of our water derived and stored locally in reservoirs and aquifers **even more valuable as the most vital resource we have**. With no limits being made on population growth in our county, we view ALL threats to our precious water supplies as potential for disaster.

The proposed Gregory Canyon landfill project is just such a threat. One example is the landfill/drinking water disaster at Camp Pendleton when the Las Pulgas dump liner failure contaminated the groundwater of the Santa Margarita River. Consequently, that enormous military base became dependent on bottled water. The Regional Water Quality Control Board described Las Pulgas as the greatest engineering failure in San Diego County history.

There IS NO WAY to protect the San Luis Rey River from becoming contaminated by a dump sited next to it in Gregory Canyon.

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**There is no engineering method or liner technology that can guarantee the safety of the river water from the dump in perpetuity, as claimed by project proponents, especially in our very seismically active county and state. As our county continues to grow, our water resources become even more precious, requiring constant vigilance to protect them.**

Moreover, Gregory Canyon would provide an important precedent and open the door to other speculators along our rivers. Most often, this is inexpensive land because its main use is habitat. But Gregory Canyon would change that: Lakeside and the city of Santee abound with quarries - in essence pre-excavated landfill sites. These sites also have an essential component for landfills, a large source of groundwater. Please consider the impacts of a landfill on the San Diego River system. Think of impacts to Mission Valley in the event of an upriver landfill failure such as Las Pulgas.

Also, please consider that the Gregory Canyon project has received only one permit for construction: from the Environmental Health Department of the County of San Diego, with many other permits still pending. Supervisor Pamela Slater-Price has been opposed to this project in her district since its inception, along with thousands of concerned citizens and organizations throughout San Diego County.

Arguments in favor of the project have been disingenuous and rely on misrepresentation by the project proponents, greatly diminishing potential significant negative impacts, to gain support and approval. That is why the project's environmental documents have lost court challenges twice, and doubtless would lose a third time.

There are other uses the land could be developed for, projects that would be less dangerous to our vital water supply. The property owners are not being asked to forfeit all development rights to their property, but to consider the future well being of San Diego County residents, which they adamantly have refused to do.

The Pala Band of Luiseno Indians is opposed to the landfill project on the grounds that it would desecrate sites of important religious significance to them in Gregory Canyon and Medicine Rock.

Another critical aspect of our opposition to this potentially devastating proposed landfill project is that it is NOT NEEDED and would greatly add to greenhouse gas emissions that have not been addressed in the project's environmental documents. Studies have determined that San Diego County has landfill capacity for the next 22-28 years, depending on the amount of increased recycling activity.

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Can or would the State of California underwrite the expense to San Diego residents that would be incurred from the inevitable pollution of the San Luis Rey River caused by failure of the Gregory Canyon landfill to protect the San Luis Rey River? If not, **we respectfully request that you SUPPORT SB 833.**

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

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