

Critics of Stoneridge Drive extension in Pleasanton are not happy with environmental plan

By Robert Jordan
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 12/11/2009 04:27:11 PM PST

Updated: 12/11/2009 05:08:13 PM PST

PLEASANTON — Environmental groups that sued the city over a proposed extension of Stoneridge Drive are unhappy with proposals to protect the habitat and wildlife in the area.

At a planning commission hearing Wednesday, representatives of Alameda Creek Alliance and Center for Biological Diversity were critical of a new environmental report meant to address those concerns.

They also asked the city to extend the report's comment period, saying it does not provide access to certain references made in the report, which is related to the road extension and the 124-acre Staples Ranch development on the east end of town.

On Friday, the city pushed back the Dec. 17 deadline for public comment to Dec. 30.

"There were some concerns about procedural issues and that the biological mitigation needs to be more robust," said Ralph Kanz, the conservation director of Alameda Creek Alliance. "They should be mitigating for stuff they are not, and what they are mitigating should be more robust."

Kanz e-mailed the city Wednesday, asking for the public comment period to be extended. He also wrote that, according to California Environmental Quality Act guidelines, "the report and documents referenced should be available for public review." Kanz said he visited the Pleasanton planning office Nov. 19 and three of the documents referred to in the report were not available.

Kanz said he is still reviewing the environmental report but would like to see the city follow development guidelines from East Alameda County Conservation — of which the city is a member — that are currently being drafted.

The draft East Alameda County Conservation plan calls for mitigation for the San Joaquin spearscale plant at a 2-to-1 ratio — which means any one plant removed during construction is replaced by two. The city's report currently calls for a 1-to-1 ratio, Kanz said.

Kanz would also like to see a plan for the California tiger salamander and western pond turtle. Neither species was found during a Staples Ranch survey done by the city, but they are found in the creek just east of that area in Livermore.

Safe Streets Pleasanton, Center for Biological Diversity, Alameda Creek Alliance and two citizens sued the city in March after the council approved the Stoneridge Drive extension from Trevor Drive to El Charro Road as part of the Staples Ranch development plan.

In the suit, the plaintiffs claimed the reports — specifically the environmental impact report — failed to analyze the effects the road extension would have on wildlife and habitat as well as residential neighborhoods.

The completed development will include a 37-acre auto mall, a 45-acre senior continuing care community, 11 acres of retail, a 17-acre community park, including a 7-acre ice-skating facility and a 5-acre neighborhood park.