



The Bakersfield Californian

Groups sue over Tejon development

THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN | Thursday, Nov 12 2009 04:54 PM

A group of environmentalists, Native Americans and local residents filed an expected lawsuit Thursday to overturn the county's approval of Tejon Mountain Village, an upscale project of homes, golf courses and hotel rooms.

The lawsuit stemmed from concern about the California condor, Chumash sites, air quality concerns and other "decreased quality of life for current residents," according to a news release.

"All of California will suffer if this project gets built -- more water will be stolen, the bird that graces our quarter will be doomed, our air will get dirtier, and thousands of people will be placed in harm's way because of earthquakes and wildfires that will inevitably follow -- all so Wall Street can make another quick buck," Adam Keats, director of the Urban Wildlands Program at the Center for Biological Diversity, said in the release.

The suit was filed in Kern County Superior Court by the Center for Biological Diversity, Wishtoyo Foundation, TriCounty Watchdogs and the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment.

The Kern County Board of Supervisors approved plans and environmental reports for the project Oct. 5. That project involves 5,082 acres of homes, hotels, golf courses and shops on more than 26,417 acres east of Interstate 5 near Frazier Park.

Officials at Tejon Mountain Village LLC said they just received the lawsuit and so can't comment on specifics but were disappointed it was filed.

They pointed out Tejon had hammered out a "historic" conservation agreement with environmental groups to preserve up to 90 percent of the sprawling Tejon Ranch.

"The county planning staff and the supervisors were unanimously satisfied that our plan for Tejon Mountain Village has set new standards for conservation and sustainable development," David Crowder, director of government and community relations for Tejon Mountain Village, said in a statement. "We feel that the record will show that the county made a well-easoned decision and that the courts will find in our favor."