

Environmentalists: Tejon project may hurt condors

By SARAH RUBY, Californian staff writer

November 4th, 2005

Tejon Mountain Village, a tony resort development proposed near Lebec, could harm the endangered California condor and other species, environmentalists say.

Consultants are about to examine the environmental impact of this 28,253-acre development sprinkled with 3,450 homes, 160,000 square feet of commercial space and up to seven spas and hotels. Roughly 23,000 acres of the project would become a nature preserve, according to county documents.

The proposed location sits in the way of condors and other wildlife trying to get from the Coastal Range with the southern Sierra Nevada Mountains, said John Buse, staff attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity.

A hit to condor recovery is a hit to taxpayers, Buse said, because his organization estimates the public has spent more than \$35 million to help the struggling species.

"(Condors) need lots and lots of space without people and the problems that they bring," he said. "As configured I think the impact to the condor will be unavoidable and severe."

All potential impacts on wildlife will be studied in the next six months, said Barry Zoeller, a spokesman for Tejon Ranch. The initial layout of the project was configured with condor protection in mind, he said.

"The center has made no secret of the fact it's opposed to any and all development on the ranch," he said. "They're just looking for reasons to oppose it."

Comments from the Center for Biological Diversity and others were gathered by the county to help figure out what more to analyze than traffic, air quality, biological and other impacts of Tejon Mountain Village.

The deadline to speak up was Friday, but the public will have another chance when the first wave of environmental studies are finished, likely this spring.