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Lawsuit Challenges High-density Harmony Housing Development
Project Would Devastate Wildlife Habitat, Increase Traffic and Air Pollution

HIGHLAND, Calif.— Public interest groups filed a lawsuit late yesterday challenging the city of Highland's approval of the high-density Harmony development in Southern California. The remote development sits at the confluence of Mill Creek and the Santa Ana River and is directly adjacent to San Bernardino National Forest lands and will bring more than 3,600 houses to 1,657 acres of land acquired by Orange County Flood Control in the Seven Oaks Dam project that are currently home to numerous endangered species, rare habitats, wetlands and crucial wildlife connectivity corridors.

"There's nothing harmonious about the Harmony development," said Ileene Anderson, a senior scientist with the Center for Biological Diversity. "Not only does this project threaten endangered species and some of their most important habitat but the city's analysis did a lousy job of looking at how Harmony will affect air quality, traffic and the climate crisis."

The lawsuit was brought by the Center for Biological Diversity, San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society and the Greenspot Residents Association, who are represented by the law firm Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger. It argues the City of Highland's City Council's August approval of the project violates the California Environmental Quality Act.

The proposed development site is far removed from Highland's city services and is vulnerable to episodic fire, catastrophic flooding, and the San Andreas Fault. The environmental review completely ignored that a bridge over Mill Creek – which would be required to access the development – will permanently alter that free flowing creek. The project will also harm rare and protected species, including critical habitat for endangered [San Bernardino kangaroo rats](#) and federally threatened [Santa Ana sucker fish](#) as well as habitat for endangered [southwestern willow flycatchers](#).

"It's developments such as this that push rare plants and animals to the brink of extinction," said Drew Feldmann, with the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society. "The amount of rare wildlife and habitat already existing on the site points to conserving it, not developing it."

"The area has a long tradition of rural and agricultural living, not high density housing as is proposed with the Harmony Plan" said Wendy Rea, Executive Director of the Greenspot Residents Association. "This development is precisely the sort of ill-conceived 1960's leap-frog planning that has plagued this county for decades. Rather than focus on economic development and urban renewal, the City and an outside county have pushed an enormously unpopular development on a remote, annexed piece of land surrounded by unincorporated citizens. It is a fundamentally flawed and unsafe plan, built on a heritage of eminent domain and disregard for the community."

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.1 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

The San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society is a local chapter of the National Audubon Society, with about 2,000 members dedicated to preserving the habitat in the area, not just for birds, but for other wildlife, and to maintain the quality of life in and around San Bernardino County.

The Greenspot Residents Association is an unincorporated association comprised of concerned citizens within the area historically known as "Greenspot," that covers much of the Mentone, Redlands, and Mill Creek Canyon communities. Dedicated to the historic, cultural, ecological and agricultural preservation of the area, the association was formed and is managed exclusively by local residents.