



Date: November 24, 2020

Monish Sen
Senior Civil Engineer
Contra Costa Public Works
255 Glacier Drive
Martinez, CA 94553

Subject: Lomas Cantadas Roadside Turnout Closure Request

Dear Mr. Sen,

As you may be aware, our agencies have received a significant number of public complaints regarding large crowds gathering on Lomas Cantadas in unincorporated Contra Costa County just East of Grizzly Peak. This area has a significant history of roadside fires started from the numerous pull outs along the shoulder. In response to this history and the increased popularity of these areas for social gatherings due to COVID-19 restrictions closing alternative locations turnouts along Grizzly Peak have recently been closed by EBRPD by placing logs along the roadway.

A fire start in the light flashy fuels and brush which predominate in these areas has the potential to rapidly spread to the East under normal weather conditions. A fire moving East threatens the El Toyonal neighborhood of Orinda. Built in the 1920s, this area is defined by steep slopes, a single winding evacuation route, and heavy fuel loading. In short, an evacuation of El Toyonal in the face of a fire starting on Lomas Cantadas represents a significant threat to both lives and property. Under Diablo Wind conditions, this same fire start has the potential to recreate the fire conditions of the 1991 Tunnel Fire and the 1923 Berkeley Hills Fire, both of which were the most destructive in state history at their time.

Over the last couple months, the Oakland Police Department has organized multi-agency operations on Grizzly Peak in response to reports of large gatherings with fires, fireworks, gunfire and other high-risk behavior in the turnouts. These operations have resulted in the contact of hundreds of people with parked cars on Grizzly Peak. Lomas Cantadas is a road that runs south from Grizzly Peak Road in the immediate vicinity, through Contra Costa County jurisdiction into the City of Orinda. The City of Orinda and the Orinda Police Department have received several calls and complaints from residents in the area, who have stated they observe high-risk behavior at turnouts on the upper Lomas Cantadas. Residents also report they go to the turnouts on Lomas Cantadas and pick up trash left by people who stay in these turnouts overnight. Based on the statements of residents of high-risk behavior, coupled with the extreme fire danger presented by the conditions in the area of Grizzly Peak, parking restrictions for the turnouts in the County area of upper Lomas Cantadas seem reasonable.

In closing, we collectively urge you to enact a parking resolution to restrict access to these turnouts during hours of darkness as defined by the California Vehicle Code, to reduce the risk of wildfire in our area.

David Winnacker
Fire Chief
Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Lieutenant Brian Sliger
Contra Costa Sheriff's Office
Valley Station Commander

David Cook
Chief of Police
City of Orinda