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Press Release

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Friends of Sycamore Valley

Report Documents Destruction Due to Cattle Grazing in East Bay Parks

East Bay Regional Park District grazing policies not in compliance with California environmental laws

Danville, CA - The Friends of Sycamore Valley released a report today documenting environmental degradation on East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) land at Sycamore Valley Open Space in Danville and other public parklands in the East Bay. The 366-page report details extensive wildlife habitat destruction, water pollution, public safety issues, violations of Park District policies, and gross mismanagement of public resources due to cattle grazing in the parks. The report also exposes the biased and fraudulent “public review process” of the EBRPD grazing program conducted last year.

“Our report discusses the assault by Park District management on the biodiversity of our public open space,” said Greg Schneider, report author and founder of the Friends of Sycamore Valley. “For an agency that claims ‘*An environmental ethic guides us in all that we do,*’ the Park District's non-compliance with the environmental laws of California is troubling.” Schneider also points out that “of all the public agencies in the Bay Area, you would expect the EBRPD to

operate with the highest of environmental standards, as they have been entrusted with the responsibility for preserving public wildlands in the East Bay Region.”

The report, entitled “*An Assault on Biodiversity in the Name of Wildlands & Habitat Preservation*,” is the culmination of a three-year study on Park District operations. It focuses on the rapidly declining conditions of the Sycamore Valley Open Space in Danville, which was acquired by the Park District in 1998.

Says Schneider, “I was originally quite pleased that this open space was soon to become a regional park. However, I was shocked by the massive destruction that occurred in as little as two weeks from the cattle the Park District brought into the park.” The disturbing lack of concern by the Park District when informed of the damage prompted The Friends of Sycamore Valley to look more closely at the Park District’s wildlands management policies. This investigation uncovered numerous problems and management neglect relating to park preservation.

The EBRPD relies on public taxes, such as the Measure K parcel tax, for operating funds. Many environmentalists and park users are dismayed with the Park District’s priorities, as a significant amount of money goes for infrastructure improvements for special interests, mainly cattle ranchers, rather than for public benefit.

“The people want their parks back,” said Schneider. “We want to stop the declining conditions that are preventing us from having a ‘naturally pleasant’ park experience.”

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