



Montara Water & Sanitary District

Serving the Communities of Montara and Moss Beach

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July 16, 2021

Mark L. Weaver
Deputy District Director
Dina El-Tawansy
Acting District Director
California Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 23660
Oakland, CA 94623

Mr. Weaver:

On behalf of the residents of Montara and Moss Beach, as well as other adjacent property owners in San Mateo County, we feel compelled to bring to your attention a matter of great concern; the untended, hazardous conditions on Caltrans property within Montara, California. Reports of hazards on this property through illegal activities have increased and not only pose physical risks, but have been and continue to be a financial burden to this community.

Caltrans owns the Montara Bypass Lands, locally known as the Caltrans Right of Way (ROW), in Montara, CA. These lands have been left vacant and untended for decades under Caltrans' ownership. The Bypass lands parcel is primarily forested sections consisting mainly of Eucalyptus trees, shrubs and heavy undergrowth. Some sections contain untended, unofficial trails that are used by locals and tourists. Other sections allow and even invite illegal dumping. Montara Water and Sanitary District (MWSD), the sole local public jurisdiction in Montara and Moss Beach, has frequently cleaned this parcel at our community's expense. This work has been undertaken to avoid a catastrophic fire within the critical local watershed which supplies all of our community's water.

The numerous condemned premises on the property are decaying, used as drug dens, and harbor other illegal and dangerous activities. Some of the premises remain illegally connected to the MWSD water system without proper safety features, posing a substantial health and safety risk to our public water supply.

PG&E powerlines are located within the parcel in an area of unmanaged and highly flammable fuel materials. Powerlines connected to the decaying structures are partially damaged and can ignite an inferno at any time.

Caltrans has not taken any action. MWSD is aware that the local Fire Department has raised concerns to Caltrans without Caltrans taking the responsibility that any local property owner must take. The local community is taking all the risk. The existence of this entire community is at risk due to Caltrans irresponsibility.

MWSD has repeatedly communicated to Caltrans our interest in acquiring these lands to benefit the local community. Given MWSD's known interest in acquiring the ROW, we have received a high number of complaints about the imminent dangers on the parcel, particularly the high fire risk.

To support our community, MWSD asked the State's largest tree maintenance company to provide a cost estimate to reduce the most imminent vegetation fire danger on the property. That quote is \$800,000 and does not include tree removal or long-term fire strategies. This significant cost represents simply what must be done IMMEDIATELY as of July 2021 to address this significant fire risk.

Montara Water and Sanitary District is a critical community and county asset, providing domestic water and fire protection to approximately 1,800 connections in our small, isolated Coastside communities. We are a locally elected body charged with representing and taking action for our community members. We are prepared to continue the critical stewardship of our local lands, including safeguarding the watersheds that protect our local water resources for our community, now and in the future.

We ask that Caltrans address this hazardous situation immediately or initiate immediate discussions with MWSD on a collaborative solution that addresses both hazards and property ownership. Otherwise this community will hold Caltrans liable for past current and future damages and risks to our livelihood.

We look forward to your response to this urgent issue.

Sincerely,



President Scott Boyd

On behalf of the Montara Water and Sanitary District Board of Directors

Director Peter Dekker

Director Jim Harvey

Director Ric Lohman

Director Kathryn Slater-Carter

cc: *Via electronic transmission*
CA State Assemblymember Kevin Mullin

CA State Senator Josh Becker

County of San Mateo Board of Supervisors:

President David J. Canepa

Vice President Dennis Horsley

Supervisor Dave Pine

Supervisor Carole Groom

Supervisor Warren Slocum

Lennie Roberts, Committee for Green Foothills

Steve Monowitz, San Mateo County Planning

Jeannine Manna, California Coastal Commission

Marthy Poyatos, San Mateo Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo)

Midcoast Community Council