

# WATERSHED

E-NEWS Fall 2012

## FRIENDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER

Friends of the Santa Clara River (FSCR) is a non-profit, public interest organization dedicated to the protection, enhancement and management of the resources of the Santa Clara River, which flows approximately 100 miles from Acton, California to the Pacific Ocean. The Santa Clara is the largest natural river system remaining in Southern California, and was selected by American Rivers in 2005 as one of the nation's most endangered rivers.

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# FRIENDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER

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## **Court Deals Newhall Ranch a Major Setback**



In a tremendous win for the Santa Clara River, on October 15 a superior court judge confirmed a previous ruling that the California Department of Fish and Game's approvals for the enormous Newhall Ranch project in Los Angeles County violated state law in numerous, fundamental ways. The ruling deals a severe blow to the project, which would create a new town of 60,000 residents on the banks of the Santa Clara River just upstream of the Ventura County line.

A coalition of environmental and Native American groups, including the Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of the Santa Clara River, Santa Clarita Organization for Planning the Environment (SCOPE), Wishtoyo Foundation, Ventura Coastkeeper, and California Native Plant Society, challenged the Department of Fish and Game's (now known as the Department of Fish and Wildlife) Newhall Ranch approvals in January 2011. The comprehensive, 38-page ruling upholds the coalition's claims that the Department failed to adequately protect endangered species, including the San Fernando Valley spineflower, unarmored threespine stickleback, and southern

California steelhead; improperly disregarded the project's contribution to climate change; failed to adequately identify and preserve in place Chumash and Tataviam cultural resources; and erroneously rejected less environmentally damaging alternative development plans.

Los Angeles County approved the overall plan for Newhall Ranch in 2003, but the project required major additional permits for river development and endangered species from the Department of Fish and Game. As a result of the court ruling, these permits must be invalidated.

The first two phases of Newhall Ranch were approved by Los Angeles County in 2011 and 2012. These phases depend on the Department's approvals, so they face an uncertain future now that these approvals have been reversed.

John Buse, senior attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity, summed it up this way: "Government agencies have so far failed to halt this poorly conceived plan for massive development in and around the Santa Clara River's floodplain. The Santa Clara is a gem, but is one of the most endangered rivers in America. The ruling gives us hope that we can preserve southern California's last major free-flowing river."

After the decision was released, newspaper articles have reported that the Department is considering an appeal.

## DONATING TO FRIENDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER

The work of our organization depends on the support of those who believe in what we do. Legal actions, such as that resulting in the court decision against Newhall Ranch, require significant financial resources. Should you wish to donate, please make your check out to Friends of the Santa Clara River and send to 660 Randy Drive, Newbury Park, CA 91320. All donations are tax deductible.

