

RESPONSE TO SAN DIEGO COUNTY DATED AUGUST 31, 2018

Subject: **Potential New Target Shooting Closure Area in The Donohoe Flats Area Near Dulzura**

Michele Clock

Thank you for calling me about the proposed shooting closure area and pending proposal. Since then, as noted below, I have consulted with the South Bay Rod & Gun Club Board of Directors, and many of our neighbors. Almost to a man (and woman) we note that this appears to be a rushed and ill-considered proposal, with limited justification based on actual history.

As a result of our inquiries, please accept the following questions and observations regarding the proposal:

1. South Bay Rod & Gun Club is within the Boundary that is proposed according to the provided map. The Board of Directors of South Bay Rod & Gun Club, and many of our neighbors, do not feel that **any** private property should be included within the proposed closure area. The stated purpose of the proposed ordinance is to eliminate target shooting on BLM Land. Why wouldn't the boundaries of the ordinance follow the BLM Boundaries?
2. During our phone call, you stated that this ordinance "should not" affect SBRGC. Is there proposed language to that effect? We would like to see that, but the actual text of the proposed ordinance has not been shared. As a result, we can't help but wonder why SBRGC would be included by location, just to turn around and then exclude the Club from enforcement.

Obviously, if South Bay Rod & Gun Club is included within the boundary it implies that there is no target shooting allowed in an area that the County has already explicitly granted permission for such shooting. To say this is detrimental to the operation of our shooting range complex is an understatement. You also mentioned that "assuming you are in compliance with all the requirements to operate a shooting range", but that also implies that if we become non-compliant for any reason unrelated to the purpose of the ordinance and that we are in the area of a recreational shooting closure area we would be closed as per the proposed ordinance.

The Club has a long history of encouraging safe operation of its location as a safe target shooting range complex. We control access to the complex, constantly monitor the shooters, spend dozens and dozens of hours every year in weed abatement and other wildfire mitigation efforts, etc., etc. The Board of Directors believes that, as a private land holder, we have taken incredible steps to control whether we allow shooters or trespassing on our property with the usage of signage and gates. While we are always open to improve our operations, and in fact have taken an extremely cooperative view toward working with the County land use and

Sheriff's Department, we believe that the proposed ordinance is a direct threat from our government partners.

3. You mentioned that you had been working with the Dulzura residents but during our conversation I was surprised to learn that only a very few local residents were involved.
 - One individual who owns property in a Trust but has not show any interest in development of the parcel in number of years.
 - Two individuals who are concerned with bullets near their house and of a potential fire. These two individuals have a lengthy history of friction with the Club, and have refused to work with us to mitigate their concerns. (We met with them and Supervisor Jacob several months ago, and she encouraged cooperation. But in the interim they have refused any contact with us.)
 - Two individuals who are across the road from the proposed closure area and one individual who I don't know their location with respect to the closure area.

What is really surprising is the people who were not consulted:

- I attended the Dulzura Community Development Center (DCDC) pancake breakfast on Saturday, September 1, 2018. Nobody I spoke with had heard of this proposed closure of the BLM land. Also, in attendance at the breakfast were members of the Dulzura Fire Safe Council. None of them were aware of this proposal. If the fire threat is truly the motivation of this ordinance, why were they not contacted or involved in the process? Considering that most of the residences of Dulzura are members of one of these groups, this clearly was not a open process.

In short, this proposal is coming across like a one-sided approach to closing an area to recreational shooting to satisfy a very small (but highly vocal) percentage of the population that lives near the proposed closure area.

4. It was mentioned that target shooters are entering the area across from the Chicken Ranch on Marron Valley road to shoot targets via the Donohoe Spur gate. The people who park along Marron Valley road are going back into that area to hunt, which this restriction does not address. Target shooters in general will not venture very far from their vehicles to set up, since there is too much equipment to move.

That brings up the other entrances to the area such as the south gate (which is open now). In the past this gate was closed most of the time which prevented people from accessing Donohoe Spur area.

The Gate area, where the Gate Fire started, is also closed. This is an area where you see the people parking along Hwy 94 and they don't go that far into the BLM area before they set up targets. This area is closed now to target shooters but you still see hunters' parking along Hwy-94 and going back into the area to hunt.

Another area that prevents access is the gate over by Pio Pico which is also closed.

5. It's interesting to note that the Gate area should have been closed when the vegetation got too thick for any event, let alone target shooting. It appeared that the responsible government agents for this decision were waiting for a calendar date, not an actual assessment of the vegetation and fire danger. Ironically, after the fire it was closed to target shooting which was actually the best time to open it up to target shooting as there was nothing left to catch fire.
6. You also state "fire risk is really year-round now." That may have been true this year, but historically that has not been the case. We are back in a drought. Like every previous drought, this drought will eventually end. Even this year, despite the drought, CalFire has issued burn permits. It is possible that some people might be trying to exploit the fire danger to push their own agenda. As property owners we are deeply concerned about wildfires and have supported seasonal closures or when fire conditions warrant such actions. But we cannot support a permanent year-round closure. The facts do not support such an ordinance.
7. We note that the press has reported that the Gate Fire arson investigation was directed to non-shooters; local news reported that shooters had video of the arsonists leaving the scene. That is, elimination of target shooting on the land would not have prevented the Gate Fire. While we are not privy to the ongoing investigation or the results, the Public Safety personnel of the County should be able to determine whether the ordinance is attempting to solve a problem which, in reality, does not exist.
8. The underlying memo indicates that having BLM actually engage in seasonal closure the land to target shooting is a tedious process. This is disconcerting. Wouldn't a better solution to the supposed problem be closer contact between CalFire, County officials, and BLM officials? If the fire danger is high - as determined by the fire professionals at CalFire - any reasonable person would agree that target shooting should not be allowed. Certainly, that includes the local officials at BLM.

Please note that this letter does not necessarily address every concern raised by the Board of Directors, our neighbors, or our legal consultants. We strongly believe that the County should slow down and engage in a measured risk-management and cost-benefit analysis before

jumping on this proposal. And, as always, the Club would welcome the opportunity to be part of that process.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Don Gussler".

Don Gussler
619-405-2125
President, South Bay Rod & Gun Club