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P.O. Box 12
1075 Dakota Lane
Nipomo, CA 93444

August 12, 2015

Brian Pedrotti, Project Manager
Department of Planning & Building
County Government Center, Room 200
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

Re: Laetitia Proposed Agricultural Cluster

Dear Mr. Pedrotti,

I am opposed to the Laetitia Agricultural Cluster Subdivision, including 102 one acre homesites, a clubhouse and the suggested future development of a 75-room Dude Ranch on the Laetitia property. My greatest concerns are for the protection and sustainability of the water supply for the environment, existing residents and farmers, as well as ensuring the safety of the roads to and from our homes.

My family has owned property and resided in Upper Los Berros Canyon for over twenty six years. During the last fourteen years, the expanded vineyard activity has created increased traffic into and out of Upper Los Berros Canyon, by utilizing Thompson, Sheehy, Dana Foothill and Upper Los Berros Roads, to access the vineyard. This increased traffic has caused concern over the safety of those who travel on the curvy paved roads and the one lane gravel road we drive daily to and from our homes in the canyon. The traffic created by farm laborers, equipment and large delivery trucks has made the road very dangerous. Our country roads are not designed to handle this increased heavy traffic. Adding an additional 1,000 vehicle trips per day will place all of the residents in our community at greater risk.

Historically and specifically prior to 2001, when the Maison Deutz Vineyard and Winery was purchased, and renamed Laetitia, the Los Berros Creek flowed year round. Since Laetitia's owners purchased neighboring farmland, the vineyard has been expanded into an area which was previously dry land farmed. Numerous wells have also been drilled on the property over the last several years. In addition, a lengthy pipeline was installed along the vineyard fence line bordering Upper Los Berros Road, adjacent to Los Berros Creek.

The decrease in the creek flow in the last several years has been obvious. Many of the wells of our neighbors to the west have gone dry and deeper wells have been drilled due to reduced output. *Some of my neighbors in the Upper Los Berros Canyon have had to purchase water elsewhere this year, due to reduced output and drying up of their wells. Many artesian wells in the Upper Los Berros Canyon watershed, which feed Los Berros Creek, have dried up or have reduced flow.* Los Berros Creek flow is critical to recharging the aquifer which supplies Oceano (within the Northern Cities Management Area) with its water. The County of San Luis Obispo is responsible for ensuring the reliability of this water source. Already, wells close to Los Berros Creek that Falcon Ridge (El Campo area) once used are not adequate, and other sources had to be implemented. Please pay particular attention to The Nipomo Mesa Management Area (NMMA) 7th Annual Report-Calendar Year 2014, "Findings (ES-2) and Recommendations (ES-3)".

The ecosystem is in danger due to Laetitia's increased pumping of ground water for its vineyards. Los Berros Creek has all but dried up. Los Berros Creek was once teeming with wildlife, including distressed species such as steelhead trout, southwestern pond turtles, coast range newt, and red legged frogs. The watershed of Los Berros Creek and downstream tributaries must be protected from pollution. I have personally noticed vineyard workers spraying unknown substances on the vines on weekends. Laetitia has not proposed any retention basin to capture water runoff from agricultural activities. This insensitive disregard to the ecosystem is a great danger to our environment in Nipomo.

The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club in its letter to San Luis Obispo County has stated, *"The real possibility that the expansion of irrigated ag has resulted in the dewatering of Los Berros Creek, as evidenced by substantially less flow, demonstrates that **there is no "excess water" for residential use and the project represents a violation of Ag Policy 11 and the Ag Cluster ordinance**"*.

The California Department of Fish and Game has stated in their letter to San Luis Obispo County that *"The Department **strongly discourages approving projects** which would reduce Los Berros Creek flows"*.

The fractured shale rock formations in the Nipomo Hills, which provide our water for our homes and farms is noted for being a very unpredictable and unreliable source of water. Fractured shale does not store water, as does a sandy aquifer, such as that found on the Nipomo Mesa. Laetitia's owners cannot guarantee that it is a reliable water source. Peer review of Laetitia's estimate, by noted hydrogeologists offer documentation that it is not a reliable water source. The hydrogeology company Geosyntec states in their 2011 letter, *"This indicates that the long term capacities of the fractured bedrock aquifers to transmit groundwater are **lower than previously estimated** and sustainable production potential of the Project Site wells based on the short term tests were **unrealistically high**. Initial yields from wells in fractured bedrock aquifers often are not representative of longer term yields, which are typically lower."* Cleath and Associates (the hydrogeology company hired by Laetitia) proposes to utilize water in storage within the fractured shale as a component of "safe yield". Two of the peer reviews indicate that this is a **violation of CEQA and should not be allowed**. Fractured shale does not typically "store water." The Fugro hydrogeology report states that *"It should be noted also that the annual recharge estimates provided by Cleath are **misleading** in that they imply a component of available aquifer storage as recharge during a critical drought. The volume of **groundwater in storage is very small** given the limited extent of available water in the bedrock aquifers and that the amount cannot be used as a component of sustainable supply"*.

Laetitia vineyard operations have already affected nearby wells. Much of the Laetitia well testing, performed by Laetitia's consultants, was done during a relatively wet year. It is presumed that their studies would have been substantially different if performed during dryer years, which is the norm for the area of Nipomo. Many vacant properties south of the Laetitia have been approved for building. Most of them have approval for two home sites. These home sites will be obtaining their water from the same fractured shale that Laetitia is proposing to use for the Ag Cluster Subdivision. There will not be enough water to go around for all of the homes that have already received approval if this project is approved.

Allowing the Laetitia Agricultural Cluster Subdivision and future Dude Ranch will only aggravate an already dire water situation and dangerous traffic situation. The estimates of water use for the proposed housing project provided by Laetitia's consultants are lower than hydrogeological peer review experts have concluded. Laetitia continually reduces the estimated amount of water that the housing project will use. The expanded vineyard operations have already decreased the water availability in

existing wells in an area of unreliable water supply. There are no proposed retention basins to protect the watershed by capturing runoff from the vineyard or the proposed project. There is no reliable water source for additional homes in this area. Both the Nipomo Mesa (NMMA) and Northern Cities (CMA) management areas have been adversely affected by extreme drought conditions. Laetitia's proposed withdrawal of 20% to 25% more water is absurd. The traffic congestion from the vineyard operations has caused overuse of our narrow curving roads, presenting a dangerous safety issue for existing residents of the Sheehy, Dana Foothill, Rim Rock Road and Upper Los Berros Road. Allowing an additional 1,000 vehicle trips per day is insane!

Please do not approve the proposed Laetitia Agricultural Cluster Subdivision or future Dude Ranch project.

Respectfully,

Tina Grietens

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Nipomo, CA 93444

Property address: 1075 Dakota Lane in Upper Los Berros Canyon

Retired Utility Superintendent, Nipomo Community Services District
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