

## FW: Contact Us (response #3062) - OAKS

### Board of Supervisors

Thu 6/23/2016 3:36 PM

To: BOS\_Legislative Assistants <BOS\_Legislative-Assistants@co.slo.ca.us>; cr\_board\_clerk Clerk Recorder <cr\_board\_clerk@co.slo.ca.us>;

For your review.  
Thank you.

Blake Fixler  
Administrative Assistant III  
Board of Supervisors  
San Luis Obispo County  
[www.slocounty.ca.gov](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov)

Connect with us:

[www.facebook.com/SLOCountyGov](http://www.facebook.com/SLOCountyGov)  
[www.twitter.com/SLO\\_CountyGov](http://www.twitter.com/SLO_CountyGov)  
[www.linkedin.com/company/county-of-san-luis-obispo](http://www.linkedin.com/company/county-of-san-luis-obispo)  
[www.youtube.com/user/slocountygov](http://www.youtube.com/user/slocountygov)

-----Original Message-----

From: Internet Webmaster [<mailto:webmaster@co.slo.ca.us>]  
Sent: Thursday, June 23, 2016 1:20 PM  
To: Board of Supervisors <Boardofsups@co.slo.ca.us>  
Subject: Contact Us (response #3062)

Contact Us (response #3062)

Survey Information

Site: County of SLO  
Page Title: Contact Us  
URL: <http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/bos/BOSContactUs.htm>  
Submission Time/Date: 6/23/2016 1:19:59 PM

Survey Response

Name:  
Pat Riley

Telephone Number:

Item No. 1  
Meeting Date: July 15, 2016 Special Meeting  
Presented by: Pat Riley  
Rec'd prior to meeting & posted to web on: July 7, 2016

Email address:

Comments or questions (8,192 characters max):

<http://www.latimes.com/business/hiltzik/la-fi-hiltzik-justin-bulldozes-20160622-snap-story.html>

BUSINESS / Michael Hiltzik

# Column Billionaire Resnicks' Justin Vineyards bulldozes forest of old oaks, sparking uproar



Wonderful Co. owners Stewart Resnick and Lynda Resnick flank film director Morgan Spurlock at the 2011 premiere of a Wonderful-sponsored film. (FilmMagic)



By **Michael Hiltzik** · Contact Reporter

JUNE 23, 2016, 8:33 AM

**T**he Wonderful Company, the corporate arm of Beverly Hills [billionaires Stewart and Lynda Resnick](#), promotes itself incessantly as an exemplar of social responsibility and a guardian of sustainable agriculture. “As an agricultural company, we are deeply committed to protecting and conserving our natural resources,” it says right there [on its website](#).

Don't tell that to the company's neighbors in Paso Robles, the heart of California's Central Coast wine country. They're infuriated by what appears to have been the clear-cutting of an oak forest on land

Item No. 1

Meeting Date: July 15, 2016 Special Meeting

Presented by: Pat Riley

Rec'd prior to meeting & posted to web on: July 7, 2016

managed by Justin Vineyards, a Wonderful subsidiary, to make room for new grape plantings for its [Justin Wines brand](#). Wonderful acquired the winery from founder Justin Baldwin in 2010.

“

**They'll suck our wells dry, and then we'll have to move somewhere else. We weren't planning on doing that.**

— Neil Heaton, fourth-generation Paso Robles farmer and rancher

The action, which appeared to start in early June and was halted by San Luis Obispo County soon after it was discovered, has left hillsides bare and gray, denuded of vegetation and vulnerable to storm-fed erosion. Neighbors of the property, which is located just west of Paso Robles, say they're also concerned that a large reservoir excavated on the property will enable the company to drain groundwater they depend on.

“The only thing that allows us to live on this land is this underground aquifer,” says Neil Heaton, 66, a fourth-generation resident and farmer who does environmentally sustainable dry-farming of grapes and walnuts on his property abutting the Wonderful parcel. “They'll suck our wells dry, and then we'll have to move somewhere else. We weren't planning on doing that.”

(See [the video below](#), from the San Luis Obispo Tribune.)

The reaction has extended to the Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo restaurant community, where some restaurants are boycotting Justin wines. “What they did is an injustice, and we can't support that,” says Debbie Thomas, owner of [Thomas Hill Organics](#), a Paso Robles farm-to-table restaurant that has taken Justin off its wine list.

“[This just has me sad](#),” Greg Holt, owner of the Big Sky Cafe in San Luis Obispo, wrote on his business's Facebook page last week. “You just don't do that to the Earth. I get private property rights, but it just ain't right to remove all those trees. As such, we are going to remove Justin wines from our list. They grow great grapes, and make GREAT wine, but I have to follow my heart here. Some things are just more important.”

The extent to which the company's actions violated local law is unclear. The basis for the county's stop-work order is a county ordinance requiring a permit for grading at more than a 30% slope. But tradition, rather than ordinance, protected the oaks themselves.

Members of the community say that until now, it didn't seem necessary to put the principle in writing. "If you're a resident of Paso, you know you don't cut down the oaks without a permit," Thomas says. The very name of the town, she observes, derives from the Spanish for "Pass of the Oaks." In the wake of the Justin controversy, the county board of supervisors will be taking up a deforestation ordinance on an urgent calendar sometime in the next few weeks.

**RELATED: [The "science" behind Lynda Resnick's Pom Wonderful juice »](#)**

**RELATED: [Something's not right about this California water deal »](#)**

In a statement issued from Wonderful's Los Angeles headquarters, a spokesman for Justin referred to its "long-standing commitment to... responsible environmental stewardship." He said the company has "made every effort to comply with local ordinances for this project" and is "actively cooperating with officials to address their concerns." The statement said that "among other efforts, we will plant 5,000 oak trees across our properties."

No one is sure how many oaks were bulldozed. Local estimates range from several hundred to as many as 8,000. The entire parcel is more than 300 acres, but the work was done on only a portion of unplanted land. Local residents say the grading wasn't immediately apparent because it took place at locations that aren't visible from the highway, and debris burning was done at night, when the source of smoke wasn't easily determined.

"The first tip was when we saw truck after truck of oak logs going by," says Justin Smith, whose [Saxum Vineyards](#) is located about a mile from the site.

Devin Best, executive director of the [Upper Salinas Las Tablas Resource Conservation District](#), says the company received a permit for the reservoir, but didn't submit the tree-removal or grading for review. "Their impression is they were exempt," he says. But proper conservation practice should have stayed the bulldozers' march, he says, since the bare hillsides are vulnerable to erosion.

"The big concern is if there's a storm event, how will that change the environment," he says. A certain amount of vegetation clearing is permissible, he says, "but clear-cutting is a very different practice. That's native vegetation and a habitat for wildlife. Practices like this on a slope this steep is the far end of the spectrum."

“

## **You just don't do that to the Earth.... As such, we are going to remove Justin wines from our list.**

— Greg Holt, owner of Big Sky Cafe, San Luis Obispo, on the restaurant's Facebook page

Vineyard owners have been at war with oak trees for decades, since vineyards tend to encroach on stands of old trees. In the most controversial episode before now, Kendall-Jackson winery destroyed more than 849 old oaks in 1996 to make room for a vineyard expansion in Santa Barbara County. That provoked a local campaign for an oak-preservation ordinance, which failed in a 1999 initiative vote but was enacted by the county in 2003.

The Justin affair brings the Resnicks, whose other brands include Fiji Water and POM Wonderful pomegranate juice, under what may be an unwelcome spotlight. Wonderful has been at odds with water users in central California, and with federal regulators who were unhappy with its promotion of pomegranate juice with what the Federal Trade Commission called “misleading and inadequately supported” health claims. The FTC [challenged those claims in 2010](#) and [emerged largely victorious](#) from a drawn-out legal battle with the company. The Resnicks, who claim to be the biggest growers of pistachios and almonds in the world, [tend to prevail](#) in battles over rights to the water needed to feed those trees, however.

With the clearing of the Paso Robles hillsides a fait accompli, local officials are pondering what can be done to mitigate the damage. “We’re not sure we can make them regrade,” says County Supervisor Frank Mecham, whose district covers Paso Robles and the Wonderful property.

Locals will be eying the heavens nervously as wet weather approaches late this year. “We’re trying to get some sense of how to head off the erosion certain to come this winter,” Heaton says. “One good storm, and a good portion of that silt covering all those hills will be heading right for our income property.” At the very least, he says, “they need to put some sort of retaining wall to keep that silt on their side, not here.”

**Keep up to date with Michael Hiltzik. Follow [@hiltzikm](#) on Twitter, see his [Facebook page](#), or email [michael.hiltzik@latimes.com](mailto:michael.hiltzik@latimes.com).**

[Return to Michael Hiltzik's blog.](#)

Copyright © 2016, Los Angeles Times

Item No. 1  
Meeting Date: July 15, 2016 Special Meeting  
Presented by: Pat Riley  
Rec'd prior to meeting & posted to web on: July 7, 2016

## FW: Contact Us (response #3063) - OAKS

### Board of Supervisors

Fri 6/24/2016 8:04 AM

To: BOS\_Legislative Assistants <BOS\_Legislative-Assistants@co.slo.ca.us>; cr\_board\_clerk Clerk Recorder <cr\_board\_clerk@co.slo.ca.us>;

For your review.  
Thank you.

Blake Fixler  
Administrative Assistant III  
Board of Supervisors  
San Luis Obispo County  
[www.slocounty.ca.gov](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov)  
[REDACTED]

Connect with us:

[www.facebook.com/SLOCountyGov](http://www.facebook.com/SLOCountyGov)  
[www.twitter.com/SLO\\_CountyGov](http://www.twitter.com/SLO_CountyGov)  
[www.linkedin.com/company/county-of-san-luis-obispo](http://www.linkedin.com/company/county-of-san-luis-obispo)  
[www.youtube.com/user/slocountygov](http://www.youtube.com/user/slocountygov)

-----Original Message-----

From: Internet Webmaster [<mailto:webmaster@co.slo.ca.us>]  
Sent: Thursday, June 23, 2016 5:13 PM  
To: Board of Supervisors <Boardofsups@co.slo.ca.us>  
Subject: Contact Us (response #3063)

Contact Us (response #3063)

#### Survey Information

Site: County of SLO  
Page Title: Contact Us  
URL: <http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/bos/BOSContactUs.htm>  
Submission Time/Date: 6/23/2016 5:12:31 PM

#### Survey Response

Name:  
Sally Marshall-Ensworth

Telephone Number:  
[REDACTED]

Item No. 1  
Meeting Date: July 15, 2016 Special Meeting  
Presented by: Sally Marshall-Ensworth  
Rec'd prior to meeting & posted to web on: July 7, 2016

Email address:  
sally.e@charter.net

Comments or questions (8,192 characters max):

It is really very upsetting that the Resnicks have denuded a large swath of the oak ecosystem and they also have plans to take command of the water resources in the area. This must not be allowed. Please protect our county!

## FW: Contact Us (response #3064) - OAKS

### Board of Supervisors

Mon 6/27/2016 8:06 AM

To: BOS\_Legislative Assistants <BOS\_Legislative-Assistants@co.slo.ca.us>; cr\_board\_clerk Clerk Recorder <cr\_board\_clerk@co.slo.ca.us>;

For your review.  
Thank you.

Blake Fixler  
Administrative Assistant III  
Board of Supervisors  
San Luis Obispo County  
[www.slocounty.ca.gov](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov)

Connect with us:

[www.facebook.com/SLOCountyGov](http://www.facebook.com/SLOCountyGov)  
[www.twitter.com/SLO\\_CountyGov](http://www.twitter.com/SLO_CountyGov)  
[www.linkedin.com/company/county-of-san-luis-obispo](http://www.linkedin.com/company/county-of-san-luis-obispo)  
[www.youtube.com/user/slocountygov](http://www.youtube.com/user/slocountygov)

-----Original Message-----

From: Internet Webmaster [<mailto:webmaster@co.slo.ca.us>]  
Sent: Saturday, June 25, 2016 12:02 PM  
To: Board of Supervisors <Boardofsups@co.slo.ca.us>  
Subject: Contact Us (response #3064)

Contact Us (response #3064)

#### Survey Information

Site: County of SLO  
Page Title: Contact Us  
URL: <http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/bos/BOSContactUs.htm>  
Submission Time/Date: 6/25/2016 12:02:04 PM

#### Survey Response

Name:

Telephone Number:

Email address:

**Item No. 1**  
**Meeting Date: July 15, 2016 Special Meeting**  
**Presented by: Administrative Assistant**  
**Rec'd prior to meeting & posted to web on: July 7, 2016**

Comments or questions (8,192 characters max):  
Pls enact a protect the oaks ordinance asap Thx

## Forward of Agenda Item Mail - OAKS

Blake Fixler

Fri 7/1/2016 8:02 AM

To: BOS\_Legislative Assistants <BOS\_Legislative-Assistants@co.slo.ca.us>; cr\_board\_clerk Clerk Recorder <cr\_board\_clerk@co.slo.ca.us>;

1 attachment (65 KB)

OakLetter.pdf;

For your review.  
Thank you.

Blake Fixler  
Administrative Assistant III  
Board of Supervisors  
San Luis Obispo County  
[www.slocounty.ca.gov](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov)  
Direct Line 805-781-5498

Connect with us:  
[www.facebook.com/SLOCountyGov](http://www.facebook.com/SLOCountyGov)  
[www.twitter.com/SLO\\_CountyGov](http://www.twitter.com/SLO_CountyGov)  
[www.linkedin.com/company/county-of-san-luis-obispo](http://www.linkedin.com/company/county-of-san-luis-obispo)  
[www.youtube.com/user/slocountygov](http://www.youtube.com/user/slocountygov)

RECEIVED

JUN 30 2016

Board of Supervisors  
San Luis Obispo County

June 2016

The Honorable John Laird  
Secretary of Resources  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Urgent need for protecting California's Oak Woodlands**

Dear Secretary Laird/ *Lynn Compton*

I am writing to ask that you promulgate statewide protections for oak woodlands, a public trust resource that provides habitat for diverse plant and wildlife communities, sequesters carbon, and sustains healthy watersheds. An article in the June 10, 2016 *Paso Robles Daily News* highlights the need for immediate action on behalf of California's primary old growth resource:

<http://pasoroblesdailynews.com/justin-winery-clear-cutting/56473>.

California's oak woodlands and oak forested lands form an ecological backbone that sustains the economy and environment. Cumulative impacts from land conversion, drought, and disease threaten stands of oak woodlands, thereby endangering this entire ecosystem so important to people, plants, and animals throughout California.

Thank you for your leadership to conserve oak woodlands on behalf of California.

Sincerely,

*Ruth Madocks: owner of Branch Mill Organic Farm in Arroyo Grande*

cc: The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.  
The Honorable Lynn Compton, Chair, San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors  
Jean-Pierre Wolff, Ph.D., Chair, Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board  
California Oak Coalition