

# ***SANTA MARGARITA AREA RESIDENTS TOGETHER***

## **Tract 1 Lot Line Adjustment Overview**

In 2001, the new owners of the Santa Margarita Ranch submitted to the County of San Luis Obispo plans to reorganize the lot boundaries for 36 lots west of Garden Farms in what is called "Tract 1." Tract 1 lots had been established by E. G. Lewis in the 1920s as an adjunct to Atascadero. The lots sprawled across the entire 550 acres. The proposal by the SMR was to cluster 36 lots and then dedicate a remaining 300 acres into open space.

The Santa Margarita Area Advisory Council advised the County to require that the developer hire an independent traffic consultant. The County failed to do so and the developer hired William P Heath. Heath recommended that a left run lane be built for north bound traffic on El Camino Real turning left into Santa Margarita Rd. See link below and find Garden Farms Tract 1/Traffic report. Significantly, this left turn lane would occur on a two lane bridge, a fact not noted by Heath.

SMART followed the entire process, researching every assertion. We discovered the flaw in the traffic report along with numerous reasons why an Environmental Impact Report should be required. SMART testified in hearing in front of the Subdivision Review Board.

The County Staff had returned a statement of Negative Declaration on the application. A bridge replacement or widening can not occur under a "Neg-Dec." The Subdivision Review Board was forced to apply conflicting conditions, requiring the lane addition but denying the bridge expansion.

SMART, while agreeing on both of the conditions, appealed the decision based on the fact that a project this size should not receive a negative environmental impact declaration. The appeal could not be heard before the end of 2001. On January 1, 2002 a new state law came into affect that disallowed adjustment of more than 4 lots in one project. The SMART Appeal would prevent the LLA altogether. This had the effect of denying the developer what appeared to be an important cash flow source and forced the developer to negotiate with SMART. The results of this negotiation were a habitat assessment on the remaining ranch parcels, promise of a future EIR on the entire remaining development proposals and a cash settlement for SMART's attorneys. The 300 acre open space was dedicated to the California Rangeland Trust. See link below for the text of this settlement.

For more information, see: <http://margaritaresidentstogether.org/>