

February 6, 2007

Contact: Cameron Benson  
Executive Director  
(805) 963-1622

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## FIRESTONE ADMITS CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Santa Barbara County Supervisor Brooks Firestone acknowledged today that he has a disqualifying financial conflict of interest regarding the County's proposed changes to the "Uniform Rules," which would allow a significant amount of new development on private agricultural land in the County. Supervisor Firestone conceded his interest in over 500 acres of land that would benefit from the new rules. As a result, state law required him to recuse himself from further participation in the proposed rule changes.

Supervisor Firestone's recusal comes more than seven weeks after a coalition of local nonprofit organizations, represented by the Environmental Defense Center, submitted a thirteen page letter and numerous documents demonstrating his conflict of interest and requesting his recusal. At the time, Firestone denied any conflict and stated he would seek advice from "outside counsel" regarding his conflict.

"Of course he has a conflict of interest," stated Cameron Benson, Executive Director of the Environmental Defense Center (EDC), "he wouldn't have stepped down if he didn't." "We are pleased that this issue has been resolved in the public's interest."

According to County records, Supervisor Firestone is identified as the "Chairman" of the Firestone Vineyard and a "partner" in the Firestone Farming Company, which owns 573 acres of land enrolled in the County's Agricultural Preserve Program. In his "Statement of Economic Interests" filing with the County, Firestone identified the value of his interest in those entities at "over \$1,000,000."

###