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YET ANOTHER PROSPECTIVE NAPLES DEVELOPER WALKS AWAY FROM THE PROPERTY – SANTA BARBARA RANCH STILL OWNED BY THE BANK; ACTIVISTS STILL ACTIVELY PURSUING PRESERVATION

The most recent contenders for the crown of Gaviota have given up. Spectra America and Cerberus Capital Management, who were working a deal with FirstBank of Missouri to purchase Santa Barbara Ranch (aka Naples), have terminated their plans to transfer ownership of the star-crossed property.

FirstBank acquired the property through foreclosure in 2010 from the prior developer of Santa Barbara Ranch, Matt Osgood, after he defaulted on outstanding loans. Since then, multiple development groups have reportedly entered into tentative deals with the Bank to purchase Naples, but none of these deals was consummated. In March of 2012, one group got so far as to ask the County Board of Supervisors to approve the transfer of a “development agreement” affecting a portion of the property. But the Board could not determine that the group was equipped to handle a property as unique as Naples, and eventually that developer withdrew in June 2012.

Most recently, a similar and more extreme scenario was presented to the County when Spectra America asked the Board to approve a transfer request on July 2; but this time the group presented *no* information about its ability to acquire, develop and manage Naples, and the developer did not even appear at the hearing. This time, the Board flat-out denied Spectra's request to transfer the development agreement.

“Development of this property has never made sense,” said Naples Coalition attorney Marc Chytilo. “And it appears that the latest prospective purchasers have not figured it out. Naples is an area of national significance. Anyone attempting to develop there faces the unrelenting opposition of Santa Barbara’s environmental community and must overcome an insurmountable series of hurdles, ranging from lawsuits, uncertainties over the effectiveness of approvals, a stringent coastal commission review, public rights of use and access based on historic prescriptive use of the property, and the absence of a certain water supply.”

“Naples is irreplaceable,” said Nathan Alley, attorney for Environmental Defense Center and Surfrider Foundation. “Our organizations remain committed to doing everything possible to preserve Naples in its undeveloped state.”

The Naples Coalition, Surfrider Foundation and the Environmental Defense Center have been working for decades to preserve the magnificent ecological, cultural, recreational and scenic rural characteristics of Naples. Currently, there is a lawsuit pending at the Court of Appeal that could vacate critical project approvals and send the project back to square one. Further, no development can occur at Naples without Coastal permits, and the Coastal Commission review process has not even begun. Regardless of who owns it, Santa Barbara's environmental and conservation community will maintain their unwavering opposition to any attempt to develop the crown jewel of the Gaviota Coast.

Background

The Santa Barbara Ranch development is a 71 large lot residential development located two miles west of Goleta on the rural Gaviota Coast. The development received approval by the Board of Supervisors in late 2008 despite unanimous opposition from the community. If the development is to proceed, a significant portion of the project must also be approved by the California Coastal Commission.

The Naples Coalition is a Santa Barbara County, CA-based public benefit corporation with representation by local non-profit groups including the Citizens Planning Association of Santa Barbara County, Gaviota Coast Conservancy, League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara County, Los Padres Chapter of the Sierra Club, Santa Barbara Chapter of Surfrider Foundation, Santa Barbara Chapter of the Audubon Society and Santa Barbara Community Action Network. The Naples Coalition is dedicated to the preservation of the rural character of the Naples property on the Gaviota coast. **Visit www.SaveNaples.org for information about Naples and the Naples Coalition. Visit http://www.savenaples.org/index_res/NC%20History%20Chronology%209-09.htm for a summary of the 120 year development history of Naples.**

The Environmental Defense Center protects and enhances the local environment through education, advocacy, and legal action and works primarily within Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties. Since 1977, EDC has empowered community based organizations to advance environmental protection. Program areas include protecting coast and ocean resources, open spaces and wildlife, and human and environmental health. EDC has represented Surfrider Foundation in opposition to the Naples development project since 1999. **Visit www.EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org for information about EDC; information specific to Naples can be found at http://www.edcnet.org/learn/current_cases/naples.html.**

Surfrider Foundation is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the oceans, waves and beaches for all people, through conservation, activism, research and education. The Santa Barbara Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation was founded in 1990 to protect local beaches, coastal areas, and water quality. One of Surfrider Foundation's priority campaigns is to protect the Gaviota Coast, including Naples. **Visit www.santabarbara.surfrider.org/issues/naples-property to learn more about Surfrider's efforts to save Naples.**