

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



FROM: Supervisor Buster

SUBMITTAL DATE: September 23, 2005

SUBJECT: Further Consideration of Eagle Mountain Landfill

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

- That the Board accept the ruling of the Federal District Court, decline to initiate or support an appeal and rescind all County approvals
- That the Board oppose a new or modified application for a landfill at Eagle Mountain
- That the Board oppose establishment of desert landfills primarily designed for trash from other counties
- That the Board oppose trash trains coming into or passing through the County to desert landfills
- That the Board support a new vision for the Eagle Mountain area in cooperation with the community as a visitors' interpretive center for the historic iron mining site and for the desert wonders of Joshua Tree National Park
- That the Board direct a review of the application process for projects of this magnitude so that such fundamental flaws are uncovered before time and effort is expended by the County and public in response

BACKGROUND and JUSTIFICATION:

The Court's rejection of the land exchange knocks out the main economic underpinnings of this project, raising serious questions as to the project's ultimate viability and the promised financial benefits to Riverside County.

The Court's nullifying the trade is extraordinary. This deal is a giveaway of valuable public land. The County of Riverside must not be associated any further with a business that speculates with the public's land and attempts to escape paying fair value, well into the millions of dollars, for it.

Bob Buster
Supervisor, 1st District

BB:ds

Prev. Agn. ref. Dist.AGENDA NO.

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BACKGROUND and JUSTIFICATION (continued)

Time and events have overtaken this project.

Had the County known that Mine Reclamation was a stalking horse for the Los Angeles County Sanitation District, which since has purchased rights to the project, but also has other alternative sites for its future trash, the Board would have insisted upon and received much better economic and environmental terms. Eagle Mountain Landfill space is not needed by Riverside County. Other environmental mitigation from rapid growth in the County can easily make up for whatever possible loss in tonnage fees this project may one day produce.

The value of Joshua Tree National Park to the county is much greater and clearer today than it was 16 years ago when this project was first proposed. Any risk of damage to tourism and the natural wonders of Joshua Tree National Park is not worth taking. There will never be a way for proponents to provide sufficient mitigation to eliminate the public's negative perception of a huge trash dump next to a national park.

Many more freight trains and cars on the county's roads, combined with inadequate local and federal funds to build grade separations, have created gridlock and safety problems along the county's major rail corridors. The County would not today easily approve adding long trash trains to an already terrible situation. This project's provision of only \$2 million to pay for grade separations is completely inadequate to make a dent in the current average estimate of \$20 million for a grade separation.

The fact that the Eagle Mountain Landfill proposal has been shot down twice in the courts should give us pause. The County has foolishly wasted enormous time and efforts to consider and assist this project in two long rounds. The County needs to examine why it would even let the project sponsors apply when they never owned the land on which the project was to be built.

It's time for Riverside County make a clean break from this project. We must insist that Riverside County's interests come first and we must safeguard the international treasure of our desert.