

September 20, 2005

Santa Clara County Board of Education
Santa Clara County Office of Education
Mail Code 201
1290 Ridder Park Drive
San Jose, CA 95131-2304

Good Day and Hello:

Thank you for taking this moment to consider my comments regarding the BAREC land and its future. My name is Frank Schiavo. For 41 years I have dedicated my professional and personal life to teaching two generations of students about our natural and human environment. I was the environmental studies teacher for 13 years at Willow Glen High School and for 28 years at San Jose State in the Environmental Studies Department. The most rewarding part of this experience was teaching over 1500 San Jose State students to become K-8 environmental educators for the public school system.

I grew up in Santa Clara from 1946 to 1962 and then moved to San Jose to begin my teaching career. During my childhood days Santa Clara Valley was a series of small towns surrounded by orchards and open space. On the east and west were the beautiful undeveloped mountains. Unfortunately this has all changed.

Given a child's perspective on the Valley floor: Where are fields and creeks and hills and farms to explore and experience? Where are the sounds and smells of the natural world? Where is the opportunity to see wildlife like rabbits, fox, snakes, and flocks of birds? All this has GONE! What children today experience is an indoor life of computers, computer games, television after school and not much more than concrete for biking and housing developments/shopping malls to explore on excursions.

We can and must do better than this for our children. The most positive example on the Valley floor is DeAnza College's one and a half acre Nature Study Area. It was the vision of DeAnza's Environmental Studies teacher, Doug Cheeseman and a handful of volunteers. It is a jewel on DeAnza's campus and used as a park by the neighboring population as a respite from the rush of Silicon Valley's fast paced life. It has been an educational force and inspiration for thousands of DeAnza students to pursue environmental careers. Imagine if this could be done at BAREC!

BAREC is a beautiful natural setting of 17 acres. A portion of it could be park and another portion developed as a nature study area like at DeAnza. It could be a fabulous island of trees and native plants, water, wildlife, and a meeting place for many species of birds. San Jose State's Environmental Studies Department would like to be involved with this nature study area in physically helping to develop it and use it as a training ground for environmental education teachers. It would also be the place for K-12 and

college students to take field trips for their environmental studies courses. San Jose State has nothing like this and has no plans or room for such a vision.

Your decision about BAREC's future has the potential of making it into a nature study area and park for all citizens in the Santa Clara Valley. It also has the prospect of changing it with more of the same...the same endless modern housing, parking lots, token landscapes compared to the abundance of life once on our Valley. This choice would result in housing for a few residents and nothing more for anyone else. I do hope you see the picture I am painting.

I ask you to consider what your decision will do for the long term...for countless children, young adults, and families who can experience BAREC as a nature study area and park. We all need contact with nature in our daily lives in our cities and not nature that we must travel hundreds of vacation miles to see. Nature can teach us; it can remove stress and relax us; it can slow us down and give us the opportunity to reflect on the important aspects of living and life. With this scenario we preserve beauty and give it to future generations. If we choose wisely today this scenario is what future generations will inherit from us. To close please consider this quotation from Ansel Adams book, These We Inherit:

“If no one knows the importance of preserving a beautiful place, that place is not likely to be preserved but instead be transformed into something else and probably something less.”

Sincerely,

Frank R. Schiavo
Environmental Studies Department
San Jose State University