

From: [Maira](#)
To: [Pocekay, Dennis](#); [John Shribbs](#); [Barnacle, Brian](#); [Cader-Thompson, Janice](#); -- City Clerk
Subject: Re: Davidon Scott's Ranch Development
Date: Sunday, February 26, 2023 9:02:36 PM

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Please add my comments to the public record for the following item being heard at tomorrow night's, Feb 27, 2023, City Council meeting: Davidon Scott's Ranch Development.

Dear City Council Members, who you choose to listen to is the most important decision you make as councilmembers. The choice of subject expert(s) matters greatly. Dr. Smallwood, a nationally-recognized ecologist & wildlife expert, has frequently and repeatedly pointed out the City's errors in their biological surveys, including his latest report from 2022, just released, which finds that, **"there are at least 90 documented species of vertebrate wildlife, including 17 special-status species, at the Davidon project site"**¹. Who would ever allow any building/human encroachment on such an ecologically-rich site, particularly given what we know about climate change and biodiversity loss?

Dr. Smallwood would not risk his national reputation to state untruths. The developer's biological consultant and the City's consultant, and their faulty analyses and conclusions (that Dr. Smallwood carefully addresses in his latest missive), are designed to drive towards a particular outcome. We have seen this time and again. We've seen the shoddy biological surveys, and the endless M Group consultants' bogus assessments that, "any and every significant impact can be mitigated" (do they even know we are undergoing catastrophic climate change?). Kelly Creek and the rare and irreplaceable wildlife species there don't deserve this gross lack of scrutiny. Make an educated and informed decision by reading Dr. Smallwood's findings. Dr. Smallwood knows what he is talking about and he knows what is at stake here. Dr. Smallwood is the consummate wildlife expert – not the for-profit M Group, nor the consultant hired by the developer.

Dr. Shribbs – you yourself are a scientist. And you know that the staff at Sonoma Land Trust (SLT) and Prunske-Chatam Inc are **not** comprised of wildlife specialists. SLT has an acquisitions team, a finance and admin team, a community engagement team, a philanthropy team, and the like. They specialize in productive and agricultural lands, and are not scientific specialists versed in wildlife and aquatic ecosystems. Due to statewide habitat loss, riparian

ecosystems have become increasingly rare: it's estimated that **only 5% of original riparian habitat in California remains**². SLT and land architects such as Prunuske Chatam, Inc are thusly not the people to be listened to on this critical issue.

Similarly – there is not a SINGLE staff member at Earth Island Institute who identifies as a scientist. Here is the link to their staff. <https://www.earthisland.org/index.php/team> They, similarly, do not possess Dr. Smallwood's expert background and breadth of knowledge in wildlife systems, and are unqualified to speak to the impacts this development and this park would have on this fragile riparian corridor.

Roundabouts and other infrastructure, and even restoration of the Red Barn and other buildings, are in no way more important than the protection/preservation of Kelly Creek and her ecosystems. You have more than ample information from true experts that this is the LAST place we humans should further be encroaching upon, either with the built environment (houses, hardscapes), or with thousands more humans with their cars, bikes, pets, pollution, etc. It's just a hard no.

It never made sense to develop at this wildlands interface (*e.g.*, Westhaven) - but we brazenly and ignorantly did so. When homeowners wash their cars, the soaps/detergents wash out downstream of D Street onto rural properties alongside the creek. What was done there is (sadly) done. What we absolutely must not do is add insult to injury and allow yet more development – and gross human encroachment - on this fragile creek system that provides sustenance and habitat to SO many wildlife species. This is an easy NO.

When Napa County said no to Davidon, it did not even concern a riparian corridor. Our Kelly Creek is a fragile and rare ecosystem that top wildlife experts have shown contains many critical species. Riparian corridors are essential wildlife and aquatic habitat and can, critically, support the recovery of/ensure the survival of numerous endangered species. There are few locations that can boast this richness and uniqueness. Gov Newsom has specifically asked that riparian corridors be prioritized for preservation - precisely because of their richness in biodiversity.

In this time of catastrophic climate change and ecological collapse, especially, the kind of approach that focuses on maximizing developer profits at the cost of

the environment and native species is unconscionable and lethal; it is literally wiping out species. If you go with the analyses and conclusions set out by the City and developer's consultants, then you are willfully allowing yourselves to be grossly misinformed, and your decision-making will result in irreparable harm to these species and ecosystems. That will be your legacy. For all of a handful of additional homes (nevermind that we are built out more than 5-fold our required RHNA #'s in the luxury housing category), you are going to throw an entire ecosystem, with nearly a hundred wildlife species, under the bus. Does that, in any way, make sense?

IF ever there was a location where one must not expand human encroachment, it is here on our Kelly Creek riparian corridor. We have to turn this lethal tide of profit at the expense of our rare and irreplaceable biodiversity. The Davidon project provides the perfect opportunity to do so. Your colleagues on the Planning Commission, Darren Racusen and Blake Hooper, voted against this project, and our Climate Commissioner, Ann Edminster, spoke out against it. Please join them in denying this project on the grounds of all the imperiled special-status species and other wildlife at this site.

Thank you for your careful and intelligently-informed consideration,

Sincerely,

Moirá Sullivan, M.S.
Petaluma citizen and State of CA Scientist

1

<https://www.petrp.org/dr-shawn-smallwood-ecologist-assessment>

2

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780128211397002099>