

August 22, 2003

William M. Andersen
Foreperson
Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

RE: RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT – CASMALIA

The Grand Jury requested the Public Works Department respond to finding 3 of the subject report.

Grand Jury Finding 3: From inception, the Lompoc Casmalia Road has been an administrative quagmire. If the government agencies involved would have attacked and fixed the problem immediately, it would have cost very little in time and resources. However, the problem is now so severe that is insurmountable!

Public Works Response: The Public Works Department partially disagrees with this finding. Jurisdictional authorities are quite clear. Lompoc Casmalia Road is a county maintained road that traverses a portion of Vandenberg Air Force Base. The road includes a bridge that crosses San Antonio Creek. Although the creek is located on federal land, VAFB officials historically requested the assistance of the Santa Barbara County Flood Control District personnel to maintain the creek, as that section of the creek is on Federal Land and outside the District's Boundary. It was not until 1983, when the traditional maintenance of the creek and road forever changed. In 1983, the unarmored three spine stickleback was listed by the federal government as an endangered species and Base personnel working for the US Fish and Wildlife Service discovered the small endangered fish in this portion of San Antonio Creek. No longer was the Flood Control District asked to maintain the creek on federal land. Without creek maintenance, vegetation quickly became overgrown serving as a backstop for any sediment transported from upstream agricultural lands. The sediment has accumulated to such a degree that within just a few years the bottom of the creek matched the top of the bridge. The creek can no longer convey water under the bridge causing both water and sediment to spill onto the road in relatively minor storm events.

The Public Works Department has spent years working with local, State and Federal elected officials to resolve the flooding issues and to find a permanent fix for the Lompoc Casmalia Road Bridge. The most cost-effective solution involved clearing the creek channel to allow water to flow once again under the bridge. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), having regulatory jurisdiction, determined that there was a least

damaging environmental alternative to that of clearing the creek, that being using San Antonio Road as a detour. As such, it has been the Corps opinion that the regulations preclude the issuance of a permit to clear the creek. Without permitted ability to clear the creek, the Lompoc Casmalia Road remains closed for safety reasons.

Recommendation 3: Make the temporary barriers permanent and inform the general public of the final status.

Public Works Response: The recommendation has been implemented to make the temporary barriers permanent. The recommendation to notify the Public has not been implemented but will be after coordination with Vandenberg Air Force Base on the notification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phillip M. Demery". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "P".

Phillip M. Demery
Director of Public Works