

More Mesa

Issue 2

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More Mesa and surrounding open lands encompass about 400 acres of grassland, wetland, and coast live oak and riparian woodland. These include the level bluff top of the Mesa itself and lowland areas along Atascadero Creek on the Mesa's north edge. The heart of this open space is the 300-acre bluff top, with 35 acres owned by the County and 265 acres held privately. Forty acres of the east end of this area are planned for development of up to 70 large houses, with the remainder designated as environmentally sensitive habitat. More Mesa is located in Santa Barbara's Goleta Valley, west of Hope Ranch and about two miles east of Goleta Beach and UCSB. Access can be obtained off the south end of Patterson Avenue or from Mocking Bird Lane via Puente Drive.

More Mesa Preservation Coalition

The More Mesa Preservation Coalition (MMPC) is a broad based community group committed to the protection of the increasingly rare natural, scenic, and recreational values of More Mesa. MMPC's goals are:

- **To work cooperatively** with land owners and public agencies to preserve all of More Mesa forever ... for its habitat, recreational, and open space values;
- **To protect** the site's significant biological resources and restore degraded habitats;
- **To maintain** the Mesa's existing balance of recreational uses including horseback riding, running, mountain biking, dog walking, hiking, birding, and general appreciation of the natural setting.

The four years since our formation have seen many issues arise that affect More Mesa. MMPC is encouraged by some of these trends and alarmed by others. However, we remain steadfast in our determination to protect More Mesa's unique resources and to help interested members of the public stay informed and involved in issues affecting this precious remaining open space. Only an informed and active public can ensure that More Mesa, and its resources, will remain intact for future generations!



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Positive Trends

The population of our famed white-tailed kites appears very robust. Nesting kites successfully fledged 15 chicks in 2003 and 10 in 2004. More importantly, the 2004 count included offspring from a newly discovered nest on property adjacent to a proposed development. MMPC hopes to work with the project developer and County departments to protect this nest site so as to insure more chicks will be reared here in the future.

Citizen concern over protection of More Mesa remains strong. The ranks of MMPC supporters have expanded to over 600; up from 250 three years ago! This growth has allowed MMPC to begin habitat restoration activities and to turn out impressive citizen showings at various County hearings. Continued strong public interest in preserving the Mesa's scenic beauty, natural resources, and recreational activities is critical to the success of the MMPC's mission.

Another positive development involves MMPC's habitat restoration efforts. These include initiation of a multi-year program on County owned open space (northwest edge of More Mesa). With help from County Parks and "Growing Solutions", the Coalition's first clean up and weeding effort was a rousing success, with over 20 volunteers participating. In future years, MMPC is optimistic about securing grants to expand our activities in this area by providing interpretive and entry signs and erecting "mutt mitt" stations at main entrances.



Another MMPC goal is to educate More Mesa's neighboring homeowners by providing information about the use of native plants for gardens, and the hazards posed by invasive species. A new feature on MMPC's website provides detailed information on this issue. In addition, all homeowners directly adjacent to More Mesa received a mailing informing them of the new web feature.

"In the end, our society will be defined not only by what we create, but by what we refuse to destroy."

- John Scarlett



Recent Unfortunate Developments

Sadly, disturbing developments along More Mesa’s perimeter have offset these positive trends. Visitors have been shocked by the construction of 10 new houses along the Mesa’s northeastern edge, especially the large and unsightly two-story structures near the main coastal access trail. These and other potential developments around More Mesa’s perimeter threaten its scenic beauty and habitat values.

New developments on smaller vacant or underdeveloped parcels surrounding More Mesa could severely impact important biological or scenic resources (e.g. wetlands, specimen trees) and can be highly visible from the Mesa’s main trails. The County is under pressure to approve large “McMansions”, often two stories, on some of these parcels. *Development of all such parcels around the perimeter of More Mesa would more than double the number of structures surrounding the Mesa and fuel excessive expansion of existing modestly sized houses!* Such developments can destroy wildlife habitat on surrounding sites and forever mar scenic views from More Mesa’s unique trail system.



- Under construction or approved
- Vacant with subdivision potential
- Underdeveloped with subdivision potential
- Existing houses with potential for major remodel
- Potential for up to 70 houses on 40 acres
- More Mesa Specific Plan - 266.5 acres

The MMPC supports the rights of property owners to reasonable new development and for appropriate upgrades of existing homes. However, such new developments and major remodels must be designed to respect the sensitive ecological and scenic resources of More Mesa and the surrounding open lands. While County policy requires new development and remodels to be compatible with the neighborhood, respect natural resources and protect scenic views, such policies need to be strictly implemented and enforced to be effective.

Over the longer term, More Mesa is also threatened by the development of up to 70 large new houses on 40 acres adjacent to Hope Ranch. While no development is currently proposed, the current property owner may elect to sell the Mesa to developers seeking to build these 70 houses. The MMPC will continue to work with area property owners, developers and the County to protect More Mesa’s critical resources and will keep the public informed as development issues evolve.





Support the MMPC

Unfortunately, the County currently faces strong pressure to approve the most intensive development possible. If More Mesa's resources are to be protected over the long term, citizen support for strict enforcement of adopted policies and responsible levels of environmental protection is crucial. County officials need to know that their constituents vigorously support the protection of More Mesa. You can make a real difference by staying informed and voicing your concerns.



*Only your help can keep
More Mesa from
being overdeveloped!*



- **Sign up** to receive updates on what is happening on and around More Mesa.
- **Bookmark our web site** www.moremesa.org and check it often for updates, news and new features.
- **Make a financial contribution.** Your donation helps fund our ongoing efforts to educate the community about More Mesa, monitor events or development proposals affecting More Mesa, and move toward our goal of raising funds to preserve this beautiful site in perpetuity.

Join us in our mission to preserve More Mesa for all time, and for all future generations! Please contact us at the address below to become part of this vision. MMPC maintains a confidential database of supporters who want to stay informed about More Mesa, and publishes periodic newsletters summarizing important events. Together, we can make a difference!

Special Thanks

Over the years, the generosity of many people and organizations have allowed us to carry on with our work. Contributions from individual donors help with the day-to-day activities. Additionally, major funding from grantors supports very special events; the More Mesa Symposium at UCSB, Earth Day, restoration projects, and the creation and maintenance of our outstanding web site. Most particularly, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the Shoreline Preservation Fund, whose generous grant has enabled us to create and distribute this newsletter.



More Mesa Preservation Coalition

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Photos courtesy Morgan Ball, Mark Bright, William B. Dewey, Valerie Olson, and Lynn Watson.