

Greetings,

Blackwater USA's (BWUSA's) wants to build a Training Facility in the rural community of Potrero - designated with the County as P06-069 Blackwater West Training Facility Project.

My name is Jan Hedlun and I am the newest Planning Group member, as of November 2006, and the only Planning Group member against the proposed BWUSA facility. This is not a position I recommend for any newcomer into a political venue.

I have been given a great deal of information and asked by community members to speak for the community members **AGAINST BLACKWATER USA IN POTRERO.**

The majority of Potrero's population is against this venture, illustrated by a petition presented to the County of San Diego with 320 signatures from an 800 plus population that has only 400 some registered voters. Forgive me for not having the exact figures for population and registered voters. Eight out of nine Planning Group members voted for it in December 2007, **which does not** reflect the community viewpoint of **No On Blackwater!**

Potrero residents do not want Blackwater in Potrero due to the negative impact it would have on the health, safety and the character of this rural hamlet.

- Blackwater's proposal is to purchase 824 acres and install a Training facility in an agriculturally zoned area that borders BLM land, private property, and is inclusive of California National Forest.
- This would require the cancellation of an Agricultural Preserve Permit of a designated Agricultural area.
- Groundwater issues in an area notoriously depleted during droughts (drought being an ongoing situation documented by various groups), is predominant.
 - Estimated water use is 10 million gallons a year.
 - Potential pollution from septic issues could contaminate groundwater. Potrero residents rely on wells.
 - Pollution from diesel fuel, gasoline, oil, aircraft fuel would increase.
 - Emissions, in the air, produced by spent bullets will drift outside of BWUSA's berm system and will rest on surrounding foliage and ground to be swept into the groundwater system during rainy season.

NOTE: The proposed area has designated wetlands. Rainwater flowing through McAlmond Canyon and Cottonwood Creek enters the Tijuana River that flows to the Pacific Ocean.

- Estimated septic production is 6.5 million gallons a year handled by five septic tanks.
- Noise from the proposed shooting ranges and driving track, operating day and night, would be continually disruptive to resident's who moved to Potrero to escape noise, crowding and pollution.
 - Although time restraints are being promised (approximately 9:00 am to 5:00 pm with *some* firing going on until evening), residents adjacent to the Moyock, North Carolina and Mount Carroll, Illinois facility said those promises made to them have not been kept.
 - 500 to 530 rounds of ammunition (it has not been stated if that is during the week or daily) will be issued per student.

- 300 students firing, during a four to five day class schedule, in 8 to 10 rifle ranges and 2 to 3 pistol ranges.
- There will be several live-fire multi-level and single-level shoot houses at the proposed facility and no safety information or noise level information has been provided to residents. A primary complaint from the surrounding residents of the new Blackwater North facility in Mount Carroll, Illinois is stray bullets escaping into the surrounding area and private properties.
- Although the proposed Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (NPEIR) states that there would be *No Impact of Air Quality to sensitive receptors*, two Chemically Sensitive residents live adjacent to the proposed project and have been informed, by their physician, that this facility would be fatal to their health; even fatal.
- A larger Chemically Sensitive enclave exists in Potrero – all of these residents moved to this area due to the clean air and limited pollution. Emissions from vehicles, the driving track, ammunition, fuel, et al, will seriously disrupt and endanger their health and the health of others in the community who came to Potrero for their health.
- Endangered species listed in Appendix C of the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) for Potrero include, and are not limited to Stephen's Kangaroo Rat, Least Bell's Vireo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Orange-throated Whiptail, and San Diego Horned Lizard. The NPEIR identifies turkey vulture, white-tailed kite, loggerhead shrike and Southern California rufous-crowned sparrows.
- The Arroyo Toad and California Gnatcatcher have been documented within the Potrero environ.
- Plants listed in Appendix C of the ACEC for Potrero include, and are not limited to Payson's Jewelflower (*Caulanthus simulans*) and Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *parryi*). The NPEIR also identifies the Tecate Tar, Sticky Geranium, Rush Chaparral-Star and Engelmann Oak.

NOTE: From Appendix C of the ACEC: *“Because of Potrero Valley's importance to federally listed and candidate species, the area is proposed for designation as an ACEC/RNA.*

NOTE: The NPEIR states that *additional surveys are still required for spring plant species and several sensitive and/or listed species.*

- Three (3) Golden Eagle nests are located approximately within 3,500 feet of the site. Arguments are that the eagles will remain in the area in spite of the daily firearm usage. A primary complaint from the surrounding residents of the new Blackwater North facility in Mount Carroll, Illinois is stray bullets escaping into the surrounding area and private properties.
- There are designated voluntary and seasonal general climbing restrictions and closures in various areas around the United States in regards to raptors; disturbances that is far less disruptive than daily gunfire. www.accessfund.org
- According to the NPEIR: *indirect impacts from increased noise associated with firing ranges would affect wildlife use within a total of 172.1 acres consisting of 31.4 acres on-site and 140.7 acres off-site. Elevated daytime noise during training would impact 163.9 acres of granitic northern mixed chaparral (23.2 acres on-site, 140.7 acres off-site) and 2.7 acres of non-native grassland on site.*
- The current mapped habitats in Potrero include: granitic northern mixed chaparral, southern coast live oak riparian forest, open coast live oak woodland, open Engelmann oak woodland, non-native grassland, alkali meadow, disturbed wetland, and open water.
- The commercial designation for Potrero is along Highway 94, not three miles away in a secluded agricultural valley.

- The proposed facility would include 60 staff members (35 of which would be part-time) and 300 students. 200 of these students are designated to stay in the facility during the 4 to 5 day training period while 100 would commute daily.
- There has been a consistent intimation to the community that the majority of these 60 jobs will be for Potrero residents, yet this assurance cannot hold true if BWUSA opened its doors for employment, as others in the surrounding areas of Tecate, Campo, Barrett, Dulzura, Jacumba and San Diego may have superior qualifications and experience.
- The increase in traffic from this proposed facility (90 average daily trips not including school buses, residents, UPS/FEDEX delivery vehicles, County Park employees, commuters and more) would include:
 - Construction (initially)
 - Vans, bus transport and personal vehicles transporting students to and from the proposed facility on Sunday, Thursday and Friday, plus daily commuters.
 - Gasoline delivery vehicles to fill the storage tank for the proposed two mile tactical driving track endangers public safety.
 - Ammunition delivery vehicles for the proposed facility endanger public safety.
 - Food and supply delivery vehicles.

NOTE: All of these vehicles would share the narrow roads with school buses, residents, bicycles, horseback riders and students (from Elementary School age to High School), walking or riding their skateboards home after school.

- Initial trip distribution would be 80% to/from the west along SR94 and 20% to/from the east (presumably from I-8 and Buckman Springs Road). This increases traffic that includes residents and the increased truck and vehicle traffic from Tecate, Mexico.
- There is increasing truck and commuter traffic on SR94 from Tecate, Mexico that does not appear to have been taken into consideration.
- The proposed 400 diameter helicopter pad exceeds the indications that BWUSA representative Brian Bonfiglio made that "only emergency helicopters would be utilizing this facility." Potrero is within a known helicopter corridor and community members feel usage would increase beyond Bonfiglio's statement (i.e, BWUSA officials, government officials, visitors using helicopter transport versus SR94).
- Although BWUSA has offered their proposed facility as a "defensible location" for firefighters during wildfires, area residents have stated they would not flee to a box canyon with one access point and feel safe.

NOTE: *The Draft Fire Protection Plan from Jim Hunt strongly indicates secondary access would not be needed and likely create additional fire hazard. Defend-in-place is the preferred and recommended alternative to secondary access. Rural Fire District Chief supports defend-in-place recommendation.* (From BWUSA's 10/23/06 Project Issue/Action Items).

- It is noted in the NPEIR that *twenty-one new cultural sites and four isolates have been surveyed on-site. 10 prehistoric sites will be included within biological open space and no further testing of these sites will be required.*
- An adjacent property owner has designated Native American ceremonial land and feels that the proposed facility imposes on the Religious Freedom Act.

NOTE: As a surprise to Potrero community members:

- The County has instituted a Fast-Track system (with BWUSA as its pilot project) that is reported to be a 21 to 22 month project versus the normal 4 to 5 year program historically required for a Major Use Permit.
- Potrero residents were first made aware of the Blackwater issue with a Potrero Hotline (local newsletter) notification and one posted Agenda 72 hours prior to the October 2006 Planning Group Meeting. Brian Bonfiglio gave a presentation which included 9 members of the Planning Group and 11 members of the community. Also, Stephanie Saathoff – Carpe and Clay, Nicole Bonfiglio (Brian’s wife), Lance Manthey (moral support), Alyssa N. Maxxson – DPLU Planning Manager, Greg Krysz – DPLU Project Manager – Biologist – SME – ERI reviewer, and Russ Hunt from Mooney Jones & Stokes.
- In December 2006 at the end of the second Planning Group Meeting on BWUSA, seven out of the nine Planning Group members (two absent) voted to approve BWUSA in Potrero. Very few Potrero residents were aware of what BWUSA represented and were not given any time to give their input and, to this day, feel railroaded by the majority of the Planning Group and the County of San Diego.
- The Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report dated March 29, 2007 comes only 5 months into the proposed project with the Public Scoping Meeting on April 5, 2007 and the final date for public response is April 27, 2007; leaving residents very little time to voice their disapproval.
- Although Diane Jacobs has been very vocal against the Jamul Indian Reservation Casino, citing the very same arguments that Potrero residents are vocalizing, she has remained quiescent on the topic of BWUSA in Potrero.
- In an article published in the East County Californian it states that: “Lori Spar was listed with the California Bar Association as an attorney with the law firm of Stephenson Worley et al, a San Diego law firm representing Blackwater, on July 31, 2006. Now Spar has surfaced as a land use/environmental planner for the DPLU.”
- In the same article it states that: “A July 31, 2006 memo from Bonfiglio sent to “attorney Lori Spar” and others, however, invited Spar to an August 3rd meeting at Nasland Engineering for an agenda that included a “potential fatal flaw discussion” of the Blackwater West project in Potrero.” Potrero residents **did not** find out about this project until October.
- Many Potrero residents feel that Blackwater West, or any facility similar to BWUSA would be more suited to one of the many defunct military bases or an area further from residential populations with significantly less environmental impacts.
- One last point mentioned by a community member – although BWUSA has stated that no training of foreign individuals will occur without the Department of State involvement, residents feel that this facility would make Potrero a target of Terrorism in some form or another.

BWUSA has totally disrupted the lives of Potrero residents and the facility isn’t even here. The few individuals that are for BWUSA’s presence in Potrero view those against as the “opposition” and pitched verbal and email battles have ensued. These are neighbors, friends, people who have worked side-by-side for the common good of the community and outside interests. This division within the community is disruptive and stressful to all concerned.

Potrero residents have been told many things that resemble promises. We've been told that we will have someone to go to *if* BWUSA does not follow the rules and guidelines established for their habitation within our community. The very things Potrero residents fear have already occurred in Moyock, North Carolina and Mount Carroll, Illinois. Potrero residents do not want to fight after-the-fact in court. Community members want me to repeat that some residents are already ill from the stress this issue has created.

In the words and as the voice of the majority of Potrero: **We do not want Blackwater to establish itself in the Potrero community.**

Thank you for your time.

Jan M. Hedlun
Potrero Planning Group Elected Official
For the Potrero Community Members Against Blackwater West in Potrero
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