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The Little Hidden Creek

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

My name is Michael McGrady, and I live on Hidden Creek Drive in San Juan Capistrano.

When we discuss the dangers of this proposed lithium battery facility, understand that for me, it's not a theoretical risk on a map.

I live at ground zero.

My home, my family, and our lives are closer to this threat than anyone. At only 800 feet away, when they talk about the facility's hazardous footprint, they're talking about my front yard.

And this isn't just about my property. When ENGIE North America's application specifically identifies single-family residences on Hidden Creek Drive as '*sensitive areas*,' they are talking about my friends and neighbors. They're talking about the large home just across Oso Creek, home to international missionaries from Joshua Generation Church. They're talking about the Dominican Sisters convent, two doors down from me, the selfless women who teach at JSerra Catholic High School. They're talking about our bright neighborhood school kids, newborn infants, grandparents, small business owners. This threat impacts our entire community.

It's an honor to represent this truly special community, a community that trusts me to voice our shared concerns and fight for their collective safety in my role as the Hidden Creek HOA president.

Hidden Creek...before this project made the location so notorious, ***it was just a hidden creek.***

Oso Creek was once a hidden waterway, a quiet tributary that meandered into the San Juan River and then onward to Dana Point and the open sea.

Yet, very close to this tranquil waterway lies vital community resources:

The Groves, an affordable senior living complex. The **Silverado Memory Care Community**, focused entirely on supporting individuals with dementia.

Moreover, still within less-than a mile's reach, around 1,000 horses reside in various stables, among them **The Shea Therapeutic Riding Center**. This half-century-old nonprofit provides therapeutic horse-related programs for children and adults with disabilities, including support for combat veterans with PTSD.

My neighbors, the Dominican Sisters, walk along Camino Capistrano, just above Oso Creek, on their way to **JSerra Catholic High School**. There, the sisters and staff are charged with the wellbeing of *over 1,500 students, faculty, staff, and visitors* who are located on campus at any given time. Downwind, along the same waterway, lies Fairmont School, empowering, teaching and caring for children from preschool to 8th grade.

The Compass project's advocates present themselves as the adult voices, claiming to empathize with our concerns while simultaneously invalidating them as the worries of frightened children.

But this isn't about difficulty grasping complex ideas or misunderstanding their profit intent. Our perspective is the careful conclusions of adult minds that rigorously relies on verifiable facts, ensuring our understanding aligns with objective reality.

The facts are that:

Both the company and the industry's lobbying group continue to practice misdirection.

Rather than pursuing higher standards for operations and equipment safety, the California Energy Storage Alliance dismisses recent fires and evacuations as strange anomalies. They are too busy promoting the next installation and opposing any attempts at legislation designed to improve safety.

ENGIE continues to promote that the LFP batteries planned for this site as practically immune to thermal runaway – they are not.

When they recently were asked in a public forum about toxins released during that unlikely thermal runaway event, ENGIE suggested the toxins were limited to carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide, conveniently omitting the highly toxic hydrogen fluoride.

And if the batteries were truly immune, why then does ENGIE's own application detail explosion control systems, with 12 electronic igniters throughout each battery compartment, there to ignite and release flammable toxic gases, through 26 vents in the roof?

Further critical facts to be considered:

Immediately below us are 12 lanes of Interstate 5, one of the nation's most heavily traveled roadways, with an average daily traffic volume exceeding 415,000 vehicles.

Adjacent are two rail lines forming part of the vital Los Angeles–San Diego corridor, which transports over \$1 billion in freight annually throughout Southern California and handles 2.4 million Metrolink passenger boardings each year in Orange County.

Flanking these major transportation arteries are Rancho Viejo Road and Camino Capistrano Road.

Now, imagine if, as occurred recently in Moss Landing, California, all of this critical infrastructure was shut down, and evacuation orders were issued.

As site commander, you now must evacuate all seniors living in nearby apartments, dementia patients who won't understand the abrupt and chaotic retreat from their homes, the 2,000 plus grade school and high school students and staff must be evacuated while fielding panic calls from their parents, then evacuating my and my neighbor's families, shutting down nearby businesses and now relocating over 1,000 horses.

As Rich Meyer, president of JSerra High School has said, ***“A mass evacuation during a school day would be nothing less than calamitous.”***

And what about our gentle, little, hidden Oso Creek?

At the recent Escondido, California lithium battery fire, Cal Fire estimated that crews used 8 million gallons of water to cool adjacent battery containers, none of that meant to actually extinguish flames.

To envision an equal 8 million gallons of water for the inevitable Compass battery fire, it is a ***10 ft wall of water, 20 ft wide, and a mile long***, flowing down our little hidden creek, carrying the toxic runoff past our homes, past schools, past senior care facilities, and into the blue Pacific Ocean.