

Andrea Vachss  
3305 Melendy Drive  
San Carlos, CA 94070

December 3, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

My street is adjacent to Devonshire Canyon in San Carlos, CA. In 1970, a horrific fire in Devonshire Canyon came within 100 yards of homes on my block, which was used as a staging area for the fire departments fighting the blaze. Earlier this year, our fire chief stated publicly that the danger is even worse now. As 20-year resident of the Devonshire Canyon area, I continue to observe numerous occurrences and conditions that have the potential to cause another wildfire in the canyon. My neighbors and I have major concerns over the proliferation of extremely dry brush, of longstanding neglect in managing the vegetation, and of other hazardous situations we've encountered that could easily lead to disaster.

Although we have had some success in getting public attention to address mitigation in other areas nearby, Devonshire Canyon is particularly problematic due to the overlapping jurisdictions responsible for fire response and prevention. When we contact local government, including a fire marshal, we are told that the multiple jurisdictions in the Canyon – involving two cities and the County of San Mateo – make it difficult if not impossible for any agency either to act unilaterally on what is clearly a hazard, or even to coordinate with another agency toward this end.

During the driest period of the year, we and our neighbors live in constant fear that someone will start a fire by tossing a cigarette from a vehicle or during a hike, or by setting off illegal fireworks or firecrackers, or by allowing winds to spread embers from an unprotected barbecue. We have observed these activities, in and near dried out brush, repeatedly. The 1970 Devonshire Canyon fire started from a single cigarette butt.

There are hundreds of single-family homes and townhouses situated along the rim and adjoining Devonshire Canyon, and it is my sincere hope that the State of California can provide the encouragement and financial support to perform major vegetation removal and to provide other wildfire safeguards and warning mechanisms. While my neighbors and I are in the early stages of forming a hillside residents association, please be assured that we are ready now to call on our respective local governments to work cooperatively on any state-supported initiative aimed at preventing a wildfire emergency. And we believe that this is an ideal project to be overseen by the FireSAFE San Mateo County Council, which can coordinate with the various jurisdictions in ways that currently are not happening.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Andrea', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

Andrea Vachss