

October 16, 2018

Letter to Yavapai County, Tammy DeWitt from Karin Reid Offield/former owner/builder of El Rojo Grande Ranch

Dear Tammy and the Board of Supervisors of Yavapai County-

Please say no to a change of Zoning for El Rojo Grande Ranch

As the previous owner of El Rojo Grand Ranch, I am very interested in what is happening there, and would like to receive every available update. Over the many years on the Ranch, I gained a lot of vital experience about how that land can best be managed, and I want to share all of that experience with the Yavapai County Planning Department during this public process.

MY CONTACT INFORMATION: My email is elrojograndeanchinsedona@gmail.com

The website is www.elrojograndesedona.com

THE PROPERTY: Located alongside State Route 89A, just outside of Sedona, the Ranch's unique and spectacular red rock outcropping has become the welcoming landmark to visitors entering Sedona through its western Gateway, and a last view of the striking red rocks for visitors leaving through that same Gateway. The view of the Ranch is so spectacular that Sedona's hot air balloon companies launch from Dry Creek Road, to fly visitors over the Ranch and its red rocks every morning. It would be a tragedy to see this iconic landmark surrounded by a sea of mobile homes. That spectacular view, remembered and talked about by so many Sedona visitors, would just become an example to visitors of how one of Sedona's most beautiful places was destroyed by a high-density development.

THE ROAD IT ADJOINS AND INDIAN ARTIFACTS: State Route 89A is known as the *Dry Creek Scenic Road*. It's piñon and juniper covered hills on each side, and its many washes and traces of water tributaries, create a beautiful and serene drive into Sedona for all arriving visitors - with no stoplights to break the spell. It's like a ribbon of greenery with piñon covered hills on each side, with many washes and traces of water tributaries aside the roadways. No wonder many Native Americans made this land their home, as is evidenced by the many artifacts found on the Ranch.

HOW WE PURCHASED THE LAND AND ALREADY INVOLVED GOVERNMENT GOVERNING BODY: The United States Forest Service does not trade land easily. Jim Offield and I worked together with the United States Forest Service to create the assemblage of land that is now called El Rojo Grande Ranch. When we asked to trade other parcel islands within Forest Service land for the one parcel along Highway 89A, we were challenged by the local community. They did not want that land alongside the beautiful gateway into Sedona developed.

We worked hard to reassure the Sedona community (and the Forest Service) that the Ranch would be good stewards of that beautiful land, and that we would not allow the pristine beauty of our Ranch (including the land that the Forest Service eventually entrusted to us) to be destroyed by development. We knew that we would build no buildings, or do no harm on that parcel alongside the Highway.

THE WATER AND SEWER ISSUES:I am also concerned about the huge amount of groundwater that will be pumped out of the limestone aquifer, to supply this enormous and densely populated mobile home park. When ground water is extracted, it dries up the riparian areas above it. An even greater problem is the huge amount of effluent (and street run-off) that will be either dumped into the fragile riparian habitats that run through the heart of the Ranch, or will be pumped down into injection wells. Those injection wells will likely contaminate the cave-perforated Limestone aquifer below. Water flowing through those underground caves is not filtered, allowing contaminants to flow on to downstream users, such as people in Page Springs area, who draw all of their water from the aquifer.

THE FRAGILE LAND OF THE RIPARIAN CORRIDOR AND RIVER DAMAGE:I have personally seen historic torrents of water unleashed, which roar down Dry Creek, and flood widely over the adjacent riparian areas. I have seen those enormous flows carry large trees and debris down the creek, which turn bridges into dams. A very recent example I learned about was the torrent that roared down the creek just a few weeks ago on October 2nd of this year. It backed up behind (and overtopped!) the 14-foot-high bridge in Sunset Hills - just downstream from the Ranch. The ELS answer to this is to construct two or three enormous 55-foot wide, 350-foot long concrete bridges high over the creek. That bridge (and two other bridges in the ELS plan) will devastate the riparian habitats that meander through the heart of the Ranch.

WWW.ELROJOGRANDESEDONA.COM: I have built this website for all of you... and for all visitors that love Sedona and the Northern Arizona lands. I will ask all our neighbors, friends, ranchers, shop owners, politicians, tourism experts, worldwide guests, retail leaders, and the sons and daughters of our Verde Valley founders to send in letters saying **NO to a Yavapai County rezoning**, in order to protect what we value in Sedona - the ranch lands and the rural character of the Dry Creek Scenic Road, and the western gateway into Sedona. My website will describe, portray and illustrate more than this one letter can convey.

WHY TO SAY NO: We are being called upon to decide how to develop this last, greatest, pristine private land resource in the Sedona area. There are environmentally sensitive developers who could turn this Ranch into an international center for the arts or more that will draw people from around the world to enjoy what we have here in Sedona. Or we can turn it into an enormous mobile home park.

WHAT IS AT STAKE: People come from around the world to see the beauty that is Sedona, and they are pleased when they hear how we plan to preserve it for future generations. The manner in which we develop El Rojo Grande Ranch will tell them whether those are just words, or whether we are truly committed to that long-term goal. The international reputations of Sedona and the Verde Valley are at stake here. We can either allow this huge

mobile home park to replace the pristine beauty of El Rojo Grande Ranch, or we can wait for a more environmentally sensitive development that could make the Ranch a great asset to the Sedona area. Then the 200-year-old junipers who have been growing on the Ranch since before the white man came to Sedona, could go on living for another 200 years - instead of being lost forever.

WHO THE DEVELOPMENT WILL EFFECT: The Sedona City Council has spoken with a unanimous voice. The residents of the Sedona area should be allowed to have the future that they have committed themselves to, and not be overruled by developers who are based outside the area. **In my opinion, this is the time to decide the big idea, the wake-up call that will stop this type of development to be developed up and down the corridors between our small towns. If Yavapai County allows this manufactured home/apartments development to proceed, we will ask ourselves, then, how did this happen?**

THE POTENTIAL HARM:A huge mobile home park would put an ugly and unfortunate landmark alongside the gateway into Sedona. It will then become a symbol of our community's future, and it will be cited by future developers who submit similar rezoning requests. High-density housing communities like this are not appropriate for this area. They will adversely impact our water resources, worsen our traffic problems, and strain our already overtaxed infrastructure. You cannot unpave paradise, and we will be left asking ourselves "How did we let this happen?"

HOW CAN WE THE PUBLIC STOP THE DEVELOPMENT ? The PUBLIC citizenry in Arizona has the power to define our future, each of us has now the experience to understand that this designed development will change the entrance of Sedona, and cause a snowball effect on our water, our sewers, our traffic, our infrastructure, our life in Sedona, FOREVER. The Yavapai. County Comprehensive Plan

Please Yavapai County, say NO to a change in zoning that will allow this huge, sprawling mobile home park to be put down over one of the last gems of Sedona.

Sincerely, Karin Offield
Former Owner/Builder

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To contact me with questions, please email me:elrojograndeanchinsedona@gmail.com