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## Local Environmentalists Sue County Over Santa Barbara Ranch Project

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By **Sonia Fernandez**, Noozhawk Staff Writer

The groups challenge the proposed development, calling the necessary rezoning of land 'inappropriate.'

Local environmental groups on Thursday announced that they were launching a lawsuit against [Santa Barbara County](#), challenging the county's approval of the recently approved [Santa Barbara Ranch](#) project.

The legal action is another skirmish in a series of fights over the Gaviota property, which encompasses more than 3,000 acres from the coastal and historic Naples townsite to the foothills of the adjacent Dos Pueblos Ranch. Local environmental groups for years have dedicated their efforts to keeping this mostly agricultural area free from residential development.



In October, after a decade of conferences with developer Matt Osgood and the environmentalists discussing plans for a luxury enclave on the Gaviota Coast, the county [Board of Supervisors](#) voted 3-2 ([Salud Carbajal](#) and [Janet Wolf](#) dissenting) to approve a plan that would put 71 7,500- to 10,000-square-foot homes on 3,200 acres, while dedicating 2,600 of those acres into an agricultural easement.

Groups such as the [Naples Coalition](#) and the [Gaviota Coast Conservancy](#) fought at nearly every step of the process.

The environmental groups claim that "such rezoning (of agricultural lands) and large-scale development is inappropriate for open space coastal lands located far from any other urban development."

Recently, the [California Coastal Commission](#) rejected the county's Notice of Final Action on the coastal section of the project, claiming the document was "deficient."

The lawsuit was filed in the Superior Court of Santa Barbara County and names Santa Barbara County and the Board of Supervisors as respondents. The project applicants and landowners are also named in the lawsuit, as Real Parties in Interest.

In addition to filing the lawsuit, representatives from the Naples Coalition, the [Environmental Defense Center](#) and the [Surfrider Foundation](#) said that they intend to appeal the county's approval to the California Coastal Commission.

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