

**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO
HEALTH COMMISSION**

Public Comment from Special Meeting

Wednesday, May 27, 2020 (Virtual)

Public Comment 1 of 2:

From Eric Greening

Hello!

It is come to my attention that a special meeting of your commission has been called for this evening. I would like to encourage your commission to support locally-based planning and self-determination to the maximum extent feasible, given the much greater thought and study that went into the County's "START Framework" (now inactivated due to state pre-emption) for cautious, step-by-step emergence from "Stay-at-home" compared to the state's plan. The psychological impact of protracted "Stay-at-home" orders on everyone from children long-denied seeing their friends to elders experiencing isolation is as much of a health issue as the viral risk that supposedly drives such policies. I would call your attention to a study published in The Lancet, entitled "The Psychological Impact of Quarantine and How to Reduce It." Protracted quarantines with indeterminate goals have particularly dire consequences. In that connection, while the County's START Framework allowed restrained socializing as businesses reopened, the state's plan defers the end of "Stay at Home" orders until Phase Four, even though such businesses as bars and tattoo parlors open during Phase Three. Are we to believe that visiting an isolated relative or friend is more risky than going to a bar? I support allowing socializing in small numbers among people who KNOW each other (for ease in contact tracing if needed) in the earliest possible phases of our reopening plan, with incentives for the socializing to occur outdoors, given the considerably lessened risk of viral transmission outdoors compared to indoors.

Covid-19 science is brand new and just emerging, but the studies that point to the wisdom of encouraging people to be outdoors as much as possible come from two countries in which the pandemic peaked early: China and Japan. Both appear in "Med Rx iv." The Chinese study is entitled "Indoor Transmission of SARS-CoV-2" and the Japanese study is entitled "Closed Environments Facilitate Secondary Transmission of Coronavirus Disease" Both indicate that the risk of transmission is orders of magnitude less outdoors than indoors. The WHO Scientific Brief "Modes of Transmission of Virus Containing Covid-19: Implications for IPC Precaution Recommendations" also points to a lack of airborne transmission. In other words, for people to be sharing outdoor space, whether passing each other on a trail or dining al fresco, is far safer than most routine indoor gatherings, especially when the latter subject one to contact with surfaces that could be virally contaminated. The county should support efforts such as that of the City of San Luis Obispo to add to the outdoor space available for dining and strolling, and should look to allowing outdoor jobs, shopping, and dining before allowing their indoor counterparts. It is also clearly counterproductive to close outdoor parks and common spaces, even if a few people might be observed not socially distancing there. Closure only adds to the crowding pressure on the open spaces that remain to people. We don't treat other public commons by punishing the innocent. Speeding is dangerous, and can lethally endanger non-speeders. That doesn't lead to closure to all users of any highway on which some people speed; the speeding itself is addressed, not the place it happens.

Frankly, some public policies seem driven more by panic than by science. Skeptics of policies intended to address Covid-19 are not necessarily anti-science in the same way as are deniers of human agency in climate change. Peer-reviewed climate science has been accumulating for decades, while Covid-19 science is brand new. Many of the policies being implemented in supposed response to Covid-19 depend not on data but on MODELS, which are notoriously vulnerable to inaccuracy if even one variable is mischaracterized or ignored.

Although I would encouraging incentives for people to occupy whatever outdoor space can be safely opened, this encouragement does not extend to vehicular recreation, due to the particulate pollutants the activity generates. I reference the study from Harvard's Department of Biostatistics and the T. H. Chan School of

Public Health: "Exposure to Air Pollution and COVID-19 Mortality in the United States." While actual viral transmission via particulates is not documented, outcomes of the disease among those exposed to the virus are far more dire in areas subject to significant particulate pollution. I would urge that the County, for at least the duration of the declared emergency, close the La Grande Tract (which is county-owned) to all vehicular use, thereby protecting the most emissive area of the ODSVRA from destabilization of the sand; doing so could save lives among those living downwind.

I would also support efforts, joining with other counties if need be, to influence, pressure, or confront the State in seeking maximum possible local self-determination based on local conditions. In Dr. Borenstein we have a true and conscientious professional who has steered a prudent course avoiding the extremes of panic-driven endless lockdown on the one hand, and heedless swift reopening on the other. I would far rather trust her, and our local decision-makers, than a governor addicted to rule by decree (he showed autocratic tendencies before the viral emergency washed over us, as evidenced by his insistence on approving PG&E's bankruptcy plan, even though no law gives him that authority), and believe that your commission can play an indispensable role in monitoring our local response to evolving conditions and in helping direct our responses and policies going forward.

Many thanks, and STAY WELL!!

Eric Greening

Public Comment 1 of 2:

From Nell Langford

Please close La Grande Tract to vehicular use. A recent Harvard University study, shows that the detrimental health impact of Covid-19 is greater on those whose air quality is diminished by particulate matter. When health in this manner is threatened, the California Coastal Commission, in an amendment to its coastal permit, recommended that SLO County use its police powers to enact a temporary moratorium on vehicular activity in the ODSVRA.

That time to act is now. The APCD conducted studies that show the increased PM is a secondary effect of the crust breaking action of vehicles. San Luis Obispo is the only county in the state having coastal dunes where there is a health danger downwind. We are the only county whose coastal dunes, especially those in La Grande Tract, are ravaged by vehicular activity. The dangerously high levels of particulate matter will continue until the dune crust heals. In the present health crisis, please do not continue our county's historical preference for off-road recreation over protecting the health of its citizens. We cannot go backwards. Do not open those gates.

Nell Langford