Suit filed over North River Farms
Nonprofit says project would reduce public safety, harm environment

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The nonprofit Preserve Calavera announced Friday it has filed a lawsuit challenging Oceanside's approval last month of North River Farms, a 585-home development proposed for the city's rural Morro Hills area.

The lawsuit says an inadequate environmental impact analysis was done for the project, and that the development would reduce public safety, increase greenhouse gases and bring the permanent loss of more than 150 acres of prime farmland.

"We have long referred to this as the 'egregious North River Farms Project,'" said Diane Nygaard, president of Preserve Calavera, in a news release. "It represents the worst kind of sprawl development, placing dense housing where it was not planned, where there is inadequate infrastructure, and where the local community ends up paying a high price."

Ninia Hammond, project manager for the developer Integral Communities, said Friday afternoon she had not been notified of the lawsuit and declined to comment.

The development also fails to follow the Climate Action Plan adopted by Oceanside in May 2019, Nygaard said in her news release.

The lawsuit alleges that North River Farms relies too heavily on programs that allow the developer to purchase carbon credits outside the city instead of reducing greenhouse gases within the project.

North River Farms is a planned community designed to capitalize on the region's farming history by incorporating an agricultural theme. It would have neighborhood gardens available to residents, a farmers market, different types of housing in separate "villages," and a commercial core with a restaurant, brewery or both, and space for offices, retail shops and community activities.

Preserve Calavera is an all-volunteer North County organization that has successfully fought a number of development projects in the area.

A settlement in 2013 of legal action filed against Carlsbad over its approval of the Quarry Creek development along state Route 78 near the Oceanside border resulted in the developer donating 60 acres for a community park and open space in the Village H area of Calavera Hills.

More recently, Preserve Calavera was part of a lawsuit against Carlsbad over its General Plan update. That settlement in 2017 required city to set aside additional property for habitat preserves and created the 3.1-acre Buena Vista Reservoir Park now under construction.

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