1-5-15

Mayor and Supervisors
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
500 W. Temple St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Request for Full Planning Commission Hearing - Chiquita Canyon Landfill
Master Plan Revision Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) [Project No. R2004-00559-(5)] – Please include this correspondence in the administrative record for this project.

Honorable Mayor Antonovich and Supervisors:

SCOPE joins with other community groups in requesting that a full public hearing with all Regional Planning Commissioners present be granted before the Final Environmental Impact Report is released.

This request is made due to the absence of any commissioner at the July 31, 2014 public hearing on the DEIR which took place in Castaic, CA. Even the Commissioner representing the 5th District, where the landfill is located, failed to attend.

Background
Chiquita Canyon Landfill is currently located on Highway 126 immediately adjacent to the historic community of Val Verde. Although the residents of this community were promised that the landfill would be closed in 2019, a new proposal to expand Chiquita Canyon Landfill, if granted, will instead make this landfill one of the largest in the nation, tripling truck traffic and adding to unresolved odor violations and other concerns.

The Regional Planning Commission held a hearing in the community before a hearing examiner on July 31st last year. Nearly one hundred community members attended the July hearing and provided testimonials recounting health issues and suffering due to the landfill gasses and odors produced by the Chiquita Canyon Landfill at its current size. They made comments on the EIR and spoke out against an expansion, but no Commissioners were present to hear these concerns.

Unfair Process
Community members learned only recently that no hearing would be held before the Commissioners during the draft period of the EIR, but only on the Final EIR. We object that this is not a fair process. The hearing examiner does not make the decision and waiting until the final EIR to hear the community is too late.
While the community was promised that the Commissioners “would read the transcripts” of this hearing, that procedure does not allow the Commissioners to ask questions or make changes while the project is still in its draft stages.

This expansion will have substantial impacts on all adjacent communities, especially Val Verde, as well as affecting air quality in the entire Santa Clarita Valley, an area already known for its poor air quality and failure to meet federally required ozone levels. The community deserves to be heard before the full Commission so that these issues can be addressed rather than rushing the project to approval.

The Commission often hears such minor issues as alcohol and parking permits. We cannot understand why this huge project would not be afforded a full hearing before the Commission at the draft EIR stage. We find this especially puzzling in light of the deference and multiple hearings held when the County proposed a landfill in Elsmere Canyon. One must therefore ask if this process could be biased, based on the minority composition of the adjacent community.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is designed to ensure that the public has the opportunity to bring problems and concerns to the planning agency so that they can be resolved in the planning process. Eliminating the hearing before the Commissioners during the draft stage while there is still time to make changes, deprives both the Agency and the public of this important opportunity to create better and more informed planning options.

We therefore ask that you direct the Regional Planning Department to hold a hearing on the Draft EIR for this project.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Lynne Plambeck,
President