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## PRESS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SIERRA CLUB FILES LEGAL CHALLENGE TO FAIRBANKS RANCH POLO FIELDS EXCLUSIVE LEASE AND TERMINATION AGREEMENT**

#### **Removal of Lease Restrictions by City Endangers River Valley Resources, Limits Public Access**

San Diego – Sierra Club filed a California Environmental Quality (CEQA) lawsuit Friday challenging the San Diego City Council’s approval of a Grant Deed Termination Agreement and 28-year exclusive lease to Surf Cup that removed all protective restrictions on lands dedicated to the City as open space through a grant deed.

Commonly known as the Polo Fields, the 114 acres falls within the San Dieguito River Valley flood plain. The City was granted the land in 1983 as a condition of approval of the Fairbanks Ranch Country Club Specific Plan Amendment, with explicit conditions to maintain the lands as open space for the public.

“These lands were never meant for private or commercial exploitation. They were meant for everyone -the community, for nature, and for future generations,” said Pam Heatherington Sierra Club’s representative to the San Dieguito River Valley

The lawsuit cites several reasons the lease revisions require environmental review, including impacts on natural resources, public safety and equitable access.

“The City Council must uphold its prior promise to its electorate—that the Affected Lands would be dedicated for open space uses. Furthermore, the City is legally bound to implement promised mitigation measures under CEQA and state law.” Said Attorney for Sierra Club Isabella Coye.

Also opposed to the City Council action are the Cities of Solana Beach and Del Mar, the Carmel Valley Planning Board, Friends of the San Dieguito River Valley, the Environmental Center of San Diego and the neighborhood group Coalition to Preserve the Polo Fields.

“Every child deserves access to publicly owned open space, trails and passive recreational opportunities, not just those who play organized sports or families who can afford the fees.” said Sierra Club San Diego Chair Lisa Ross.

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The San Diego Chapter of the Sierra Club is San Diego’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization, encompassing San Diego and Imperial Counties, with more than 9200 members. Founded in 1948, the San Diego Chapter seeks to preserve the special nature of the San Diego and Imperial Valley areas through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. The Sierra Club is America’s largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3 million members and supporters across all 50 states and Puerto Rico.