Guest Column

The Pollution of San Juan Creek is NOT ABOUT HORSES…

by Ilse Byrnes & Jerry Nieblas

SJC residents, horse owners and trail riders Ilse Byrnes and Jerry Nieblas have devoted their lives to historic preservation in SJC

In recent times we've watched the western riders gradually be replaced by the more elite "Hunter-Jumper equestrians" that have come with housing developers for profit. Recently, Dr. Julie Ryan-Johnson of the San Juan Equestrian Coalition dared to categorize the horse community of San Juan Capistrano as, "… owning 1.5 houses, 2.5 cars and 3 horses." But Johnson will never speak for many of us who grew up in this community who do not own 1.5 houses, 2.5 cars and 3 horses; generations of San Juan historical families, with our horses being our whole way of life. The horse lifestyle in San Juan Capistrano goes back to early Mission days when the Spanish introduced horses to the Native Americans. The role of the working horse back then was directly related to the evolution of the Missions, the early Ranchos, and the formation of what would become San Juan Capistrano.

In 2004, the City of SJC and the San Diego Water Board along with locals and representatives from the county, established Best Management Practices ("BMPs") to prevent the current conditions the OC Coastkeeper is suing the City and Blenheim over. If the practices in this report were followed, and Code Enforcement under the leadership of the City Manager routinely inspected the facilities, there would be no lawsuit. What happened?

Not so long ago, we did not have BMP's to direct us on how to treat the land. There were unwritten, common sense rules that generations of us followed. As horse owners we were required to respect the lands, the creeks, and the irrigation channels, removing horse waste properly, and avoiding riding in certain areas.

Jerry Nieblas: For example, the Rosenbaum Ranch had no problem with us riding all over their property as long as we followed the rules. We were expected to stay out of the irrigation channels that ran and controlled the watering of orange groves, corn fields, and walnut groves. There were many wheelbarrows at Rosenbaum Ranch and we picked up all horse waste. When the wheelbarrows were full you were expected to give nourishment to the earth by spreading it around the various orchards or in the pasture for healthy grazing grasses. At Mission Trails stables, manure would be worked into the ground of lunging pens and arenas, making it softer and easier on horse's hooves. After a ride we'd take our horses down into the creek and the healthy mineral water would nourish their legs, or we would pour a bucket of creek water over them - never using any soap or chemicals! Never would we have considered doing what some of the human element of these facilities/businesses are doing today, such as having wash stations next to creeks which appear to be purposely dispensing run-off into them. Some of these facilities have been brazen enough to purposely dump mounds of cow and horse manure into San Juan Creek, others have been siphoning water out with generators for their own personal use.

Ilse Byrnes: I remember when the Annual Trail Ride in the 1970's in San Juan Capistrano would include a couple of hundred riders from La Pata through the Ranch to Caspers Regional Park. We had simple rules: stay on the trail, don't damage or disrupt the land, don't disturb the cattle, and put any trash in your saddlebag. We had to leave it how we found it; no one ever questioned it and we never had a problem. Just to make sure, we had a designated cleanup crew. Afterwards we would brush the horse down and rinse them off. There was no run-off, it simply absorbed into the ground. The Ranch stopped the ride after about twenty years. The Ranch cited liability issues but what I saw was real estate development moving in; curbs began to appear along our trails. If the Ranch wanted to, they could have provided a trail to remain for the SJC equestrian lifestyle to continue.

Story continued on page 11...

Copyright © 2017, All Rights Reserved Commonsense.com LLC

§

Letters and Articles for consideration must meet submission guidelines, are subject to editorial adjustment and may be sent to: eboard@ccsense.com

Editor: Kim Lefner

Advertising/Sales: Kim McCarthy
Phone: (949)275-8800

Operations/Distribution: Alvin Ehrig

Email - eboard@ccsense.com

30240 Rancho Viejo Rd., Suite A, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675

◇◇

Find out more on our website: www.ccsense.com

Show your support for the CCS by supporting our advertisers!

Like Us on Facebook!
Please Visit Us at:
www.facebook.com/CommunityCommonSense

Find Us on Twitter! @SJCommonSense

About the Community Common Sense

The CCS is a non-partisan community watchdog publication, distributed to homes and businesses in our local communities.

We were established in 2009 by a group of residents who recognized that tax dollars are often spent in ways that enrich a select few, while average residents are left with the resulting increases to cost of living, traffic and debt.

We believe knowledge is power, and are committed to reporting facts not offered in other publications. Aided by Public Records Act requests for information and extensive research, we print fact-based information about fiscal and quality of life issues which enables residents to make educated decisions about local leadership.

We do the homework – you decide!