

PRESS RELEASE

Friends of Del Mar Horsepark

Press Contacts: Carla Hayes, Co-founder

Cell: (925) 202-0033

Email: Carla@writingwithdata.com

Laura DeMarco, Co-founder

Cell: (858) 692-5194

Email: laurastanleydemarco@yahoo.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community Rallies to Stop the Threatened Closure of Del Mar Horsepark

(Del Mar, CA) **The Friends of Del Mar Horsepark** announced their formation to save our region's only public equestrian sports facility and last remaining public riding school.

The 65-acre Del Mar Horsepark at 14550 El Camino Real is threatened with being permanently shut down by its owner, the cash-strapped 22nd District Agricultural Association (DAA) which is suffering from steep financial losses at the nearby Fairgrounds due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instead of being shut down, Horsepark should be leased to a well-capitalized, knowledgeable equine operator which can generate profits for the 22nd DAA, provide needed facility upgrades and water remediation, and retain the public riding school. Horsepark's public stables and horse shows cannot be moved to the Fairgrounds due to competing summer events such as the Fair and horse racing.

The **Friends of Del Mar Horsepark's** goal is to deliver over 10,000 petitions to the 22nd DAA board and state leaders by January 12, 2021, the date of the next Board meeting, so that Horsepark's horse show contracts and stabling leases are honored instead of being cancelled (Change.Org, ***Save Del Mar Horsepark***).

On Dec. 12, 2020, 22nd DAA staff acted, without public notice or board approval, to cancel Horsepark's 35 horse shows scheduled for 2021 that would have generated over \$1.75 million. Further, they started evicting the trainers and stabled horses from the property which generated \$655,000 in fees in 2020, including the last remaining public riding school there for 26 years. They did not respond to two long-term lease proposals from well-regarded horse show operators.

2020 Horsepark events generated \$1.34 million during a truncated season in 2020 due to the pandemic, demonstrating a reliable, pandemic-resistant revenue source without spectators.

As a state agency accountable to the public and our community, the 22nd DAA board's fiduciary responsibility goes beyond finding the highest bidder for this property. 22nd DAA needs to uphold the critical agricultural mission of the Fairgrounds, as Horsepark is the only remaining public equestrian facility and riding school in San Diego County.

The equestrian and surrounding community is committed to supporting Del Mar Horsepark, financially and politically. Otherwise, this irreplaceable public treasure will be turned over to developers and lost forever.

Further information and the Save Del Mar Horsepark petition can be found at the Friends of Del Mar Horsepark website: www.friendsofdelmarhorse.com.