Farallon Capital Management, Tom Steyer and the systematic attack on an agricultural community in Ione California, just 37 miles from Sacramento and how the Ione Valley Land, Air & Water Defense Alliance (LAWDA) continues to fight back

**1986:** Tom Steyer, schooled at Exeter and Yale, Stanford Business School and formerly of Goldman Saks, founds Farallon Capital Management in San Francisco. The hedge fund “quickly earned a reputation for take-no-prisoners investing, raking in millions, and eventually billions. Steyer picked through the books of flagging or collapsed companies, made sophisticated bets on them, and often conducted ruthless campaigns, legal and corporate, to force their value up and reap a massive return.” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Steyer>

**2004:** In Sacramento County, due to the efforts of conservation groups, half of the Charles Howard Ranch (owner of the legendary racehorse Seabiscuit) is purchased. 12,000 acres are permanently conserved as valuable grazing grasslands.

**2006:** Tom Steyer’s Farallon Capital Management and Developers - who specialize in housing and golf courses - purchase the remaining 16,100 acres in Amador County, California.

**2006-2010**: Developers drill extensively all over the ranch, attempting to find water to support housing development. Water is not found, the housing market falls.

**August, 2011:** Notice of Application for a 50-year massive 2 mile by 1 mile new Quarry and Hot Asphalt Plan is filed, on pristine agricultural land, one mile from the tiny rural town of Ione. Twenty six ranches, the town and surrounding rural community are directly in the path of both asphalt toxins and quarry dust, heavy truck and permanent biological damage. The Plan passes the local Planning Commission but is not unanimous. One Planning Commissioner says “I feel like our County is under attack.”

**Early 2011:** Developer silences four households by offering to move asphalt plant back 800 feet in exchange for no public opposition. The move does not improve Air Quality, which would remain severely impacted. Other neighbors refuse to sign the “gag order.” Farallon funds and writes the Environmental Impact Report for the County, hiring dozens of private consultants for the two enormous projects.

**May 2012:** Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is filed.

**June 2012:**- The Ione Valley Land, Air & Water Defense Alliance (LAWDA) LLC is formed by families, neighbors and citizens in the wake of the project. Col. Fraser West, USMC (retired), age 94, a local hero and respected community supporter, takes the lead with his youngest daughter Sondra West-Moore. Opposition comments from both State Agencies and the Public are submitted to the County that highlight the many adverse effects on the local the water quantity and quality, air quality, noise, dust, traffic and the irreversible effects to rare biological resources in the area. The County and Farallon Developers ignore all comments and make no attempt to consider Alternative uses for the land.

**August 2012:** Detailed letters and 345 signatures are gathered against the project by LAWDA, but the County publishes the Farallon funded Final EIR with no changes. The Board of Supervisors (BOS) approves it.

**November 2012:** With no other recourse, the Ione Valley LAWDA sues Amador County, Farallon and Developers over the Newman Ridge Project, citing failure to mitigate permanent environmental damage and damage to Public Health, and for their refusal to consider one Alternative - which is the expansion of an existing Jackson Valley quarry located for decades away from ranches and the town, already fulfilling the needs of the community. The County calls the expansion of the other quarry Alternative unfeasible as “The Developers of the Newman Project don’t own it.”

**November, 2012**: Farallon, Developer and County file a motion to remove Farallon Capital Management from being named in the lawsuit.

**December, 2012**: Tom Steyer steps down as CEO from Farallon Capital Management, the hedge fund he founded, to focus on “environmental issues.”

**February 8, 2013:** LAWDA wins. Amador Superior Court Judge refuses to grant motion to remove Farallon from the lawsuit, saying “Well, they are the landowner.”

**2013:** LAWDA gathers more than a thousand opposition signatures and public comments from the online petition ([www.ionevalleylawda.com](http://www.ionevalleylawda.com)) against the project and presents them to the County. During a Public Hearing, LAWDA is forced to silence (despite a very polite presentation from them) by the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, muzzling Public opinion in an open meeting designed to hear from the Public.

**July 30, 2013:** The County approves the previously stalled Alternative Jackson Valley Quarry expansion, despite calling it unfeasible in the past. All economic and employment goals stated for Newman Ridge project are now fulfilled by this existing Quarry’s expansion.

**February, 2014:** LAWDA wins. Amador Superior Court judge orders the County and Developers to decertify the entire EIR, and to recirculate.

**September 2014:** The County, Farallon and Developer decide to recirculate one chapter on Traffic, despite having no legal validated EIR in place. Hundreds of public letters and comments are sent in protest to the County, but are again ignored and no changes to the project occur. Caltrans and other State Agencies continue to oppose the project, saying an entirely new EIR should be issued. Local meetings are held. Developer packs the meeting hall with truck drivers and miners, LAWDA members are stunned when (now 96 year old) Col. West is boo’d and heckled by Developer employees. Col. West, his daughter and his 65 year old autistic son sit in the front row of the Town Meeting, ignoring the verbal abuse.

**January 2, 2015**: Col. Fraser West, co-founder and leader of LAWDA, passes away peacefully at home on the ranch, at 96 years of age.

**March 2015**: County and Developer approve the single recirculated traffic chapter, despite the approval of the Alternative Quarry which would fulfill all job and production needs, despite all the Public opposition, lack of a certified EIR and proof of any business or economic justification. The Court asks if they recirculated, the Developer says yes, and the court approves the project.

**April 2015:** LAWDA files new Environmental lawsuit against the County and Developer, citing that new information requires a new EIR - as circumstances have changed since 2012, proving additional study must be performed to include the 2014 California Official State of Drought, the County’s own approval of the Alternative Quarry, Mule Creek Prison expansion - which includes heavy truck on the community’s 2-lane roads.

**April 2015:** LAWDA submits a Referendum for the People of Amador County to vote on a live ballot on the three issues since their opposition has been ignored by elected officials: the rezoning of Agricultural land to Heavy Industry, the General Plan change without a General Plan update since 1973 and the People’s right to vote to overturn the approval on the flawed Reclamation Plan.

**April 21, 2015:** LAWDA gathers more than the 10% of registered voters’ signatures required for the 3-part Referendum to appear on a live ballot: 2203 verified signatures in 17 days in the small rural County.

**June 9, 2015:** The Amador County Clerk-Recorder Registrar of Voters officially certifies the Referendum and presents it to the BOS as legal and validated, saying that the County can either reverse project approvals or put the Referendum on the next live ballot. Instead, with Farallon attorneys, the BOS finds a rare legal loophole. They file suit against LAWDA and one co-founder (Sondra West-Moore) by name, citing that the Reclamation Plan is administrative, not legislative, and therefore cannot be taken to the Public have a vote and say in the matter.

**December 2015:** The County, Developer and dozens of their attorneys attend the Referendum hearing. The judge rules in their favor, citing there is no precedent for referending a reclamation plan.

**January 2016:** LAWDA is contacted by lawmakers in Sacramento to give a voice to the Public on mining process and law, which is currently blocked.

**March 4, 2016:** The same judge rules against LAWDA and for the County, Farallon and the Developer on the new Environmental case, giving no reasons.

**March, 2016:** LAWDA plans to file appeals for both cases, and begins fundraising to cover legal costs so the cases can be heard outside the County in the third District Court of Appeals. LAWDA hopes reason, the law and justice will prevail with the will and support of the People, whose lives and Health are at stake.

**Summer/Fall 2016:** Tom Steyer becomes the largest Democratic donor, most visible backing the cigarette taxes – to promote clean air for our children - spending over sixty million dollars to promote his message. Advertisements featuring Steyr run constantly on television, each ad closing with “I’m Tom Steyer.” Speculation that Steyer wants to run for office grows. Meanwhile, just 37 miles from the Governor’s office in Sacramento, California, **Tom Steyer’s company Farallon Capital Management continues to press forward with environmentally destructive plans** to build the asphalt plant and quarry just outside in Ione, in Amador County, on agricultural land, despite heavy local and State Agency opposition to both super-polluting, greenhouse gas producing projects.