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Report Finds New Quarry Will Improve Traffic, Air Quality
Draft EIR concludes Liberty Quarry will help fill the growing demand for aggregate, get trucks off the road and benefit nearby communities.

TEMECULA – The Liberty Quarry project will provide multiple benefits to the region, reducing traffic on congested freeways and improving southwest Riverside County’s air quality, according to the Draft Environmental Impact Report released Monday, July 20, 2009.

The extensive independent report, which took more than three years to prepare, found that the region will be better off with the quarry than without it and that virtually every impact can be mitigated. As required under the California Environmental Quality Act, Riverside County’s report includes an exhaustive analysis of key issues, including air quality, traffic, vibrations, noise and light, among others.

“This report confirms what we’ve been saying since the beginning. This is an ideal location because it’s removed from population centers, has easy access to the freeway and is not visible from the surrounding communities,” said Gary Johnson, aggregate resource development manager for Granite Construction.

“This unbiased report shows the community that our mitigation measures work and Temecula residents will benefit from this much-needed project,” he said.

The DEIR concluded that the “environmentally superior alternative” is the Reduced Footprint Alternative. Implementing this alternative would reduce the proposed quarry footprint by 20 acres and result in less intensive impacts for air quality, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, land use, hydrology and water quality, traffic and transportation, water supply, and vibration. There would be a loss of access to about 13% of the aggregate reserves.

The report found that no ambient air quality standards would be exceeded by the project and that the actual particulate matter emissions from the project after mitigation would be nearly 10 times lower than the current emissions from the 6.7 miles of Interstate 15 that run through Temecula.

Additionally, the project will result in a reduction of up to 16.5 million truck miles per year on Riverside County freeways, providing local builders with a ready source of aggregate and drastically reducing the time and resources they currently spend to import it from distant sources. The construction-grade aggregate is used for roads, homes and numerous other infrastructure needs.

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The report contains an examination of alternatives to the proposed project, including a study of what will happen to the region's environment if Liberty Quarry is not built and trucks continue to traverse the busy freeway in pursuit of aggregate in remote areas. The analysis found that not building Liberty Quarry would likely lead to increased air emissions and traffic in the region.

The project has been specifically designed to protect local communities, using natural topography to shield the site from view and reduce noise and light emissions. Liberty Quarry also provides an open-space buffer around the site to further insulate the Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve (SMER).

Based on these efforts and the proposed mitigation, the DEIR concludes that there is no effect on local communities.

The report, which totals over 7,000 pages, noted that the project will create no noticeable noise increases in Temecula and Fallbrook. There also will be no significant light emissions under the lighting plan Granite already has had reviewed and approved by the Palomar Observatory.

The release of the DEIR kicks off a 60-day public review period that will precede the necessary public hearings before the Riverside County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors later this year.

A full copy of the DEIR is available on Riverside County's Planning Department home page, and can also be found at www.LibertyQuarryFacts.com.

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