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There are benefits to backyard quarry

By: BOB KOWELL - Commentary:

Someone recently told me that the Liberty Quarry was going to be the largest open pit mine in the world. That's just not true. The Liberty Quarry is slated to be 155 acres, according to documents submitted to the county. This is about half the size of The Promenade mall with some of its parking lots.

Arizona's Morenci open pit mine is 6,000 acres; 40 times bigger, state documents show.

As quarries and mines go, Liberty Quarry is dinky.

This person who I talked with about the quarry also told me that the dust would be horrendous. My grandparents lived next to a quarry in windy Pasadena without a problem for many years. I visited them often and hardly knew it was there.

That quarry is closed now but the ones in windy Irwindale, off Interstates 605 and 210, are still running without a problem. My wife and I worked in neighboring Azusa for many years and we didn't suffer at all. Also, recent regulations on quarries have limited dust emissions from quarries to almost zero.

I was also told that since Temecula will be a hub of activity that we'll get more truck traffic. It looks, however, like there will be a significant net drop in truck traffic, accounting for an increase in the Liberty Quarry trucks minus those coming from quarries north of us.

The Liberty Quarry will more than likely become a reservoir. There are no plans for that now, because the quarry would be in business for about 50 to 75 years. They don't make plans that far out. Certainly, a hole in the ground would make a great reservoir. Why dig a hole for a reservoir, which we'll need to do anyway, when we'll have one already made by the quarry project? It will actually save us time and money in the long run.

For many of the opponents, it's all about environmental concerns that have to do with a specific piece of property; the Santa Margarita Ecological Preserve adjacent to the quarry. This is probably the biggest reason that the leaders of the movement against the quarry are using scare tactics to stop it. I love the outdoors, but not at the expense of destroying it and our neighborhoods by bringing in trucks from out of town. Not all the opponents to this project are extreme environmentalists; many are just residents listening to misinformation or they may be against any new growth.

This project is good for us. If you want new roads, you need aggregate from a quarry. If you want a bunch of trucks from somewhere else coming in, that's expensive and causes more pollution than it's worth. For me, I want the aggregate from my backyard. Since it's cheaper and easier this way, we'll be able to fund the roads we need instead of waiting until the gridlock and pollution created by gridlock gets worse and people spend more time and gasoline waiting in traffic at traffic signals.

-- Bob Kowell is a Murrieta resident who is a licensed professional engineer in California.