



Stop Cottonwood Sand Mine, Org.
Save Our Community

Website:

Email: info@stopcottonwoodsandmine.org

Address: 2514 Jamacha Road, #502-155, El Cajon, CA 92019

Media Release - 12/17/21

Contact: Barry Jantz – 619.300.3795 cell

**StopCottonwoodSandMine.org Board of Directors responds to
release of Draft Environmental Impact Report**
Community called to action over proposed 10-year sand mining project

Following the County of San Diego's release yesterday of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for a 10-year open pit sand mining operation at Cottonwood Golf Course in Rancho San Diego, the *StopCottonwoodSandMine.org* Board of Directors called for action by the community and reiterated the significant concerns raised by area residents over the proposal.

The Board stated it would immediately start utilizing the 60 day public review process, which ends February 14, 2022, to review the DEIR document. Board members further noted they would be communicating with the thousands of residents who have signed up in opposition to the project, to let them know it is now time to communicate their concerns to the County and attend upcoming public hearings.

"We will review the DEIR with diligence to see if any of the community concerns have been addressed," said *StopCottonwoodSandMine.org* Board Chair Elizabeth Urquhart. "Most importantly, although it's been a long wait since the project was proposed in 2018, the community needs to know it is now the right time to speak up and register concerns over the community impacts, despite this being the holiday season. We need our neighbors to understand we cannot sit still as we continue to voice our opposition. We ask residents to inform their friends and neighbors to sign up at our website. We need to all work together to inform the community and to ultimately stop this sand mine."

[View and Send Communications on the DEIR](#)

The DEIR can be reviewed online at:

http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/pds/ceqa_public_review.html (main page)

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds/ceqa/MUP-18-023.html> (project specific link)

Hard copies of the DEIR can also be reviewed at Planning & Development Services (PDS), Project Processing Counter, 5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 110, San Diego, California 92123.

The DEIR documents can also be reviewed at the Rancho San Diego Library, located at 11555 Via Rancho San Diego, El Cajon, CA 92019 and the Casa de Oro Library, located at 9805 Campo Rd., #180, Spring Valley, CA 91977.

Comments on the DEIR must be sent to Robert Hingtgen, Planning & Development Services, 5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 310, San Diego, CA 92123 or emailed to Robert.Hingtgen@sdcounty.ca.gov.

The County encourages written comments on the project to be submitted via email.

Comments on the DEIR should reference the project number and name:

COTTONWOOD SAND MINING PROJECT (PDS2018-MUP-18-023), (PDS2018-RP-18-001);
LOG NO. PDS2018-ER-18-19-007; SCH# 2019100513

Comments on the DEIR must be received by the County **no later than February 14, 2022, at 4:00 p.m.**

Upcoming Meetings

There are two options to participate in an in-person or virtual meeting, with the same project material covered at both meetings:

An in-person public meeting will be held on the DEIR on Wednesday, January 12, 2022 from 7:00 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. at the Hillsdale Middle School Multipurpose Room, 1301 Brabham Street, El Cajon, CA 92019.

An online/phone-in public meeting/teleconference will be held on Wednesday, January 19, 2022 from 7:00 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. The meeting may be accessed at this web link: <https://bit.ly/CottonwoodSandMine> or the meeting can be accessed by calling (619) 343-2539 and providing conference ID number 972 237 701#.

More Info on StopCottonwoodSandMine.org: www.stopcottonwoodsandmine.org

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See the following pages for additional background on the sand mine proposal.



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Background:

The Cottonwood sand mine is proposed by New West Investment and investor Michael Schlesinger, who purchased Cottonwood Golf Course in 2015, four years after the golf course filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. As originally filed, the proposal is to mine 4.7 million cubic yards with approximately 3.8 million cubic yards (5.7 million tons) of construction aggregate produced over ten years, in phases with reclamation planned after each phase. Approximately 214.4 acres of the approximately 280-acre site are proposed for extractive use which would occur in a total of four phases. The project application was filed in November 2018.

In the case of the Major Use Permit sought by the developer, the detailed list of requirements previously released by the County underscores the same concerns expressed by the community regarding a long-term mine along the Sweetwater River, most notably in the middle of an established residential neighborhood surrounded by homes, schools and businesses.

Those concerns, detailed at www.stopcottonwoodsandmine.org, include traffic, safety and noise, health hazards, impacts on the environment, and decreased property values.

Among the Major Project Issues identified by County Planning & Development Services:

Consistency with the San Diego County General Plan, along with the Valle De Oro Community Plan and Rancho San Diego Specific Plan – As noted in the letter, County “staff cannot move forward with a recommendation of approval until the project is found consistent with all applicable General Plan and community plan policies.”

Land Use/Community Character Consistency – “The character of the area consists of residential, recreational, civic and open space uses, and the project request is for a sand mining, an extractive use,” the letter indicates. “The Rancho Specific Plan identifies the golf course serving as a buffer area and providing a larger setback to sensitive habitat areas. In order to assess the potential impacts to community character a land use and community character analysis shall be prepared...”

Major Use Permit Findings – The letter notes the requirement that the location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the proposed use must “be compatible with adjacent uses, residents, buildings, or structures.” Among other things, consideration must be given to “the harmful effect, if

any, upon desirable neighborhood character; the generation of traffic and the capacity and physical character of surrounding streets; (and) the suitability of the site for the type and intensity of use or development which is proposed.”

Biological Resource Constraints – The site contains jurisdictional waters of the State of California and the United States, including protected wetlands, requiring approval from State and Federal resource agencies. “Several federally endangered and/or threatened species have been identified on the project site or within the vicinity of the project,” the letter continues. Given the sensitivity of the area, the letter provides a list of agencies that must provide project approval, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish & Wildlife. “Any impacts proposed within the National Wildlife Refuge would require...an environmental document that addresses both state and federal environmental requirements. Please note that Major Amendment areas in particular can take years to complete and could result in significant delays in the processing of the project.”

Visual Resources – “Based on an initial review,” the letter additionally notes, “it appears the proposed project may adversely affect visual resources. Willow Glen Drive is designated as a County Scenic Road. Views from scenic vistas, scenic highways and County Scenic Routes, and public recreation areas will need to be analyzed further to determine the extent of any adverse impacts.”

A 115-page Scoping Letter issued by the County in May 2019 provides additional details on the approval requirements, including the need to address impacts involving noise, air quality, altered hydrogeologic conditions, and overall “significant impacts on the environment.”

The Sweetwater Authority, the public water agency that manages Loveland and Sweetwater Reservoirs, also previously sent a letter to the County detailing its concerns about the potential impacts, “...as this project proposes a variety of activities that could significantly increase pollution of the Sweetwater Reservoir.”

The Committee continues to seek those who can assist with expertise in any of the areas noted among the Major Project Issues listed above, and/or in the areas of Land Use, Noise, Traffic and Traffic Safety, Air and Water Quality, Archaeological and Cultural Resources, and Biological Resources. Please contact the Board at info@stopcottonwoodsandmine.org.

Community meetings held by StopCottonwoodSandMine.org were attended by hundreds of residents, and in late 2018 over 2,100 petition signatures and 70 additional comments were submitted to the County of San Diego from area residents opposed to the plan. County staff also reported over 130 emails or letters received directly from residents. Over one thousand residents, most representing a household of two to four family members, have also signed up on the group’s website to receive ongoing communications about actions they can take to reject plans for the sand mine.