

From: Jim Caputo <jacaplc@cox.net>

Sent: Friday, November 22, 2019 2:56 PM

To: 'Robert.Hingtgen@sdcounty.ca.gov' <Robert.Hingtgen@sdcounty.ca.gov>

Subject: Opposition to and Comments Regarding the EIR for the Proposed Cottonwood Sand Mine Project

Robert Hingtgen, Planner III

San Diego County Planning and Development Services

Mr. Hingtgen,

I write to state my strong opposition to the Sand Mine Project to be located on the Cottonwood Golf Course property. In opposition, it is more than sufficient to simply state that locating an industrial sand mining operation in the middle of a zoned residential neighborhood; within feet of homes, an elementary school and care facilities; welcomes significant environmental degradation and undoes any sense of reasonable or justifiable planning or development. But there is more – much more.

The Sand Mine Project is grossly inconsistent with the San Diego General Plan Valle De Oro Community Plan, and the Rancho San Diego Specific Plan. These plans reflect the thoughtful and painstaking work of your Department as well as numerous other agencies, experts and citizen contributors. These plans are intended to be the handbook for appropriate development. They should not be cast aside because a multimillionaire with an established track record of disregarding planning mandates and the law has a self-serving plan to make yet more money.

The cumulative impact to traffic, safety and emergency evacuation routes must be considered; in addition to proposed Sand Mine, the Enclave at Ivanhoe Ranch is planning 119 residences adjacent to the site. Already congested use of Jamul Drive, Steele Canyon Road, and Willow Glen Road cannot handle additional heavy use. Additional projects that should be considered in a cumulative study include Otay Village in Jamul (1300 residences between Jamul and Chula Vista) and Skyline Church Retirement Housing on Jamacha Road. Both projects will add significant traffic on Campo Road/Highway 94 and Jamacha Road/Highway 94. Many of the intersections at the above-referenced rates are already graded F. Is a lower grade even possible? But that was certainly will be the result of the Sand Mine Project.

The character of the adjacent Rancho San Diego area has been developed under the controlling development plans and consists of residential, recreational, civic and open space uses. The Rancho San Diego Specific Plan identifies the Cottonwood Golf Course as a buffer area and providing a larger setback to sensitive habitat areas. The Sand Mine will destroy the sensitive habitat areas already established in this area.

The guidelines for a proposed permitted major use require that the location, size, design and operating characteristics be compatible with adjacent uses – here, residences and nearby buildings. The proposed Sand Mine will have an unavoidably harmful effect on Rancho San Diego's desirable neighborhood character, the generation of traffic, the capacity and physical character of surrounding streets, and the suitability of the site for the type and intensity of use or development that is proposed.

The proposed Sand Mine area contains the 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 threatened species have been identified on or in the vicinity of the proposed project site, which is adjacent to the National Wildlife Refuge. The site is also within the South County and Metro-Lakeside-Jamul segments of the County's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) designated preserve areas.

Ironically, one of the roads that will be most directly impacted is Willow Glen Drive, a road designated as a County Scenic Road. Impacts to travelers using this road, persons walking, bicyclists, and residences along the ridges that view this road must be considered.

The proposed Sand Mine would directly impact the immediate environment, significantly impacting air quality, noise levels, and hydrogeologic conditions and thereby potentially harming residents, plant and animal species, water and the land. Such compelling harm to people and our environment must take priority over private financial gain.

The Sweetwater Authority documented that the Sand Mine proposes a variety of activities that could significantly pollute the Sweetwater Reservoir. This source of drinking water must be protected.

Numerous archaeological resources have been identified within a one-mile radius of the proposed Sand Mine site. Significant impact to tribal cultural resources is likely.

Not surprisingly, sensitive populations in this residential area include schools, resident care facilities, and facilities and residences that house individuals with health conditions (children & elderly). These populations will be adversely impacted by changes in air quality. The permit application identified

residences and nearby Jamacha Elementary school as at-risk; however, they must also study impact to Adeona Healthcare, an 80-bed residential treatment facility for adolescents that is adjacent to the Sand Mine site on Steele Canyon Road, the YMCA within a quarter mile of the property site, and La Vida Real, a senior living residence, which is located about a half mile from the site.

The Sand Mine permit application underrepresents potentially impacted agency interests. Those agencies, including those identified in the Scoping Letter for this project, should be contacted and included in the all Environmental Impact Report notification and approval process. Such agencies include the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Transportation, California State Water Resources Control Board – Division of Drinking Water, California Department of Water Resources – Division of Safety of Dams, California Regional Water Quality Control Board – San Diego Region, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation – Southern California Area Office, San Diego County Water Authority – Water Resources Department, Sweetwater Authority, Otay Water District, San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District, Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District, Grossmont Union High School District, Cajon Valley Union School District, Jamul-Dulzura Union School District, and local Native American Tribes.

No matter how much the applicants attempt to dress up this project, the environmental harm and impact it will visit on this community are obvious and transparent. The great philosopher Bob Dylan once said, “You don’t need a weatherman to tell you which way the wind is blowing.” In this matter, it similarly seems you don’t need an Environmental Impact Report to tell you this project is a horribly bad idea. But I’m sure your detailed and thorough work will confirm that point. I thank you for entertaining these comments.

Best regards,

James A. Caputo

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