Date: (Fill in the Date)

From: (Fill in Your Name & Email)

 (Fill in Your Address)

To: Robert Hingtgen, Planner III (**Robert.Hingtgen@sdcounty.ca.gov**)

 San Diego County Planning and Development Services

Subject: **Environmental Impact Report Input for Cottonwood Sand Mining Project**

Dear Mr. Hingtgen,

I write to voice my strong objection to the proposed Cottonwood Sand Mine in Rancho San Diego. It makes no sense that a major, long-term mining operation within yards of hundreds of adult and child residents, an elementary school and already overcrowded and narrow roadways is even considered. If approved, the mine will be operating for at least 12 years and possibly longer. During that time an estimated 5.7 million tons of sand and rock will be excavated, processed, loaded onto large, heavy trucks and exported to whatever site is willing to pay the most. And although the owner states that he wants to reduce dependence on imported sand in the County, there is no guarantee, nor requirement, that the product from this mining will stay in San Diego County.

The proposed open pit excavations to 35 feet or more will have a demonstrably adverse impact on the environment and community. The proposed heavy equipment and nearly 2000 feet of conveyor belts will create an incredibly noisy and nerve-racking environment. This is generally a rural community of large-lot houses with families, children, animals and even horses. It is located adjacent to a National Wildlife Refuge. The resulting noise disruption to the entire area will be felt immensely, along with the dust, smoke, dirt, particulate matter and diesel fumes that will eventually permeate the community. It is unthinkable that these operations are planned to begin at 7:00 AM. The animals and vegetation that now inhabit the open space surrounding the proposed mine site will similarly suffer. Some species are endangered, and the habitat destruction will have far-reaching and long-term impacts.

I am greatly concerned about the potential groundwater impact. While direct pollution from the operation of the mining equipment is possible, disruption of existing flow patterns is immediate and unavoidable. Many nearby residents have wells and depend upon the groundwater to be available and potable. How can this project avoid negatively impacting the Sweetwater Riverbed, a crucial source of transporting potable water to several communities? And where is the concern or mitigation for any of the lost property value that this community will unequivocally suffer?

The property owner points to the proposed reclamation efforts as somehow offsetting the deleterious consequences of this open pit mine. But much of what will be done under the guise of “reclamation” would be necessary in any event to support the planned development of the property, which, after all, is the endgame for this property owner. I am sure from the owner’s perspective this is good business, that is, to get paid for what you would otherwise have to pay for yourself. But I would hope that from the County Planning and Development Services’ perspective this will be seen for what it is, exceedingly poor stewardship of the environment and the physical well-being and safety of the community. I urge you to consider the serious concerns of Safety, Traffic, Air/Water/Noise pollution, the impact to Plants and Wildlife, and the inevitable Decrease to Property Values as you define the scope and content of this proposed project’s Environmental Impact Report.

Sincerely,