

Scotts Valley - 1990

# Neighbor complaints result in strict quarry rules

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SANTA CRUZ — County planning commissioners approved a new five-year mining plan for Kaiser quarry in Scotts Valley Wednesday, but not before tightening restrictions to help ease neighbor complaints.

"They've put in a lot of thoughtful requirements," quarry neighbor Sheryl Ainsworth said about the commission's action.

Ainsworth said she hoped the requirements would work.

"(Neighbors) started agitating ... a long time ago, so the quarry, of course, got wind of it and they started implementing changes," said Ainsworth, who is also a Scotts Valley planning commissioner. "But now that the pressure is off, they don't have nearly the incentive to follow through."

Among the more stringent requirements facing the Kaiser Sand and Gravel Co. are:

- Pay for a study within the next

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— Commissioner Renee Shepherd

year to determine the potential for helping return water on the quarry site to the Santa Margarita aquifer.

The quarry also must put meters on all its wells to allow a more accurate gauge of how much fresh water is being pulled from the aquifer.

In addition, the quarry must use treated wastewater provided by the Scotts Valley Water District for mining operations within the next two years, or justify to the county why it's not possible.

- Set up a weather station to determine how often the wind blows

hard enough to send sand and dust into nearby neighborhoods.

The quarry also must pay for a study to find out where the dust and sand is coming from. That study will be done during the windiest times of the year.

If the quarry is found to be causing the neighborhood problem with dust and sand, then a more expensive study to determine what to do about it must be undertaken.

- Use all technology available to reduce the noise of equipment operating at the plant. In addition, the quarry must build 10-foot-high

berms in areas being mined to muffle the noise seeping into neighboring homes.

- Replant all areas being mined, to state specifications.

- Return in one year with a report on the results of these studies. The commission expects to conduct a public hearing at that time to ensure that neighbors' complaints have been satisfied by the tougher restrictions.

- Establish a recorded hot line to take complaints from neighbors. Each caller who leaves a name and number must receive a post card from the quarry acknowledging the complaint. A record of those complaints is to be provided to the county during the annual review.

The quarry, which fronts on Mount Hermon Road, will be required to alert neighbors within a half-mile about the existence of the new hot line.

Commissioners also considered increasing the mandatory buffer between mining operations and the quarry's property line to 150 feet in

the southern portion of the quarry near Worth Lane that will be mined in the next five years. That would have been an increase of 50 feet.

But Jonathan Wittwer, chief deputy county counsel, said the commission would need more than neighbor complaints about noise and blowing sand to extend what is now a legally defined buffer.

Commissioner Renee Shepherd successfully pushed to require quarry officials to return in a year with verifiable facts from a consultant about whether extending the buffer would play any part in easing neighborhood concerns.

"I don't want to wait five years to see how we're doing," said Shepherd, whose district includes quarry area. "We're putting together a complicated set of requirements that I think will work, but I'd like a check-in with the community."

Ainsworth said she was disappointed the commission didn't extend the buffer, which she thought would lessen the amount of sand.