

TO:

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FROM:

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We understand that the Diamond Rock Mine, a *gravel* mining company, has applied to the Santa Barbara County Planning Commission for a permit to mine gravel in the Cuyama Valley. We also understand that three other firms - GPS, Lima and Ozena - are planning proposals for similar gravel quarry projects. The number of trucks that these firms want to put on Highway 33 each day is staggering:

- Diamond Rock – 92 trips a day
- GPS – 55 trips a day
- Lima – 240 trips a day
- Ozena – 132 trips a day

What does that have to do with us down here in Ventura County? Pretty much everything! If you guys give Diamond and these other firms permission to send 500 or more big gravel trucks down Highway 33 every day, through Ojai, to Ventura, you will do irreparable harm to the air quality and to the quality of life of the people who live and work in Ojai. And you will be ruining the most popular recreation area of Ventura County residents as well, particularly those of us who live and work in West Ventura County. We understand that the empty trucks will also return to Cuyama via Highway 33 as well. We am writing to you to ask you NOT to issue a permit to the Diamond Rock Mine (or to the other firms).

### **HIGHWAY 33 IS OUR GATEWAY TO FOREST RECREATION**

Those of us who live and work and pay taxes in Ventura County consider the Los Padres and the Santa Barbara backcountry the place where we go to seek peace and quiet and outdoor adventure. This area is our sanctuary. We hike, camp, backpack and fish in the Sespe Wilderness, bird watch in the Condor Sanctuary, ride our bicycles and motorcycles on Highway 33 in the mountains above Ojai. But put 500 gravel trucks on Highway 33 every day and most of us will decide to just go somewhere else. Ojai's tourist-based economy will be devastated.

### **HIGHWAY 33 WILL BE TOO DANGEROUS FOR ANYONE ELSE TO USE**

Imagine getting stuck behind one of these behemoths on a tight twisty two-lane road for 20 or 30 miles! Most of the road has a double yellow line so there's no way to pass a truck moving uphill at a crawl. And there are virtually no turnouts up there. There are also no shoulders along most stretches. I don't what will happen when one of these big monsters runs wide in a tight corner (of which there are literally hundreds) and runs a bicyclist or motorcyclist off the road. And how long will it be before a gravel truck driver loses control and hits and kills a bicyclist or motorcyclist? Or loses control, turns over and covers the road with gravel, closing the road for

days, weeks or months. (I've lived here long enough to remember years when the road was closed for months because of a rock slide.) Gary, this whole scheme is a tragedy waiting to happen. Highway 33 is dangerous enough with the truck traffic that it has now. Why on earth would you want to turn it into a veritable truck lane? What if there's a big fire in the Los Padres? If you're from around these parts you already know that fires occur regularly up there and are already difficult enough to get to without having to share the road with up to 500 gravel trucks. I doubt that two big trucks could even negotiate some of the corners up there if they're going in opposite directions and arrive at a corner at the same time.

### **OJAI ALREADY HAS AIR POLLUTION PROBLEMS**

Of course, these trucks will use diesel engines, so they will be spewing oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and particulate matter (PM) into the pristine mountain air day after day. Gary, did you know that Ventura County is not now nor has it ever been in attainment for ozone. Ozone is created when you mix NOx, reactive organic compounds (ROC) and sunlight. The way that air regulators reduce photochemical smog is by trying to reduce or eliminate NOx, which breaks the chain. And did you know that while Ventura County's overall air quality is classified as non-attainment with respect to ozone by both the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), that the air quality in the Ojai Valley is actually already far worse than the rest of our county, with exception of Simi Valley. Except that Ojai has only 30,000 people. See the problem here. Putting up to 500 diesel trucks in the Ojai Valley will degrade its air quality even further.

And Gary, quite aside from the serious health issues presented by diesel exhaust, some of us still need a little scenery once in a while. Right now the Los Padres backcountry has by and large escaped the dirty air found at lower altitudes down in the Ojai Valley itself. But put up to 500 trucks a day on Highway 33 and those magnificent mountain vistas will be gone. Instead, our beloved backcountry will look like the Eastern San Gabriel Mountains, i.e. invisible!

### **DIESEL EXHAUST IS A HEALTH THREAT TO KIDS**

Diesel exhaust is a known carcinogen. If these big old diesels were stationary sources instead of mobile sources the Ventura County Air Pollution District (APCD) would require that they be Best Available Control Technology (BACT), in other words, state of the art. But they're not. They're going to be a bunch of tired, worn out old clunkers with ancient diesel technology. Perhaps you read that *L.A. Times* article about what a mistake it was to have ever put schools next to freeways, because now we're finding out that that probably caused irreparable and incurable health problems for those kids. So I don't think that it would be a good idea to have hundreds of diesel trucks driving by Nordhoff High School and Miramonte Elementary, both of which are right next to Highway 33. How are the kids supposed to play outside their schools if they're breathing diesel exhaust all day long?

### **NOISE**

### **TRAFFIC**

Once these trucks arrive in the Ojai Valley, they will be driving on city surface streets that were never designed for this volume of traffic. And traffic is already dense in the Ojai Valley even without adding 500 gravel trucks. Perhaps you are aware that the Matilija Dam will soon be torn down, which will take years. And how are they going to move all that earth? That's right! In big diesel trucks, just like the gravel trucks that you are considering putting on these same streets. Add in rush hour traffic and other commercial truck traffic and you have a real mess.

### **OJAI HAS A TOURIST-BASED ECONOMY**

Allowing hundred of diesel trucks to drive though the Ojai Valley will have the effect of turning it into a perpetual construction site. People don't really like to frequent restaurants, shops on streets that have been taken over by dirty, noisy gravel trucks. Very soon, people will just stop coming. And tourism is the economic lifeblood of this charming little town. Kill its tourist trade and you kill Ojai. Gary, you work in Santa Maria. Imagine sending hundreds of gravel trucks a day through the middle of Santa Maria. Imagine doing so down State Street in Santa Barbara! It would be unthinkable! So why is such a cockamamie scheme even seeing the light of day with respect to little Ojai?

### **CONCLUSION**

We are asking you not to even consider Diamond Rock Mine's request for a permit. The damage that this project (and the other three projects) will cause far outweighs its one advantage, i.e. that it will provide gravel. Why not tell the applicant to have the trucks drive up to 166, and then either go west to the 101, or east to the 5? I know it's longer, but it's also safer, and probably just as fast.

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