

January 9, 2007

Dear Gary Kaiser,

As the CEO of the Ojai Valley Chamber of Commerce, I must protest the EIR review of the Troesh Ready-Mix proposal as conducted by agencies in Santa Barbara County. Undoubtedly you have received many communications from Ojai valley residents expressing their displeasure with the potential increase in gravel truck traffic through our community. I am adding my voice, and the voice of our 300 members, representing over 5,000 employees, to this expression.

Traffic through the Ojai Valley via Highway 33 is at an almost constant level year-round. This level has earned a CalTrans traffic efficiency grade of D during non-peak times and an F during peak commuting times. The previous addition of these large capacity trucks with trailers to the stream served only to increase the amount of traffic, the duration of rush hour times, and the potential for fatal and near fatal traffic accidents. Increasing the number and frequency of gravel truck trips will exacerbate an already dangerous situation.

The trucks are too large for the upper section of Highway 33, which is considered a Scenic Highway by the State of California. As they work their way down from the Lockwood Valley, the trucks are continuously crossing over the center line encroaching on already narrow lanes of the opposing uphill traffic. The noise and fumes generated are noxious and disturbing. From the many personal reports from Matilija Canyon residents, these trucks do not follow the guidelines for times to travel on highway 33. They will continue to ignore these limitations because there is no oversight and there is no apparent penalty for non-compliance.

Ojai's economy is tourist driven. Much of what attracts visitors to this valley are the natural recreational facilities surrounding us. Predominate among them is the Los Padres National Forest, and specifically the Sespe Wilderness area. As tales of gravel truck near misses increase, the number of visitors coming to the Ojai to camp and hike in the Sespe will drop. Local usage of the area has already been adversely affected. A decrease in overall tourism will have an adverse impact on our local businesses to continue to make a profit, whether they are in hospitality, retail or food and beverage service.

I urge upon you for your consideration that you rethink your decision to permit an increase in gravel truck trips through the Ojai Valley area along Highway 33. If you were to route these trucks through your county, particularly through Montecito or Capintaria along Highway 192, you would be hearing from your voting constituents at an even more vocal level than you will be hearing from those of us in Ojai. Santa Barbara County is receiving the profit from this permit; I suggest they take the responsibility for the traffic and pollution as well.

Sincerely,
Scott Eicher
CEO
Ojai Valley Chamber of Commerce

Concerned Ojai Resident