



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Los Padres National Forest

6755 Hollister Ave.,  
Suite 150  
Goleta, CA 93117  
805-968-6640  
805-068-6790 TTY  
805-961-5729 FAX

File Code: 1560/1970/2370

Date: February 1, 2007

County of Santa Barbara Planning Department  
Attn: Gary Kaiser  
24 W. Foster Road  
Santa Maria, CA 93455

Re: Diamond Rock Sand and Gravel Mine, Santa Barbara County

Dear Mr. Kaiser:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input regarding the proposed Diamond Rock Sand and Gravel Mine operation in the Cuyama Valley. Our concerns are related to the projected significant increases in truck traffic on State Route 33 through Los Padres National Forest.

The Chief of the Forest Service in 1995 designated the segment of SR33 through Los Padres National Forest as the "Jacinto Reyes National Forest Scenic Byway." The byway was established because of the highway corridor's outstanding scenic, cultural, historic and interpretive values. This segment of SR33 provides an exceptional motor touring opportunity, offering views and access to four congressionally designated wilderness areas and the Sespe Wild and Scenic River corridor. SR33 serves as a key access point to the national forest for recreationists from Kern, Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Los Angeles Counties; it also attracts visitors from around the world. Additionally, SR33 is a State Scenic Highway. The California Scenic Highway Program serves to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways.

It is our understanding that the volume of gravel truck traffic (currently 60 vehicles per day) is expected to at least double with this proposal. In addition to the general incompatibility of gravel truck traffic with scenic byway values, the Forest Service is concerned about the following specific issues:

1. Public Safety – Public safety on SR33 is a key concern to us in our role as first responders (along with the CHP) to vehicle accidents on the highway. The highway is narrow and twisting, and contains several tunnels. The highway's design leaves little room for driver error or evasive action such as swerving to avoid rocks on the highway. Increased truck traffic may result in increased vehicle accidents.
2. Noise – "Driving for pleasure" is one of the most popular activities in Los Padres National Forest. Heavy commercial truck traffic on SR33 generates significant noise, including noise from "Jake" brakes that carries for several miles along and beyond the



highway corridor. Excessive truck noise has a direct negative effect on camping at Wheeler Gorge, Rose Valley, and Pine Mountain campgrounds, and dispersed recreation such as swimming, snow play and hunting.

3. Air Pollution – Diesel exhaust from an increased number of gravel trucks hauling heavy loads through mountainous terrain may further deteriorate the air quality in the four adjacent wildernesses and the Wild and Scenic River corridor.
4. Delayed Access – Existing gravel truck traffic has created a perpetual need for highway maintenance. Patching or repaving the highway surface is constant affecting public and emergency use of the road. Increased truck traffic will increase the frequency of maintenance activity.

In summary, we believe that the proposed increase in gravel truck traffic on SR33 through Los Padres National Forest would result in significant social and public safety impacts that cannot be mitigated. If you have any questions about our concerns, then please call District Ranger John Bridgwater at 805-646-4348.

*/s/ Kenneth E. Heffner*  
KENNETH E. HEFFNER  
Forest Supervisor