Public Comment on Las Pilitas Quarry Project DEIR
Henry A J Ramos to: mwilson 06/03/2013 08:40 PM

Mr. Murray Wilson
Environmental Resource Specialist
San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Resources

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Las Pilitas Quarry Project that is proposed to be sited in my community.

The main purpose of this correspondence is to express my strong opposition to the project. Like many concerned members of the community who have followed the application process, I am not persuaded the project can be implemented without undue costs and risks to the surrounding area, which in its nature is a non-industrial, agricultural locale.

Over time, with the continuation of recent additional sources of new traffic pressure from the extant Hansen Quarry's extractive activities and the east-bound construction of new solar facilities on and around Highway 58, I fear this project's added burdens on the area's pristine nature and historical use for agriculture, outdoor recreation and light tourism will irreversibly damage our local quality of life. In this connection, I see many aspects of the proposed project that cause me concern – the addition of more heavy trucking activity and congestion, allied transportation safety issues, and related waste and use management challenges all come to mind.

Of greatest concern to me in this context is the absence of clarification throughout the process to date concerning the scope of and responsibility for supporting the long term additional costs of road wear and tear on Highway 58 and select connected traffic corridors (such as I Street in Santa Margarita) that are sure to be intensified if the proposed conditional use permit is approved. It does not appear to me that any aspect of the Draft Environmental Impact Report materials prepared as part of the Quarry review considers these cost issues.

The concerns stated herein are especially germane to the review process at hand since Highway 58 was never intended to serve as an industrial traffic route. Indeed, this relatively small and very winding state highway was only recently exempted from prior official safety warnings to re-route heavy commercial trucks

with multiple beds to alternative east bound routes, like Highways 41E and 46E—this owing to the concentrated activities of multiple new solar energy and utility plant developments in the region.

In fact, Highway 58 is manifestly ill-suited to support sustained industrial traffic, as has been made clear over the past two years by the notable increase in roadside trash and debris and systematic unsafe traffic lane encroachments by trucking vehicles that area residents have well documented. To impose additional traffic inspired burdens onto Highway 58 and its surrounding neighborhoods threatens to compromise the enduring rural character of our community by turning the Santa Margarita corridor into a more industrial, rather than an agricultural area. Such changes in turn would risk additional safety hazards to the community that are ultimately undesirable and unnecessary.

As a matter of fairness, it would be inappropriate for the project to be approved in such a way that passes along an undue share of the applicants' transportation impact costs to surrounding residents. I feel strongly, as I am sure others in the community do, that it is essential for local taxpayers in the areas prospectively affected by this project to be assured we will not be required to subsidize its owners' private gains by being made to cover the applicants' external costs to repair our local transportation routes as damage is incurred through their added use of our area's limited (and already very burdened) traffic thoroughfares.

It also would be inappropriate for the wider community to absorb additional safety hazards on our roads that would be created by approval of the petition in question should the applicants not be required (even if approved to proceed with the project) to absorb proportional costs required to maintain the multiple traffic corridors they will necessarily use in order to advance their business aims.

I urge the Planning Department and Commission reviewing this application, as well as the County Board of Supervisors who will ultimately vote on its fate to require the incorporation of cost recovery calculations and policies for the proposed project's immediate and long term impacts on road safety, maintenance and repair across the various phases of development that are envisioned. Once these costs are fully calculated, I urge the decision makers in this process to assign those costs and responsibilities to the applicant's required fee assessments to advance the work they propose to do.

Absent such arrangements, and related efforts by the applicants to ensure the

continued natural integrity and safety of our region, I am afraid I will be compelled to urge the relevant decision makers in this process to oppose the applicants' request for permission to develop the proposed Las Pilitas Quarry.

As a state official serving as a gubernatorial appointee on the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, and as a leader of other public and nonprofit community boards here in the region and across the nation, I am well aware of the complexity of review decisions like those now in your hands and those of your colleagues. I know these decisions are typically complex and rarely easy to reach. However, as a public official myself, I always err on the side of doing no permanent harm and always putting the interests of the broader community above those of purely privately-interested individuals. In a democracy like the one we live in, it seems to me this is the best way to ensure that immediate profit opportunities, however appealing, do not preclude future generations from enjoying the same opportunities our predecessors and we have enjoyed during our turns at the wheel. I fear that allowing this limited use permit absent a more watchful eye to contain its long term negative impacts on community economy, safety and the environment would pose a grave and irreversible mistake for all concerned.

Thank you again for this opportunity to express my views and concerns on the issues,

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