



## CENTRAL COAST SALMON ENHANCEMENT, INC.

*Enhancing Fisheries while  
Improving the Environment*

June 4, 2013

Murry Wilson  
Environmental Resource Specialist  
Department of Planning and Building  
976 Osos St., Rm. 300  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

RE: Oster/Las Pilitas Quarry EIR Comments

Dear Mr. Wilson,

Please accept the following comments on the Oster/Las Pilitas Quarry EIR.

### Biological Resources

Regarding the reclamation process involving restoring sections of the hill-side as quarry activities cease over time, what is the provision for guaranteeing that funding will be in place for restoration activities? If the quarry operation fails as a business at any point in the project life-time, there must be a mechanism to ensure that reclamation/decommissioning for areas where mining has ceased can be paid for. If no such condition yet exists, I suggest a condition that requires the company to provide commensurate restoration/decommissioning funding prior to the start of use and excavation of subsequent sections of the mine so that restoration can be accomplished by the county or a vendor in the event the mine owners cannot.

Does declaration of open space and concomitant oak preservation suffice as mitigation? I suggest a condition of replacement of lost oaks at a 2:1 ratio as adequate mitigation. Further, the open space mitigation is less than adequate. I suggest a condition of off-site mitigation through the purchase of lands in the amount of 41 acres of equal or greater value to replace those disturbed, to be placed into permanent conservation easement.

While direct impact on the threatened South-Central California Coast Steelhead trout cannot be addressed in this particular single project since the species is not directly affected, the larger issue of extraction in and adjacent to the Salinas River remains unassessed and of critical importance. With the County's RFP entitled The Salinas River Watershed Management Plan in February 2010 not being acted upon, it is not possible to fully assess and confirm oversubscription of vested mines and their future cumulative impact to instream and adjacent contributory gravel availability for the recommended (National Marine Fisheries Service) 50% by-pass. Attempting to review and approve mines in this vicinity without that wider assessment in place makes cumulative impacts portrayed in this EIR invalid. Without a solid understanding of exactly how much of this material is replenished every year during the rainy season, how much actual mineral extraction the larger watershed system can support and how the use of the watershed systems will be monitored to ensure that downstream impacts to neighboring

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properties (i.e., headcutting and erosion) are avoided, reviewing individual extraction projects is irresponsible and not well-founded.

According to the County's aforementioned RFP:

"...As a result, it was determined that a comprehensive resource inventory and assessment of the Salinas River, its tributaries and associated watershed would be a valuable tool. In addition, the County has determined that to best manage this system, studies are needed to determine the scientifically based limit for safe annual yield of material from the system along with the identification of areas appropriate for extractive activities in consideration of other land uses in order to encourage sustainable and renewable operations in the river system. In addition to providing the County with a comprehensive understanding of the valuable local sand and gravel resource, this plan would be intended to allow the County to calculate projected needs for river resources and measure that against current capacity, and assess the best locations and methods for resource development from the perspective of **protecting public trust resources.**" (Emphasis added.)

According to a document prepared for a separate mine proposal, Preliminary Bedload Sediment Budget for Salinas and Estrella Rivers, May 4, 2009, and attached here for the record, California Department of Fish and Wildlife Senior Engineering Geologist Kit Custis urged the county to move toward a cumulative effects analysis and environmental impact report to cover extractive uses to better understand the existing bedload deficit of the Upper Salinas River.

If the county continues to act in evaluating Upper Salinas River extraction projects in a piecemeal fashion, it does so in consideration of the liability for not protecting the public trust resources the county apparently understands to be central to this discussion.

Note name change of California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) to California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

### Water Supply

Experience has shown that projects might intentionally underestimate proposed water usage for expedient review and approval of the proposed project, only to subsequently request and submit water EIR addendums requesting additional water which do not require CEQA public review. Therefore, I request that a condition be added that expressly forbids additional water use requests via water EIR addenda.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

Stephnie Wald, Watershed Projects Manager

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