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## Sunol battles over temple, quarry

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Restored to its former glory, the Sunol Water Temple, the century-old tribute to Rome's Temple of Vesta, has just earned a prestigious award from the California Preservation Foundation.

Yet those involved in the painstaking and costly restoration are finding it hard to celebrate, given the approval of the mining quarry next to the temple that renowned architect Willis Polk considered his masterwork.

It's the cost of doing business in the Bay Area, where a booming construction industry requires sand and gravel to feed the machine. Last fall after a prolonged battle, Mission Valley Rock of Sunol obtained the permit from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, which owns the land, to mine the 200-acre site.

While developers cheered, Sunol residents and those involved in preserving the beloved landmark mourned.

"It's disheartening. It's very sad," said Charlie Duncan, the lead preservation architect from Carey & Co. of San Francisco. "That temple sits happily in a big broad piece of ground. It's very sad that the site is being compromised by the quarry."

But Mort Calvert, chief engineer for Mission Valley Rock, said the environmental safeguards for this project were exceptionally stringent.

"(These are) the most conditions of approval of any project 93 conditions. They have never required the intensity of landscaping and grading and groundwater protection that we have to follow for this project," Calvert said. "It's the price of getting that resource and that resource is very important."

But Duncan, who spent hundreds of hours first researching how to save the 100-year-old rotting wood with its curiously painted muses and then creating a procedure to actually preserve it, can't understand why after spending \$1.2 million to restore the temple the PUC would jeopardize it with a quarry.

"I'm very concerned that airborne dust and vibrations (from mining) will hurt the temple," he said. "Willis Polk engineered this so it's exquisitely beautiful from far away and close up."

That's exactly why Sunol residents are up in arms to protect the temple, which was built in 1910 to mark the merging of three water sources, Alameda Creek, De La Laguna Creek and artesian wells of Pleasanton. Despite the rumblings, Calvert said Mission Valley Rock plans to begin preparing the site for mining the 40 million tons of sand and gravel this spring.

"We have a 40-year contract. It's legal and binding. We're really through talking," Calvert said. "The boss said today that we've spent nearly 16 years from thinking about it to getting a contract."

Pat Stillman, founder of Save Our Sunol, feels the same way. She and others have been working to gather support from the San Francisco PUC to save the temple since it was closed to the public following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

"The quarry is a 200-acre pit at the entrance of the town next to the Water Temple. It's a terrible blight and there's also the public health and safety issue," she said. "It's 300 yards from the school playground."

In spite of the signed contract, Stillman is hopeful that the newly elected San Francisco Board of Supervisors will revisit the issue and take another vote.

"We don't think it's a done deal," said Jeff Miller director of the Alameda Creek Alliance, which is working with Stillman to stop the quarry. "The previous board certified the EIR (environmental impact report), which we think was flawed and inadequate."

Ironically, the concrete used for the dozen 40-foot columns was crumbling because it was such poor quality as opposed to the high-quality sand and gravel that will be mined from the quarry.