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FOES OF PLANNED QUARRY ENLIST NEW S.F. SUPERVISORS CRITICS WANT LEASE FOR PROJECT TO BE RESCINDED

GIL JOSE DURAN, Mercury News

Sunol residents and environmentalists who oppose a controversial new quarry near the Alameda County town received a nod of affirmation Wednesday from two San Francisco supervisors who passed a resolution urging colleagues to rescind an approval for the project.

The resolution, supported by new supervisors Chris Daly and Matt Gonzalez, says the board should discontinue plans for the Mission Valley Rock Co. quarry because they will result in "safety and health impacts to students" of Sunol Glen School and "environmental desecration."

Impressed by documents that show Mission Valley Rock dumped polluted water from an existing quarry into Alameda Creek at least 15 times last year, the two supervisors said the city should explore terminating the company's lease.

The full board of supervisors will take up the resolution April 23.

San Francisco supervisors approved plans in November for a new quarry on 252 acres the city owns just north of Interstate 680, near the Sunol Water Temple. But Daly and Gonzalez are members of a new board elected that same month.

Species cited

Environmentalists argue that the existing quarry and the new one pose a threat to the Alameda Creek ecosystem, which includes the protected Alameda whipsnake and California red-legged frog.

Patricia Stillman, president of Save Our Sunol, said the recently exposed wastewater dumping violates the company's lease with the city.

"When the board of supervisors was going to vote on this last year, Mission Valley Rock told supervisors that the company had not had any violations like this," said Stillman. "They lied. By Mission Valley Rock's own admission, they had multiple violations last year alone."

Company officials could not be reached for comment.

Those violations include the dumping of water with excessive amounts of solid waste, sediment level and pH levels. Mission Valley Rock revealed the violations to the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board in monthly reports last year, but they didn't come to light until recently when Jeff Miller of the Alameda Creek Alliance checked the board's files.

After Sunol residents spoke Wednesday, Daly and Gonzalez asked city attorneys how the city might go about terminating the company's lease. Charles Sullivan, a city real estate attorney who helped negotiate the lease, said rescinding the lease could be complicated.

"There has to be some way to ensure that the likelihood of severe environmental impact does not take place," said Gonzalez. Daly said the city has a responsibility to respect Alameda County's small towns and creek-dependent ecosystem.

Appeal to conscience

"We're supposed to be the city of St. Francis; we're supposed to care about folks who are not as big and powerful as we are," Daly said. "It's a highly legal matter, but when you pull back and look at the impact this could have on environment and on people's lives, anybody with a conscience can see what needs to be done."