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Page: 1B

Memo: QUARRY CONCERNS

Residents of Sunol, an unincorporated area between Fremont and Pleasanton off Interstate 680, have been fighting Mission Valley Rock Co.'s plans for a new quarry near their community.

Quarry size: 252 acres

Quarry location: north of Interstate 680 near the Sunol Water Temple

Length of Mission Valley Rock Co.'s lease with San Francisco: 40 years

Number of environmental violations by company at existing quarry: At least 15 within the last year

Arguments against the new quarry: It would threaten the water temple, and present a health and safety threat to the community, especially to Sunol Glen Elementary School students.

Action: San Francisco supervisors approved a resolution Monday that seeks to discontinue the company's permit for the new quarry.

Source: San Francisco and Sunol residents

S.F. OFFICIALS SEEK END TO SUNOL QUARRY PERMITS

GIL JOSE DURAN, Mercury News

San Francisco supervisors voted 6-1 Monday to approve a resolution that seeks to discontinue a Sunol quarry operator's permit to mine city-owned land in southern Alameda County.

Supervisor Chris Daly, author of the resolution, called Mission Valley Rock Co. a "corporate polluter" and said the company lied to the board in November when, under questioning from Supervisor Tom Ammiano, its representatives denied that the company dumped excessively polluted water into Alameda Creek.

San Francisco Bay Area Water Quality Control Board records show the company had at least 15 violations last year alone.

"San Francisco has an obligation to be a good neighbor," said Daly, who spent Sunday afternoon touring Sunol, an unincorporated community between Fremont and Pleasanton off Interstate 680. "We can't place profits and back-room deals over environmental concerns and the health of this small community."

Supervisor Tony Hall, who provided the lone vote against the resolution, said pulling out of the city's contract with Mission Valley Rock Co. could prove costly. The company has threatened to sue the city for up to \$200 million in lost profits, Hall said.

"We're also going to lose between \$50 million and \$60 million in revenue from the contract," said Hall. "City services will suffer."

Daly -- whose resolution was backed by Save Our Sunol, the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society -- said the company's repeated pollution of the creek last year is in violation of the company's contract with the city.

"I have some confidence in our city attorney to be able to get us out of this contract with Mission Valley Rock," he said.

Now that the resolution has passed, city attorneys will explore possible legal action to terminate the city's lease with the company.

Mission Valley Rock Co. -- which operates a quarry west of Sunol -- wants to build a new quarry on 252 acres of city-owned land that stretches north of I-680. One edge of the proposed quarry would be 300 yards from Sunol Glen Elementary and within sight of the Willis Polk Water Temple, a recently renovated monument. Sunol community groups have waged a fierce campaign against the new quarry.

Bree James, vice president of Save Our Sunol, said she was cautiously optimistic after the board passed the resolution.

"We've walked out of here in tears before," she said. "We're not cynical, but we're not naive. This is just a first step; we have a lot of work to do."

Mission Valley Rock Co. could not be reached for comment.

Alameda Creek Alliance spokesman Jeff Miller said the resolution marks a turning point in relations between Alameda County and San Francisco -- a major owner of land in the East Bay. "It's a step in the right direction," said Miller, who discovered records of Mission Valley Rock's dumping violations during a check of state records.

"It's obvious that the city shouldn't stand by a company that has continually polluted Alameda Creek."

Alameda Creek is a key part of the East Bay's ecosystem -- which includes such endangered inhabitants as the Alameda whipsnake and California red-legged frog. Mission Valley Rock Co.'s dumping violations included the dumping of water with excessive amounts of solid waste, sediment and pH levels.