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Activist coalition in Sunol seeks time to plan future

By Bonita Brewer
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Members of four activist groups will join forces in seeking a moratorium in Sunol on everything from quarries to compost facilities while they put together a proposed plan outlining a different vision for the Sunol Valley.

"We hope to figure out some sort of plan to protect and preserve the quality of life in our valley," said Pat Stillman of Save Our Sunol.

"Sunol Valley is a beautiful, historic little valley, and we think it's totally unfair that everything should be dumped on us. We want a little reprieve on some of these things."

Save Our Sunol for 15 years has been fighting plans for a quarry near town on land owned by the San Francisco Water Department. With its legal options dwindling, the group met Monday night with three other groups in an effort to bring a more unified voice to concerns facing Sunol.

One group, the Alameda Creek Alliance, among other things has been fighting plans for another quarry, on privately owned Apperson Ridge land southeast of Sunol.

Another group, called Stop the Dump in Sunol, has been fighting the Alameda County Waste Management Authority's proposed compost facility on Andrade Road property that would be leased or purchased from San Francisco. The fourth group is the Tri-Valley's Preserve Area Ridgeland Committee.

At Monday's meeting, attended by about 60 people, the new coalition decided to ask Alameda County and San Francisco to hold off for now on quarries and compost facilities.

"We'll put together a resolution asking them for a cease-fire, to not move forward on any of these industrial projects until our (proposed) specific plan for Sunol is prepared," said Jeff Miller of the creek alliance. "Sunol residents are as tired as we are in fighting every little project that comes along and wants to get Alameda County and San Francisco to do some long-term planning."

In 2003, Save Our Sunol's lawsuit against planned expansion of Mission Valley Rock Co.'s quarry to the northwest side of Interstate 680 was denied, and earlier this year the state Supreme Court declined to review the case. The quarry was recently bought by Hanson Aggregates.

Stillman and Miller said there may be remaining legal avenues to pursue and believe the separate Apperson Ridge quarry lacks all necessary permits. What's more, they said they hope joining forces will give them stronger political clout.

Alameda County Supervisor Gail Steele, who represents the populated portion of Sunol, said she supports a moratorium but is unsure if it will fly politically.

"I think it's a practical solution, but think it's uphill all the way," Steele said.

Supervisor Scott Haggerty, who represents the undeveloped parts of Sunol, was unavailable Tuesday for comment.