



SIERRA CLUB

TEHIPITE CHAPTER

Cemex Requests Extension of Mining Lease Along the San Joaquin River: 100-year Quarry Blasting Proposal Still to Come

By Brenda Markham

Cemex's application for a new conditional use permit to continue mining operations near the San Joaquin River is appalling. Our politicians and bureaucrats have their priorities mixed up. This application is to keep open their nearly depleted quarry, but Cemex's real goal is to obtain future County approval for a proposal to blast a 600-foot-deep pit into hard rock by the San Joaquin River. I thought we were in the process of restoring the river, including bringing back the salmon! This river has suffered enough already. We need protection, **not** destruction of the San Joaquin.

Common sense tells us there will be trouble for the nearby wildlife, let alone local residents having to put up with noise, traffic and pollution. What about the San Joaquin River Parkway? Is not this supposed to be part of the County's General Plan? The Parkway is designed to be a natural and recreational area, in harmony with the environment. Please, no more damage to the San Joaquin River.

This Cemex plan should cause concern, too, for all area residents, especially those in the vicinity of the River. Not only would this be an environmental catastrophe, but nearby residents would be affected: air pollution, noise from blasting, and traffic from hundreds of truck trips along Friant Road.

Marek Warszawski reports in the Feb. 26, 2023 Fresno Bee: "[This March], Fresno County's department of public works and planning circulated a 57-page conditional use permit application that would extend Cemex's aggregate mining operations for an additional four years. . . While this application proposes no changes to the mining methods currently being employed, it's clear the company hasn't given up on its horrible idea to blast and drill a 600-foot-deep pit near the San Joaquin [River]."

Cemex's legal counsel states that the reason behind its application for a 4-year project extension is delays in preparing the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Warszawski adds, "As I've written previously, Fresno County and the river that forms its northern border have been stuck in an abusive relationship for long enough. We take and take and take and leave nothing except irreparable scars." <https://www.fresnobee.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/marek-warszawski/article272562039.html#storylink=cpy>

Back in September, 2021, I contacted David Randall of the Fresno County Department of Planning and Land Use. My concern was to obtain the Draft EIR for the request of an extension of their mining lease along the San Joaquin River. I never did hear back from David Randall—and now I know why! Turns out, *they never did find that EIR.*

I'm concerned about Cemex's action, and also that of the Fresno County Supervisors, who failed

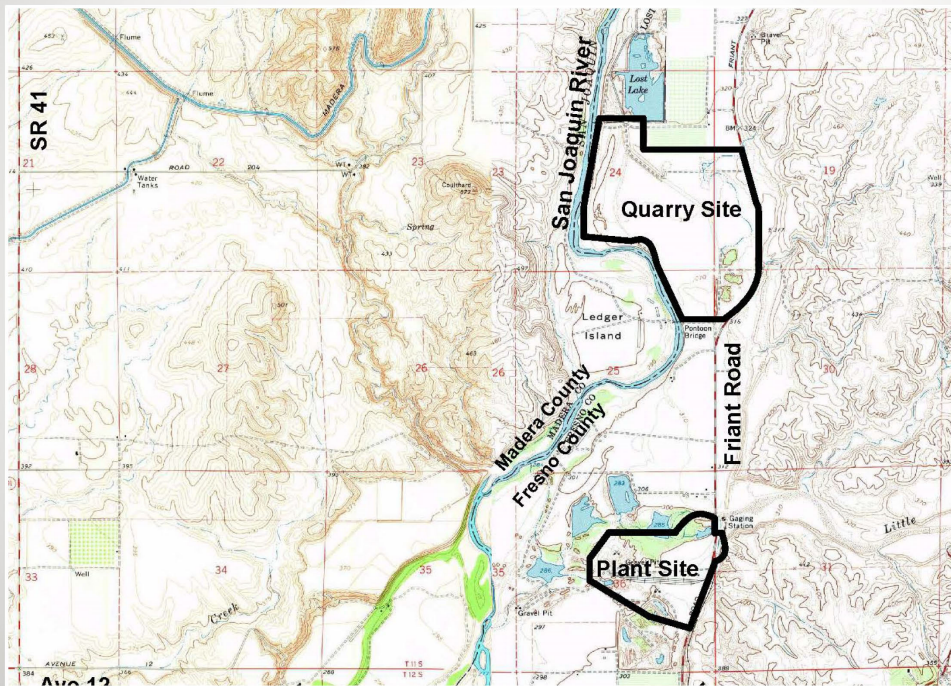
to inform the public of this application for a project extension, and also of its proposal to blast and drill a 600-foot-deep pit near the San Joaquin River. Sharon Weaver, Executive Director of the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, shares my concern: "On reviewing the documents that the County included in this latest CUP [Conditional Use Permit] extension request, it appears that Cemex is operating without an EIR at their current location. That's due to the fact that they have been operating there for more than 100 years – since before the [California] Environmental Quality Act or State Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) existed."

What I gather from this information is that Cemex was "grandfathered" in and didn't need to have an EIR. So, where do we go from here? We will not drop this issue — *Cemex needs to be held accountable.*

But, as Marek Warszawski concludes in his article, "*I don't expect our sprawl-addicted county supervisors to do the right thing on this matter — not without a massive public outcry.*"

TO GET INVOLVED in opposing the Cemex quarry expansion, contact Brenda Markham of the Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter, in Fresno, at markhambrenda2@gmail.com, or Gary Lasky at 559-790-3495.

ABOUT THE PROJECT: PROJECT LOCATION MAP



Quarry Site CUPs: 367, 2032, 3063, 3093
Plant Site CUPs: 367, 2032, 2209, 3063, 3093



ON MUSHROOMS (and not missing the forest for the trees)

Prof. Alija Mujic
Fresno State Dept. of Biology

This in-person presentation will be held on **Thursday, May 18, 7:00 to 8:30 pm**, at the **Woodward Park Library**, 944 E. Perrin Ave, in Fresno. There is plenty of free parking, so feel free to invite your friends, students, and their friends.

COME LEARN about mushrooms and edible mushroom hunting in our local Sierra Nevada forests from Fresno State Biology professor Alija Mujic. Dr. Mujic studies how mycorrhizal fungi have a mutually beneficial relationship with trees.

"Every living system, every living thing, especially macroscopic organisms like ourselves, are utterly reliant upon the microbiology we've evolved with. You can't separate us, functionally, as organisms. People are generally interested in the forest, but the forest is so much more than just the trees. It is also all the microbes that support it, like the mushrooms. A healthy forest needs its microbes."

The professor and his students have started their own mushroom hunting club, the Fresno Mycology Society. "All mushrooms should be identified by an expert," he says. "Ideally, that expert should be you!"

Dr. Mujic has degrees in Computer Science and in Environmental Studies from UC Santa Cruz and a Ph.D. in Botany and Plant Pathology from Oregon State University. He and his students use molecular genetic techniques to study the interactions that govern the sharing of nutrients between fungi and plants, and how they communicate through the root connections that they make. He is currently interested in exploring the possibility of co-cropping pecan crops and gourmet edible truffles with local pecan farmers in the Valley.

The actual body of the fungal organism is a fine network of unicellular filaments running through the soil, called the mycelium. The mycelium is to a mushroom what an apple tree is to an apple.

