



SIERRA CLUB

TEHIPITE CHAPTER

The CEMEX quarry needs to go.

On July 18, 2023, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors voted to approve a three-year extension of CEMEX USA's quarry operating permits along the San Joaquin River north of Fresno - CEMEX had asked for a four-year extension. We are told that the vote was unanimous.

The City of Fresno officially objected to the extension application because it is based on analyses dating from the mid-1980s, while affected areas of the City and County have substantially changed in the past 40+ years. The City is obviously concerned about the negative impacts that the County's approval decision will have on Fresno and its residents.

During the Board meeting, Sharon Weaver of the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, reportedly requested that the City of Fresno's objection to the application be upheld. It should be noted that the quarry operates on land along the river that the Trust wants to incorporate into the Parkway.

A few days after the Board's vote, on July 21, 2023, I noticed an informal poll being taken by The Business Journal asking the following question:

"Should CEMEX continue mining gravel at its Rockfield quarry for three more years before updating its EIR (environmental impact report)?"

Although the total votes received was small at that point (233), I was startled to note that more than 86% of respondents said, "No." I would think that readers of The Business Journal would be generally pro-business, so I take this as a conservative representation of public sentiment on the CEMEX issue.

It seems reasonable to me to think that most people in Fresno, and residents in unincorporated areas north of town, would strongly object to the quarry continuing operations. Who would want dozens of gravel-carrying big rigs traveling with them every day as they drive into and out of Fresno to work or shop, or to visit Millerton Lake or points beyond? This truck traffic is more than annoying, it is polluting and potentially dangerous.

But all of this is a warm-up to the real battle coming up, which involves CEMEX's application to change its operations from gravel harvesting to hard rock mining. The plans include blasting the rock down to a depth of 600 feet. CEMEX says the rock is needed to meet road and structure construction needs in the County based on growth projections (that is to say, sprawl).

According to Marek Warszawski's July 27, 2023 Fresno Bee column, the argument that the CEMEX operation is necessary to pave the County's existing and projected roads is misleading, at best. It turns out, the County does not have a contract to purchase gravel from CEMEX for road construction.

The column also points out that, according to CEMEX, the company provides 28% of the gravel aggregate needed for local residential construction (that is to say, sprawl).

But more than this, past political decisions have set in motion the incorporation

of the local river and its adjacent lands into the San Joaquin River Parkway. Whatever anyone believes about the relative merits of ongoing sprawl, this fact remains.

One would be forgiven for feeling baffled that we are even discussing approving CEMEX's continuing operations, never mind the company's plans to expand into hard rock mining, with blasting as a method to do it. How can anyone think that such an operation is compatible with the goal of restoring our beleaguered river and its shores to something resembling its natural state for the enjoyment of the general public?

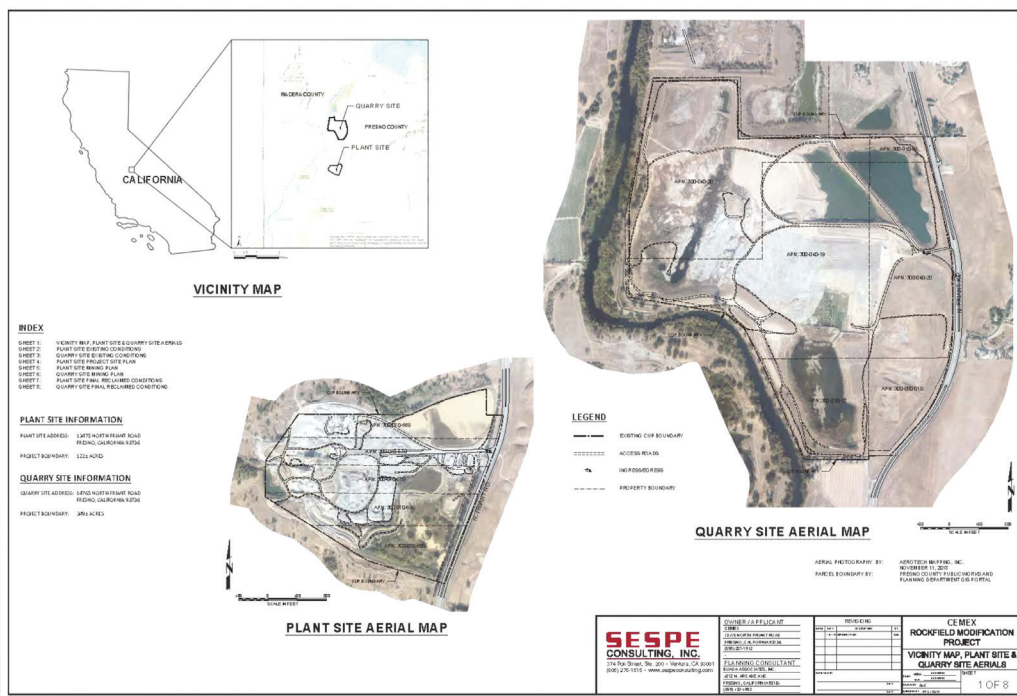
Given that the Supervisors approved the extension application over the objections of the City of Fresno, the Parkway caretaker and (perhaps) the local residents, what can those who object do?

A first step would be to encourage the City of Fresno, or others, to move forward with a lawsuit against the County to stop the Supervisors from approving any more CEMEX applications. It seems logical that a new and updated EIR is necessary, and that such a report would show how damaging CEMEX is, and would be, to the Parkway and to County residents.

It's time for CEMEX's San Joaquin River operations to end.



ABOUT THE PROJECT: EXISTING CONDITIONS



Thursday, September 21 at 7 PM
 Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Woodward Park Regional Library present:

The Influential Women in John Muir's Life, a presentation by Shirley Spencer.

Shirley will discuss the legendary John Muir, influential preservationist, author, naturalist and explorer while considering five of the women who shared, shaped, and enriched his life. Come learn about five women who were crucial to John Muir's development and achievements.

This meeting will be in person at the Woodward Park Regional Library and is free and open to the general public. (944 E. Perrin Ave. Fresno) For more details visit <http://www.sierraclub.org/tehipite>.