

# LAFCO rejects City of Temecula annexation request for Liberty Quarry area

Joe Naiman

Village News Correspondent

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## **UPDATE: June 11**

Riverside County's Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) voted 5-2 June 4 to reject the City of Temecula's request to annex approximately 5,000 acres of unincorporated Riverside County, including the site of the proposed Liberty Quarry.

While the denial of the annexation request retains the County of Riverside's zoning for the area, which includes the allowance of surface mining, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be completed and must be certified by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors before Granite Construction would be allowed to begin quarry operations.

A county LAFCO handles jurisdictional boundary changes including incorporations, annexations, consolidations and detachments.

Riverside County's LAFCO board consists of two county supervisors (currently Bob Buster and John Tavaglione), two city council members (currently Henderson and Robin Lowe of Hemet), two members from special districts (currently Russell Kitahara of the Coachella Valley Water District and Phil Williams of the Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District), and one public member (currently Banning resident Stephen Tomanelli).

Henderson, Kitahara, Lowe, Tomanelli, and Williams voted for the staff recommendation to deny Temecula's annexation request, which would have allowed the city to remove extractive use from the zoning, while Buster and Tavaglione voted against the staff recommendation.

"A lot of what is said about the project either for or against is speculation," Williams said. "This doesn't stop Temecula from presenting their case at a forum in front of the supervisors."

Approximately 4,280 acres of the proposed annexation area is part of the Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve and is managed by San Diego State University for research, conservation, and education purposes.

The area includes approximately 718 acres of private property, nearly all of which have a Rural Mountainous land use designation which allows for single-family residential lots of at least ten acres, limited animal keeping, agriculture, recreational uses, government uses, and resource development which includes extraction of mineral resources with the approval of a surface mining permit.

Proponents of the quarry, and thus opponents of the annexation, noted that the EIR will address any impacts of the mine.

Opponents expressed concern about traffic, air quality, land degradation, water consumption, and habitat linkage.

Ironically, the current environmental philosophy of "carbon footprint," that is the inclusion of transportation impacts between the production and use sites, provides a claim for Liberty Quarry proponents that the site just north of the San Diego-Riverside County boundary is more environmentally suitable than transporting aggregate from eastern Riverside County.

The state's passage of Assembly Bill 32, which mandates greenhouse gas emissions reductions, will be considered during the environmental review.

Avocado grower Ohannes Karaoghlanian told LAFCO that his De Luz grove would be adversely affected by the quarry's water demands, which he stated would be 310 gallons per minute.

The avocado industry has already been impacted by the current water shortage.

"Acres of avocado trees have been stumped," he said. "Approval of the proposal is likely to contribute to further stumping."

Karaoghlanian added that particulate matter emissions would have an adverse effect on beneficial insects, which are used in integrated pest management both to pollinate and to eat insects which threaten crops.

"Without the beneficial insects farms are forced to turn to chemical control methods," he said.

Rainbow Community Planning Group member Bud Swanson also noted the impacts of the quarry's water use requirements.

"This is going to affect avocado farmers, citrus farmers, anyone who is in the business of producing products for our tables," he said.

Greg Johnson of Granite Construction indicated a maximum likely use of 370 acre feet of water (approximately 120 million gallons) annually and expects much of that water to be recycled supply.

The entrance to the quarry site would be off of Rainbow Valley Boulevard.

Rainbow Community Planning Group member Jim Anderson noted that his planning area has 920 lots and 683 homes and currently has an average daily traffic volume of approximately 2,000 vehicles.

He told LAFCO that the quarry would add approximately 4,000 trucks per day. "We won't be able to get out on the freeway," he said.

"We need to keep this pristine place preserved," said Marilee Ragland, who has lived in Rainbow since 1976 and whose husband's family has lived in Rainbow since 1943.

Fallbrook resident Jim Oenning addressed the air quality and other environmental impacts of the Bunker Hill Mine in northern Idaho, 22 miles from Oenning's boyhood town of Mullan.

"EPA is in there scraping the first eight inches of soil off of that land," Oenning said. "That's how far crystalline silica goes."

The presence of arsenic and crystalline silica has made Mullan the US Environmental Protection Agency's current top Superfund cleanup site even though the lead, silver, and zinc mining was underground rather than through surface extraction. "It's trickled out," Oenning said.

Lynn Davis addressed water quality from the Santa Margarita River, which provides two-thirds of Camp Pendleton's water needs.

"Approval of Temecula's annexation request will also help preserve the quality of Camp Pendleton's drinking water," she said.

Approximately 200 residents live on Rainbow Glen Road. Most of those are in San Diego County while the remainder lives in the Riverside County area considered for annexation.

"I contacted nearly every resident and all opposed the quarry," Jerri Arganda of Rainbow said.

Johnson claimed that 70 percent of the private landowners opposed annexation of their area to Temecula.

"Eighty-six percent of the land is not affected by which jurisdiction it's in," he said. "The majority of private property owners who would be directly impacted have told you they want to stay in Riverside County."

Johnson also noted that the Liberty Quarry site was zoned for mining prior to Temecula's 1989 incorporation as a city.

"This proposal attempts to regulate land uses through LAFCO process," he said. "This violates the purpose of annexations."

Johnson noted that the Liberty Quarry project would take up six percent of the area's four square miles of habitat linkage area and noted that Temecula hadn't requested the annexation of the adjacent habitat linkage area east of Interstate 15.

Economist John Husing not only cited the estimated \$625 million of tax revenue over the lifetime of the quarry but also noted that trucking aggregate from Rainbow Valley Road to San Diego County would daily relieve Lake Elsinore of approximately 1,200 trucks, Murrieta of approximately 1,050 trucks, and Temecula of approximately 440 trucks.

Husing also explained that approximately 38,000 tons of aggregate per mile are needed for a four-lane road, approximately 15,000 tons are required to build a school, and approximately 400 tons are used to build a home.

"If we build things on emotions we will never build anything. Our country would go under," Murrieta's Bob Kowell said of opposition to the quarry.

Kowell's wife once lived next to the Azusa Quarry. "She never noticed the trucks. She never noticed the sound. She never noticed the dust," he said.

The EIR, and likely the surface mining permit itself, is likely to include mitigation of noise, dust, habitat, traffic, and other impacts.

Richard Brady of Fallbrook noted that water would be used regardless of where the aggregate was produced.

He added that northern San Diego County once had several operating quarries but now only has one, which has led to an increase in the cost of aggregate.

"I think it's the right time to let this happen," he said.

Granite Construction's draft Environmental Impact Report is expected shortly.

Gary Johnson notes that the concerns of the neighbors will be taken into account during the finalization of the EIR.

"Their concerns need to be addressed and they need to be addressed through the county's process," he said.

**13 comments for "LAFCO rejects City of Temecula annexation request for Liberty Quarry area"**

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8:11 pm Fri, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009

1. **SGPass** says :

If it wasn't for all the aggregate and construction for I-15, the great corridor that vaulted the Temecula Valley into prosperity would not exist. I guess back then Temecula did not mind the "inconvenience" to the rest of the good citizens of Riverside County. Without the freeway, there would be none of the commerce that is so necessary to the economic success of the region, an area that concerns the needs of all the people of the county. Where was the outrage concerning the impact to the reserve when Interstate 15 was being built? All I heard was crickets chirping.

1:21 pm Sat, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009

2. **B** says :

Concerned over the negative impact that the Liberty Quarry would have on their lives and their health, an overwhelming number of Temecula's citizens have voiced their opposition to the Liberty Quarry. But the state governmental agencies and businesses supporting the Quarry offer profit as their motivation -- more money for Granite Construction, more tax revenue for state coffers.

Should Temecula's annexation proposal be denied, it would mean that, once again, money rules, and the people would pay the price.

This issue should be decided by a vote of the people. That is what our government is supposed to do -- REPRESENT THE WILL OF ITS CITIZENS.

1:43 pm Sun, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009

3. **Reality** says :

Temecula was a mining town over 150 years ago. And get this - the granite that was mined was shipped by rail down the Santa Margarita River to the coast. My what a short memory we have.

1:40 am Tue, Jun 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009

4. **Fall Res** says :

Reality - I would think that 150 years ago people had no idea what type of impact that the mining industry had on their health. The point is, you don't build a new massive mining operation so close to a populated area. The air is polluted enough and the roadways clogged enough without the addition mess of "Liberty" thank you!

9:47 am Tue, Jun 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009

5. **Steven M.** says :

The main reason for creating the gigantic mining operation is the almighty dollar for a few crafty investors, but at the expense of the health and welfare of the large population much too close to be safe. There are rocky, mountainous areas all over the west. No shortage of rocks. The freeway is already a mess at times, especially when the border patrol is stopping traffic and can already back up a mile or two. The tremendous increase in diesel trucks would add to the traffic woes as well as polluting the air with very fine dust and diesel fumes. I had health problems from sitting over a diesel engine for 30 years as a driver in L.A. I came out here for clean air and a better life. I don't want to create a windfall profit for the gravel company. The threat to my home investment and 20 years of work in creating my life's dream is of major concern to me and everyone else in the same boat. I know the difference between a few trucks and a tremendous load of them trying to cram into a bottleneck at the freeway. Been there and done that. That's why I moved here. Financial profit alone cannot be a good enough reason to despoil this area with far too many people in close proximity to the area.

10:36 am Fri, Jun 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009

6. **Justacitizen** says :

I was at the meeting today and saw quite a few more green hats (pro-annexation) than yellow. Unfortunately, buses came to take away the green hats before some could speak. I just cannot

believe the commission could vote against annexation after such compelling arguments in favor of annexation. And who is Granite going to hire for all of these 100 (ha) jobs? Americans? I'm assuming not, after hearing Julio Marroquin.

12:33 pm Fri, Jun 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009

7. **Jake** says :

"In a blow to the hopes of thousands of residents, the city of Temecula's bid to annex 5,000 acres on its southwestern border was rejected Thursday night by the county's Local Agency Formation Commission.

As a result of the panel not approving the annexation, Granite Construction can move forward with its application to dig a quarry in a 400-acre corner of the acreage near the community of Rainbow."

And btw JustaCitizen - change your name to JustABigot ! I guess only Mexicans are good enough to work there?

I love this - NIMBY citizens 0, capitalism 1.

9:56 pm Sun, Jun 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009

8. **Sam** says :

This is disgusting, I wonder how much cash Granite Construction slipped into those officials pockets. I have lived in temecula for 21 years, and I enjoy hiking in the Santa Margarita riverbed. Where is the demand for gravel???? I am a construction worker business is SLOW!!! Go get your gravel ELSEWHERE. Whoever is in favor of this mine please give me a reply. Where is the EPA when you need them?

12:31 pm Wed, Jun 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009

9. **justacitizen** says :

Umm, Jake - some of my family is from Mexico - I grew up there part of my life. I'm assuming by your name you are American. If you are willing to give up opportunities for work that will be given to people of illegal status here in the US, using false documents, good luck to you. Being bi-lingual and bi-cultural, I know a lot of people who get away working here illegally. I am just making an observation. I don't condone this type of action and I think it is unfair for Americans. A lot of big companies (especially in construction) sub-contract to agencies who employ undocumented people. It's a fact. This is just PART of why this State is in such disarray. To call me a bigot is laughable.

7:18 pm Wed, Jun 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009

10. **Weatherman** says :

For all you who whine about "NIMBY's - why don't you volunteer to have a quarry or a dump put next door to your home.

Submit your address, we'll contact the right people.

4:02 pm Thu, Jun 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009

11. **John (Homeowner)** says :

We in San Diego love the way your County Supervisors have always whored out Riverside county for decades for other counties. It keeps our standard of living and property values higher and yours will always stay a 2nd rate county. They always feel it'll help their county. Wow, I'm glad we don't have guys like that working for us. With all the mining in Riverside County you'd think it would be the richest and nicest Counties.

It's also fun to watch the infighting of your communities. Banning is tired of the trucks as well is Hemet. Both on the board of LAFCO, so they stuck it to Temecula instead of San Diego. Like hens in a henhouse. Highschool junk. But they missed the point. With such antics Riverside county will always be a place to die. Hemet, Banning, Lake Elsinore, Indio, and yes, even Palm Springs. Has always been and will always be a place to die and not live.

Thanks guys.

9:33 am Fri, Jun 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009

12. **John** says :

Jake says, "I love this - NIMBY citizens 0, capitalism 1."

Jake, you got it wrong, we San Diego NIMBY's won!

Thanks for the support.

9:28 am Mon, Jun 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009

13. **JJ** says :

Seems strange that the article from the North County Times that preceded the annexation meeting with LAFCO had Gary Johnson of Granite almost claiming defeat if the annexation was granted. If you have ever worked in management for a large Corporation you know you never admit defeat in anything if you want to keep your job. Gary knew something about LAFCO that we didn't. He wouldn't stick his neck out if he didn't know it was already a done deal.

Crooks.