

# Ensure mining mitigation as advertised

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The inevitable happened last week when the Azusa City Council approved a plan by Vulcan Materials Co. to mine more rock on the western ridge of its property, closer to Duarte.

For decades, Azusa has permitted mining of the mountain canyon property, which is owned by Vulcan. Although this latest decision had its drawn-out battles and even a reversal from an earlier City Council denial, the cards were stacked in favor of Vulcan and against nearby residents. Vulcan owns the property and has a fairly unblemished history of mining in the city. The new plan would affect residents of Duarte more than residents of Azusa. With Duarte having no vote, and the five votes in the hands of the members of the Azusa City Council, the outcome seemed clear from the get-go.

So, barring any court injunctions, we will not see the end of mining on the face of the San Gabriel Mountains and at the entrance to San Gabriel Canyon. Azusa will reap its reward in millions of dollars in added revenues and Vulcan will continue to scrape aggregate from the local mountain canyon to produce concrete and building materials.

You might say the result is more of the same for Azusa.

However, the results have not always been positive for the rest of the San Gabriel Valley. The massive scar in the eastern portion - known as "the Mayan Steps" - is a legacy that the 1.9 million San Gabriel Valley residents live with every time they drive up the San Gabriel River (605) Freeway, along the Foothill (210) Freeway or along Arrow Highway or Foothill Boulevard. And every time they give directions to outsiders to the east San Gabriel Valley: "When you see the giant gash in the mountains, turn right."

In addition, mining operations in the canyon entrance have hampered access to Fish Canyon and one of the most breathtaking waterfalls in all the Angeles National Forest, Fish Canyon Falls. Now, hikers must take a steep, difficult, poison-oak laced climb around the quarry to reach the natural gem, instead of just walking through the mouth of the canyon.

But as we recognize the Azusa City Council's decision, we would urge the city of Azusa and Vulcan Materials to improve the environs around the operations.

Micro-benching should begin on the Mayan Steps, so the ugly scar in the ridge can be repaired as soon as possible. The city of Azusa must do regular inspections of the new mining area, too, ensuring that advanced micro-benching techniques are used as advertised by Vulcan, and that the re-planting of vegetation covers future scars.

Vulcan and the city should build a new trail that gives hikers daily access to Fish Canyon and Fish Canyon Falls. Chaperoned access at the whim of Vulcan Materials on certain days is not sufficient.

As the rest of the San Gabriel Valley puts up with more mining, the city and the property owner/operator must work at leaving as light a footprint as possible - and on being good neighbors.