

Deadline Extended for Public Comments on Lehigh Quarry Expansion

New deadline for comments on a draft EIR is May 23.

Pam Marino, Cupertino Patch, 4-22-11

The public still has time to comment on a plan by the Lehigh Southwest Cement company to expand its quarry operations in the Cupertino foothills, after the deadline for written comments was extended from April 10 to May 23.

The Santa Clara County Planning Office opened a 30-day public comment period in March for the draft environmental impact report (EIR) it's preparing about the proposed expansion.

Planner Marina Rush said the deadline was pushed back because of a state requirement for a 30-day written comment period for state agencies whenever an EIR is prepared. A Notice of Preparation was sent to the State Clearinghouse in the Office of Planning and Preparation this week, triggering the new deadline.

Lehigh officials want to amend a 1985 reclamation plan for the quarry, most notably seeking to dig a new 210-acre pit mine just to the south of the current pit mine, in operation since 1939.

The draft EIR will research possible impacts to the local environment, including geology, water, air, and visual, among others. The report does not cover the cement kiln run by the company on a different section of its land.

At a public hearing on March 30, more than 20 speakers told county planners they worry a new pit mine will have detrimental effects on the local environment and population. Some urged planners to seriously consider a "No Plan" option in the EIR.

Another public hearing on the draft EIR is expected sometime this fall, county planners said. The draft could go to the county Planning Commission in spring, 2012.

Rush said they have received 26 comments as of Thursday, April 21, and will post them on the county website by 5 p.m. today.

Written comments should be sent to Marina Rush, Planner III, County of Santa Clara Planning Office, 70 West Hedding St., East Wing, 7th Floor, San Jose, CA., 95110. They are due by 5 p.m., on May 23.