

Riverbank seeks to block planned county quarry

Ryan Campbell, Sonora Union-Democrat, 4-14-11

The City of Riverbank has sued Tuolumne County to block development of a west county rock quarry approved by the Board of Supervisors just last week.

The Riverbank City Council voted unanimously Monday to seek a court order postponing construction on the 135-acre Cooperstown Quarry, only five days after it won the board's nod.

Riverbank Mayor Virginia Madueno said the Stanislaus County town's leaders are particularly irked by plans that call for increased rail traffic through the center of their community. Under the plan, four more trains, each hauling 70 to 90 rail cars full of rocks, would rumble across Patterson Road each day, she said.

Madueno also bristled at the short notice given to city leaders leading up to the Tuolumne vote. She said the city was only told about the quarry on Feb. 22.

"We need time to do our due diligence since Tuolumne County hasn't done theirs," Madueno said.

Deputy Tuolumne County Counsel Carlyn Drivdahl said the county has yet to receive a legal filing from Riverbank. An indemnification agreement with Resource Exploration and Drilling, LLC. and Jamestown landowners Jack and Tricia Gardella stipulates that the county will not be on the hook for costs associated with legal action against the project, she said.

Several groups, including neighboring landowners and the city of Oakdale, also voiced opposition during hearings on the quarry, expected to produce 56 million tons of rock over the next 75 years.

Much of the rancor has centered around the lack of an Environmental Impact Report for the project. The California Environmental Quality Act requires that EIRs be completed on projects that have significant environmental impacts that can't be mitigated.

Tuolumne County leaders determined that the Cooperstown Quarry impacts could be reduced to acceptable levels by project conditions and decided an EIR was not needed.