

# County planners OK mining plans

**Catherine Shen, Santa Barbara News-Press, 6-9-11**

Plans for a joint venture by two mining facilities will move forward after the Santa Barbara County Planning Commission on Wednesday accepted revisions to the previously approved project.

In the narrow 3-2 vote, Cecilia Brown and Marell Brooks, representatives for the 2nd and 3rd Districts respectively, voted no, saying they needed more time to review the project.

The approved, but unbuilt, Diamond Rock Mine and Processing facility had gained interest from GPS, a sand and gravel mine and processing facility that has been in operation since the 1960s and is located 1,000 feet north of the prospective Diamond Rock mine.

Diamond Rock will be located on property west of State Route 33, six miles south of its junction with State Route 166 at the northeastern corner of Santa Barbara County, near borders with Ventura, Kern and San Luis Obispo counties.

"GPS is running out of material but is pursuing permits that would allow access to the new mine site," said Gary Kaiser, county planner. "So they are interested in a joint venture with the Diamond Rock applicant."

Cherisse Sweeney, who spoke on behalf of the project applicant, Troesh Materials Inc., said the company wants to get started with the facility, which would excavate at an average annual rate of 500,000 tons.

"We are a family-owned business for 25 years in the county and we made the decision based on business economics," Ms. Sweeney said. "We want to get people back to work and bring the project forward."

Mr. Kaiser said plans to establish the Diamond Rock Mine and Processing facility were approved by the commission and the Board of Supervisors in 2008.

"With both facilities hauling, this can scale back and reduce mining," Ms. Sweeney said. "The impacts are mitigated -- there will be no noise impacts, truck traffic will not increase, there are no visual impacts on the 33, and no water and air quality impacts."

Residents of Cuyama Valley voiced a different opinion.

Jennifer Lee, who represented the Cuyama Valley Conservancy that openly opposed the mine, said several issues have risen since the environmental impact report was filed.

"We need to protect our own watershed from something like this," Ms. Lee said. "Our natural water barriers and water table will all be affected in the valley. The report needs to be relooked at."

Gene Zannon, also representing the conservancy, said 450 signatures opposing the mine were collected in six days.

"We live here," Mr. Zannon said. "So we know how it could affect us."

Several commissioners were concerned about whether both mines could be excavated at the same time.

Dianne Black, director of development services, said because there is a permit limiting excavation, the two facilities cannot mine at the same time.