

Our valley deserves a hearing on quarry

Peter Sturgeon, Palm Springs Desert Sun, 3-21-11

Letter to the editor

What's fair about this?

Riverside County leaders caved to pressure from Temecula and extremist opposition groups recently when they agreed to move the location of scheduled hearings for the convenience of the opposition. When is catering to opposition groups good policy? Quite simply, it's not!

The proposed project in question is Liberty Quarry, an aggregate quarry located on the border of southwest Riverside County and northern San Diego County. The project will site a regional aggregate facility in the middle of what is still the fastest-growing region in Southwest California — an area that cannot currently supply the material needed to build all the roads, hospitals, bridges, and other needed facilities and infrastructure in the region.

More jobs, growth

Liberty Quarry will dramatically reduce the thousands of truck trips that currently bring material hundreds of miles from distant sources, thereby reducing the cost and, most importantly, reducing the diesel emissions that add to the foul air in the region. Liberty Quarry will increase quality jobs in the region and offer options for managed, sustainable growth in the region. Yet Temecula elitists don't want that kind of project near them.

Elected officials from Temecula have publicly stated that quarries belong “out there” in the desert. The implication is clear — not in their backyard, but in ours. And that's OK by us as long as we don't, due to Temecula's shortsightedness and unfounded bias, have to continue to ship our valley's limited and precious resources out to accommodate the growth of western Riverside County.

The Coachella Valley is already home to 17 quarries. The mining activities here are well managed and provide high-quality jobs and revenue for our area. They are our neighbors, our colleagues, our volunteers, our community leaders and we are glad they are here.

But the basic public policy question is: Should we continue to deplete our resources, thus limiting our future growth opportunities because some communities are ill-advised? We continue to rob our long-term capacity, create unnecessary truck traffic and emissions, and force continued expansion of new facilities all for the benefit of southwest Riverside County.

Voices must be heard

We deserve to have a say in this matter. Caving to pressure from opposition groups to move hearings only to Temecula, a hotbed for angry and active opposition groups, seems counter to the principles of a fair hearing. We trust our decision makers to be open to concerns and implications of proposals on all citizens and voters, not just a few. We need a convenient hearing location in the Coachella Valley. We deserve a hearing in the Coachella Valley. We have earned a hearing.

The citizens of Banning, Beaumont, Corona and Hemet should also demand a hearing location so they too can let the county know that the thousands of trucks clogging their roads bringing material from faraway sites to serve Temecula and Southwest California has to stop. Planning for long-term growth and development requires a sustainable policy perspective. The principles of which include incorporating economic, environmental and social equity and quality of life issues for all of Riverside County. Temecula is an important part of the region — but so are we. Let's not forget that!