

Threat of landslides not properly evaluated in mining proposal, Duarte report says

Daniel Tedford, Los Angeles Newspaper Group, 4-26-10

AZUSA - An proposed mining operation for the Azusa Rock Quarry would have a higher-than-acceptable risk for landslides, according to a report commissioned by Duarte.

Geologist and engineers with A.G.I. Geotechnical, Inc. of Van Nuys reviewed geological documents regarding Vulcan Materials Co.'s mining proposal and released their results days prior to the first Azusa City Council hearing on the matter.

The study, commissioned by Duarte, said Azusa's environmental impact report on the project did not adequately evaluate landslide potential for the property, according to the report.

"It is our opinion that the finished reclamation slopes described in the reclamation plan will not have adequate factors of safety against landsliding ... Under static conditions, our analyses suggest the slope will have a factor of safety slightly above 1 (1.059). A factor of 1.5 is considered 'safe' under widely accepted criteria," read the report.

Vulcan officials said the A.G.I.'s conclusion was based on inaccurate data.

"It is a case of Duarte trying to justify their false claims," Vulcan spokesman Todd Priest said. "Vulcan Materials has never and would never submit a reclamation plan that would jeopardize our employees or surrounding property. At best, their consultant's report is reckless."

Azusa's staff said they will continue to review the report.

A meeting on the proposal to allow mining in Azusa near the Duarte border scheduled for Monday was canceled in order to give experts more time to analyze A.G.I.'s report.

"We don't believe any houses are in harm's way," Azusa's Assistant Director of Economic and Community Development Conal McNamara said. "Often times you have experts on both sides with a certain point of view and we look forward to our geologist explaining that to the council."

Vulcan Materials has a permit to mine 190 acres near Fish Canyon. The company wants to exchange 80 acres of land on its eastern property line for the ability to mine 80 undisturbed acres near Duarte.

"This is pretty significant stuff that was never addressed in the EIR," said Duarte City Manager Darrell George. "There was never a cause to look at it until we brought it up."

George expects a detailed response from Azusa, he said.

"I think what they need to do is slow down and make sure all these issues are addressed," George said. "We are digging this up now because we are forced to. How many other issues just haven't been raised?"

In June 2009, the state Office of Mining Reclamation also raised concerns regarding the stability of slopes after mining operations.

Those concerns have been addressed, McNamara said.

"I think our position is that the reclamation plan will address any of those issues," he said.