

Tehama County approves mine expansion

Geoff Johnson, Red Bluff Daily News, 11-22-09

Nordic Industries, Inc. can more than double its mining operation near Dales Station, after a vote by the Tehama County Planning Commission Thursday.

The commission approved both a revised use permit for the operation, allowing it to expand its operation across 60 acres, and what company officials said was a vastly improved reclamation plan, which sets aside a bond to pay for reclamation in case the company cannot afford to return the area to its status as grassland.

Most of the concerns retired Caltrans employee and Dales Station resident Becky Eusted had were addressed in by the conditions of the use permit and the fact the company is employing a biologist and archeologist.

Among Eusted's initial concerns were the debris dragged onto the road by trucks entering the highway, potential damage to nearby wells and Paynes Creek.

She was consoled by the fact the use permit can be revoked if the mining operation violates its terms.

So far the mine is run by a "good company" that makes for "good neighbors," Eusted said.

EnviroMine President Warren Coalson, whose company was hired by Nordic, said it is unlikely the mining operations will affect local wells that are two miles away, as he has worked on coal mines that were half as far from local wells that remained unaffected.

But the relevant parts of the operation will still be subject to annual inspections.

These measures were not enough to satisfy Dales Station resident Chris Clintsman, though.

Clintsman presented the board with a list of 18 signatures from Dales Station, or all but three residents, he said were concerned about the project.

Clintsman said he remained cynical about a company report indicating the wells would not be harmed, and would have liked to see a bond in place to pay for any potential well damage.

"Who's going to protect us?," Clintsman said.

The Tehama County Planning Commission meets at 9 a.m. on the third Thursday of each month in the Board of Supervisors chambers, 727 Oak St. More information is available by calling 530-527-2200 or visiting www.co.tehama.ca.us.