

# Letters to the Editor

## **Traffic will change our town of Santa Margarita**

MARLA LIPSHIN - SANTA MARGARITA -

As a resident of Santa Margarita, I was happy to see the Las Pilitas quarry on the cover of the Aug. 15 paper ("A rock and a hard place"). After reading the article, however, I was dismayed by the lack of discussion about the impact of more than 250 double-trailer trucks' trips on the town itself and its residents.

Yes, the project will certainly affect the quarry neighbors more directly, but it will impact every resident of our town to some degree. These trucks will pass through our downtown area and turn right on a much smaller street that passes by the elementary school. Every child who walks to school crosses this road with the aid of a crossing guard.

Since we don't receive mail delivery in town, we all retrieve our mail at the downtown post office. The increased traffic will impact each of us, the downtown businesses, and, most importantly, our schoolchildren. Also, it will likely increase traffic on the residential streets that run parallel to Hwy. 58.

I have yet to meet a resident of our town who supports this project. While the quarry applicants are understandably interested in benefiting from their resources, the reality is that the impact of this project on the businesses and residents of Santa Margarita is too vast, and the project is entirely unsuitable for a town of our size.

## **Foresight is lacking in local developments**

BOB PARKER - ATASCADERO -

Having read the article about mining in SLO County ("A rock and a hard place," Aug. 15) or the huge Pismo development and the arguments against them, I am reminded that whenever I hear them, almost always these arguments seem to be geared around things like: We don't want it because it will create too much traffic, or noise, or will use

too much water, etc. While these are all good reasons, there seems to be a reluctance to say what we all feel: Piece by piece, our beautiful county is being junked by developers, Big Energy men, and greedy politicians in their pocket.

They are undemocratically taking what belongs to all of us, the beauty of one of the most lovely places around and either cramming it full of structures or outright destroying it, giving what belongs to the majority—people *and* wildlife—to a minority of moneyed interests for their personal use and abuse. What's that old Italian saying? "Feather by feather, the goose is plucked."

Here's what John Muir said: "Those reserves are not merely for the convenience and benefit of the people near them, but they are the property of the nation and for its greatest good. It is unreasonable to suppose that they should be destroyed or imperiled for any local convenience, as a mere present to men engaged in one local industry." And, "These temple-destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar."

What is sorely lacking is any foresight. We need to have a plan for when enough is enough.

## **You want to talk seniority?**

KEVIN LEE - SANTA MARGARITA -

Matt nailed it when he said "Neighbors look out for each other while also trying to stay out of each other's business." ("A rock and a hard place," Aug. 15) While I do believe that property owners have the right to do certain things on their land, there is a line that has to be drawn; that is the reason we have rules and regulations. Otherwise, everyone could do anything they want, regardless of the adverse effects on the environment or their neighbors.

And there is this mentality out here with a few people that if you have owned your property longer than others, you have more rights than the rest. Well, if that's the case, then myself being a registered American Indian (Caddo Tribe), I should be able to build a shopping mall where I live! So let's weigh this out on the scale we call Democracy and see which weighs more: benefit or liability.

## **On promises and propaganda**

TAMARA KLEEMANN - SANTA MARGARITA -

In Matt Fountain's article "A rock and a hard place" (Aug. 15), Las Pilitas Resources LLC agent Ken Johnston is quoted: "There is a lot of misinformation out there."

I agree. In fact, it is the reason I decided to do my own homework, obtain accurate project details, and follow the permit process closely. Initially, after hearing word of a proposed quarry on the adjacent parcel to our home, I started seeking information. Only after mentioning the proposal several times to our neighbor did he tell us that he was a partner in the project.

We were then told not to worry—it was just a small quarry that would not be visible or create any impacts. Later, we learned a hot-mix asphalt manufacturing plant was also part of the application. Further research revealed the industrial size and other details of major concern.

Fortunately, a public process exists to find out the actual details of any proposed project requiring a discretionary permit, and to voice your concerns. The evaluation of a discretionary land use permit is *not* based on *who* is proposing the project, but on site suitability, compatibility with surrounding land uses, and ability to mitigate impacts. The permit, if granted, stays with the land, not the applicant. Promises, propaganda, and hearsay are just that.

I encourage everyone to become accurately informed of the actual project details. Be proactive, respect *your* right to voice your concerns, and you will respect yourself and be respected.

## **This is a dangerous highway**

PEG GRADY - SANTA MARGARITA -

Thank you for the very informative article by Matt Fountain on the proposed Las Pilitas Quarry ("A rock and a hard place," Aug. 15) alongside Highway 58. One thing I would have added is a description of this road. When I hear "highway," I picture the 101 or the

I-5. Highway 58, in contrast, is a two-lane country road, with no bike lanes, no passing lanes, many stretches with no shoulder, and with such sharp turns that the speed limit is lowered to 30 mph at one point and 15 mph at another. Enormous trucks will need to safely negotiate these extremely tight turns while dealing with bicycles, motorcycles, automobile traffic, deer, and assorted other wildlife. The road is too dangerous for the traffic this project will generate. Like the sign says, "Wrong Project. Wrong Location."

## **It's a start, New Times**

DEE CARROLL - SANTA MARGARITA -

*New Times* finally wrote a cover story on the planned Las Pilitas Rock Quarry ("A rock and a hard place," Aug. 15). It seems very one sided in favor of allowing the quarry. Much of the information against it was left out.

It didn't allow Margarita Proud, the resident group recommending denial of a Conditional Use Permit, representation equal to what the project applicant's representative was given. Nor did it mention the vast quantities of water a quarry uses, water that will be taken at the expense of the surrounding domestic users.

They say they have two springs, but springs can change course or dry up! The water table of all of Santa Margarita is going down, and the Salinas River (the stated source of project water) flows into the rapidly declining Paso Robles Basin.

And with so many trucks going in and out of the quarry, if one was stalled for any reason, would emergency vehicles like fire engines or ambulance be able to pass? Perhaps *New Times* should make this the first in a series that endeavors to explore more in-depth the reasons why residents are not so happy about a strip mine in the location being proposed.