From:	Billy Ortiz
To:	Bennett, Jim; Hingtgen, Robert J
Cc:	Ana Nita; lfwood@sandiego.gov
Subject:	CEQA comments
Date:	Monday, September 14, 2015 9:48:29 AM

SCOPING COMMENTS
From: Billy Ortiz
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September 12, 2015

Dear Mr. Bennett and Mr. Hingtgen
Regarding : El Monte Sand Mining and Nature Preserve Project
PDS2015-MUP-98-014W2, PDS2015-RP-15-001, LOG NO. PDS2015-ER-98-14-016B
http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/Current_Projects/MUP-98-014W2.html

Some environmental impacts you may not have considered:

1. Coccidioidomycosis, also known as Valley Fever (VF). Cases of the fungal disease rose at stunning rates over the last decade, especially in California and Arizona, according to one report by Voice of OC:
http://voiceofoc.org/2013/03/cdc-confirms-valley-fever-epidemic-cases-up-850-percent-in-california/

I contracted Coccidioidomycosis in El Monte Valley (EMV), Lakeside Ca. There are others who have contracted VF in EMV. Valley Fever can be hard to detect and can be deadly, according to the CDC:
http://www.cdc.gov/features/valley-fever-10-things/

Hanson Aggregates established a sand mine at the far West end of the El Monte Valley at 10402 El Monte Road, Lakeside, CA in the 1970's, and closing it during the 1990's. Therefore, Coccidioides (the fungus causing Valley Fever) has possibly been stirred up since the early 1970's.
The current proposed El Monte Sand Mine project would affect approximately 500 acres of the valley floor. During normal off shore wind conditions, the fungus spores could flow East towards Alpine, Descanso, Jamul, Pine Valley, Campo and other communities in the Eastern mountains of San Diego county. During a Santa Ana event, the wind flow is West towards Lakeside, Santee, El Cajon, and beyond towards San Diego mesas and coastal communities.
We have seen how devastating wildfires can be during the Cedar Fire in 2003 during a Santa Ana wind conditions. The threat of VF fungus spreading in the winds could have a major environmental impact, not just in the project zone (EMV), but countywide.
Please do a study on how this deadly fungus could spread to the entire county with the winds.

2. Red Harvester Ants: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_harvester_ant are a crucial part of a healthy ecosystem Research on the impact of ants on their local environment has revealed they play an important role. They have a dual effect on their local ecosystem which affects both the density and diversity of other species around them, including animals much higher up in the food chain. Red Harvester Ants are a favorite food for the Horned Lizard in the El Monte Valley: http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/01/110131133227.htm
The combined mineral extraction project will affect 189 acres of land located in El Monte Valley on approximately 530 acres currently owned by Helix Water District. Harvester ants are wide spread in the mining project zone. Removal of 183 acres will devastate the Harvester Ant and Horned Lizard habitat at.

Please do a study of how removal of top soil in the El Monte Valley will affect the Harvester Ant and Horned Lizard.

3. Least Bells Vireo and California Blue Gray Gnatcatcher live and forage in the many shrubs and trees that grow in the proposed sand mining project location.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5Wx2CrV28I

Stripping 183 acres of Least Bells Vireo and California Blue Gray Gnatcatcher habitat will have a big impact on both federally protected birds in EMV.

Please do a study of consequences to the Least Bells Vireo and Gnatcatcher habitat removal.

4. There are also migratory birds (Oriels, Yellow Breasted Chat, Northern Shrike, Humming birds, Red Shafted Flicker) that will lose their foraging habitat.
Please do a study on how these migratory birds will be affected.

Please do a study on how removal by sand mining of an entire ecosystem within the boundaries and surrounding area of the El Monte Sand Mine Project (
El Monte Sand Mining and Nature Preserve Project
PDS2015-MUP-98-014W2, PDS2015-RP-15-001, LOG NO. PDS2015-ER-98-14-016B)
will affect the Black Tailed Jack Rabbit, Gray Fox, Bob Cat, Mountain Lion, Glossy Snake, Quino Checker spot Butterfly, Great Horned Owl, Barn Owl, White Tailed Kite, Red Shoulder Hawk, Red Tailed hawk, Coopers Hawk, Golden Eagle, Deer, Coyote, Pack Rat, Field Mice, Long Tailed Weasel, Scorpion, Skink Lizard, Fence Lizard, Horned Toad, Arroyo Toad, Western Spade foot Toad, Glossy Snake, Southern Pacific Rattle Snake, Red Diamondback Rattle Snake, Speckled Rattle Snake, Rosy Boa Snake, Red Racer Snake, Gopher Snake, King Snake, Swallows, (bird) Finch, Humming Birds, California Towhee, California Thrasher, Cactus Wren, Beswick Wren, House Wren, Sparrow, Acorn Woodpecker, Nuttal's Woodpecker, Nut Hatch, Oak Titmouse, Bush Titmouse, Scrub Jay, Blue Bird, Mocking Bird, Morning Dove, Rock Pigeon, Swifts, American Kestrel, Ruby Crowned Kinglet, Yellow-Rumped Warbler, Raven, Crow, California Quail, Greater Roadrunner, Vaux's Swift, White Throated Swift, Anna's Humming Bird, Costa's

Humming Bird, Calliopi Humming Bird, Western Wood Pewee, Hamands Flycatcher, Pacific Slope Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Western Scrub jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Common Side-blotched Lizard, Granit Spiny Lizard,, Western Whiptail.

5. We are experiencing one of the worst droughts in the state California's history.
Please do a study on how the removal of the sand (the aquifers natural filter) will affect the Santee/El Monte Valley Aquifer and the El Monte Valley Ecosystem.

6. There is a Native American archeological site within the mining area. It is located on the North West corner of the El Monte Valley Sand Mine Project site. It is within the 100 foot buffer zone but could extend farther out towards the south into the mining area. It has been covered over with a hard clay type mound of dirt to protect the site. It is roughly 200 yards in length and about 60 feet wide. It is historically part of an the Indian village directly across Willow Rd. to the North.
Please do a study to see if it extends out farter beyond the protected area.

7. Please do a study on dust that will be released into the El Monte Valley. Is the dust harmful to human and animal.

8. The valley has very steep mountains an both side and boxed in by El Cajon MT at the East end of the Valley. Please do a study on noise level the sand mine processing plant will create in El Monte Valley.

9. According to project plans, it is said 150 to 250 tractor and trailer big rig trucks will enter the valley. I feel it will be much more. Including the recreation vehicle/boats that enter the valley 5 days per week added to the sand mine trucks, it is my opinion the road will become too dangerous to all the residents and visitors of the El Monte Valley. The road will receive heavy wear and tear.
Please do a study on what is safe and what noise levels will be do to heavy traffic for El Monte Rd and Willow rd. both roads will surely be used by El Monte Nature Preserve LLC / sand mine company.

10. Water quality will degrade and become unsuitable for human consumption in the El Monte Valley due to sand mine wastewater that will likely be recharged back into the aquifer.
Please do a study on what is an expectable amount wastewater to be released back into the El Monte basin.

11. Willow Road and El Monte Road (from State Route 67 to the southern end of El Capitan Reservoir in Lakeside CA) are both considered a Scenic Route. Willow Rd. runs 4 miles long, almost in its entirety, East to West through the El Monte Valley. El Monte Rd is approximately

7 miles long and runs East To West in its entirety the length of El Monte Valley. You will find this under "SECOND PRIORITY SCENIC ROUTES" in this San Diego County Document:
http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/pds/advance/oldgp/scenichighwayelement.pdf
Please do study on how El Monte Sand Mining and Nature Preserve Project PDS2015-MUP-98-014W2, PDS2015-RP-15-001, LOG NO. PDS2015-ER-98-14-016B will impact the El Monte Valley scenic corridor.

12. If approved, El Monte Sand Mining and Nature Preserve Project would create physical changes in the appearance of the El Monte Valley in Lakeside, CA.
Please do a study on the socio-economic consequences of physical changes due to the projected removal of 12 million tons of river bottom sand in the El Monte Valley.
http://www.dot.ca.gov/ser/vol1/sec5/ch36eir/chap36.htm…

Sincerely
Billy Ortiz