September 7, 2015
Jim Bennett
County of San Diego
Planning and Development Services
5510 Overland Ave, Suite 310
San Diego California 92123

Dear Mr. Bennett,

My name is Elizabeth How and I live at 14512 Willow Road in Lakeside and I have many concerns about the proposed development of a sand mine and plant in the El Monte Valley in Lakeside, the first of which is water use!

The only water we have available to us in our homes comes from our own wells. What will happen to our wells when this company digs a ninety-acre pit 90 feet deep across the street from our homes? What will happen to the aquifer? Will it be depleted and our wells dry up? Where will the 132 acre-feet, which converts to 43,012,388 gallons, [That's 43 million, twelve thousand, three hundred and eighty-eight gallons] [and this is by their ***own*** estimate] of water necessary to wash 1.5 million tons of sand ***each year***, come from? That's for only the first year. The sand-mining proposal is for 15 years. That comes to a total use of 1,988 acre-feet of water, which converts to 645,185,825 gallons. That's ***six hundred forty-five million, one hundred eighty-five thousand eight hundred twenty-five gallons*** of water taken from the aquifer...by their ***own estimate!***

The El Monte Sand Mine and Nature Preserve's own Environmental Review Update Form [dated August 13, 2015] says:

> Water usage depends on production volume; however, the project's estimated water usage assumes the maximum annual production of **1.5-million tons**. Water required for dust control, watering of outgoing loads, and for the processing equipment is estimated at **132 acre-feet annually** for this production rate. The project would **obtain its water from onsite wells and ponds once sand extraction activities extend below the water table.**
>
> [Emphases ours.]

Where will it come from? From us, of course. The El Monte Mine and *Nature Preserve* just said so!

Also, San Diego County is doing its best to conserve whatever water it can during the worst drought ever recorded. What about contamination of the water? Most of us have devoted our life's savings into buying and maintaining our homes and businesses here in the El Monte Valley. Who would buy a home with no water, located across the street from a giant sand pit and sand-washing facility serviced by 200 trucks a day?

Stripping 90 feet of topsoil away from the valley floor, then piling it, dumping it, loading it and transporting it by our homes may expose us to Valley Fever. According to the Center for Disease Control, this is a reportable disease endemic to California. It is endemic to the El Monte Valley. Cases of Valley Fever have already been diagnosed here. Infection is spread through disruption of the soil. The proposed sand pit is fewer than 3 miles upwind of El Capitan High School, where about 2000 children go to school.

According to the Mayo Clinic, "Valley fever is a fungal infection caused by coccidioides (kok-sid-e-OY-deze) organisms. It can cause fever, chest pain and coughing, among other signs and symptoms.

Two species of coccidioides fungi cause valley fever. These fungi are commonly found in soil in specific regions. The fungi's spores can be stirred into the air by anything that disrupts the soil, such as farming, construction and wind.

Like many other fungi, coccidioides species have a complex life cycle. In the soil, they grow as a mold with long filaments that break off into airborne spores when the soil is disturbed.

The spores are extremely small and can be carried hundreds of miles by the wind. Once inside the lungs, the spores reproduce, perpetuating the cycle of the disease.

The fungi can then be breathed into the lungs and cause valley fever, also known as acute coccidioidomycosis (kok-sid-e-oy-doh-my-KOH-sis). Mild cases of valley fever usually resolve on their own. In more severe cases, doctors prescribe antifungal medications that can treat the underlying infection.

Complications of coccidioidomycosis may include:

- **Severe pneumonia.** Most people recover from coccidioidomycosis-related pneumonia without complications. Others, mainly Filipinos, Hispanics, blacks, Native Americans and those with weakened immune systems, may become seriously ill.
- **Ruptured lung nodules.** A small percentage of people develop thin-walled nodules (cavities) in their lungs. Many of these eventually disappear without causing any problems, but some may rupture, causing chest pain and difficulty breathing. A ruptured lung nodule might require the placement of a tube into the space around the lungs to remove the air or surgery to repair the damage.
- **Disseminated disease.** This is the most serious complication of coccidioidomycosis. If the fungus spreads (disseminates) throughout the body, it can cause problems ranging from skin ulcers and abscesses to bone lesions, severe joint pain, heart inflammation, urinary tract problems and meningitis — a potentially fatal infection of the membranes and fluid covering the brain and spinal cord.

[www.mayoclinic.org/diseases.../**valley-fever/**]

The United States Center For Disease Control says: **"Currently there is no vaccine to prevent Valley Fever..."**
[http://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/coccidioidomycosis/risk-prevention.html]

Will the El Monte Sand Mine and Nature Preserve Company pay our medical bills when we contract Valley Fever?

I am also concerned about truck and machine maintenance. Where will it be done? And when? If at night, what about noise and light pollution? Will they work all night? What happens to the hazardous waste such as oil, grease, diesel, solvents, different belts, and exhaust fumes? What are the codes and/or guidelines for disposal of these things? Where will the trucks be based? Over 200 sand trucks a day will be on our roads! What about the heavily loaded traffic on our county roads and our freeways?

Another factor that concerns me is the destruction of the natural ecology. According to the County of San Diego, wildlife corridors and habitat linkages are part of its Conservation and Open Space policy. They state:

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AND HABITAT LINKAGES
Significant portions of the County are publicly owned, including areas designated as open space preserves
and parks, National Forests, and State Parks. The County strives to work harmoniously with all such entities
to achieve common goals. Important wildlife corridors and linkages have been identified to provide
connections between areas of undeveloped lands, especially to significant public lands. Species that are well-
distributed across their ranges are less susceptible to extinction than species confined to small portions of
their range. Therefore, maintaining large, inter-connected blocks of habitat containing sizable and diverse
populations of sensitive species is superior to a fragmented landscape with undersized populations.
Figure C-1 (Habitat Conservation Programs) identifies existing preserve areas, along with areas where a
connected system of preserves will be established as additional easements are recorded for open space
and/or lands are acquired for public benefit.

[http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds/gpupdate/docs/BOS_Aug2011/C.1-4_Conservation_and_Open_Space.pdf]

The El Monte Valley is an important wildlife habitat corridor linking the coastal and riparian San Diego River natural areas to the inland Cleveland National Forest and Anza-Borrego Desert. This vital corridor needs to be preserved for our future generations.

The El Monte Valley is situated within the San Diego River Watershed area and is designated for use as municipal and domestic water supply as well as ***wildlife habitat; and rare, threatened, or endangered species habitat.*** (California RWQCB 1994).

Endangered Plant Species

According to the El Monte County Park Resource Plan, there are at least four special status endangered plant species endemic to the El Monte Valley.

Delicate Clarkia (also known as Campo clarkia) (Clarkia delicata)

San Diego Sunflower (Viguiera laciniata)

California black walnut (Juglans californica)

Engelmann oak (Quercus engelmannii)

Lakeside Ceanothus (Ceanothus cyaneus)

Endangered Animal Species

According to the Multiple Species Conservation Program, (MSCP), there are fourteen rare, endangered, or threatened animal species native to the El Monte Valley. They include:

Least Bell's Vireo (Vireo bellii pusillus)

Golden Eagle (Aquila chrysaetos)

Mountain Lion (Puma concolor)

Red-Shouldered Hawk (Buteo lineatus)

Yuma Myotis (Myotis yumanensis)

Western Red Bat (Lasiurus blossevillii)

Townsend's Big-Eared Bat (Corynorhinus townsendii)

Pallid Bat (Antrozous pallidus)

Pocketed Free-Tailed Bat (Nyctinomops femorosaccus)

Western Mastiff Bat (Eumops perotis)

Western Spadefoot (Scaphiopus [=Spea] hammondii)

Quino Checkerspot Butterfly (Euphydryas editha quino)

California Legless Lizard (Anniella pulchra)

San Diego Horned Lizard (Phyrnosoma coronatum blainvillii)

Coronado Skink (Eumeces skiltonianus interparietalis)

Orange-Throated Whiptail (Cnemidophorus hyperythrus beldingi)

Coastal Western Whiptail (Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus)

Coastal Rosy Boa (Charina trivirgata roseofusca)

Coastal California Gnatcatcher (Polioptila californica californica)

All of these rare, endangered, or threatened species, a part of our natural heritage, need to be protected, especially from having ***their entire environment strip-mined and trucked away.***

Beyond the permanent social, economic, ecological and community resources destroyed or damaged by the sand mining operation, there are archaeological sites present in the El Monte Valley. These include bedrock milling sites, which represent the worksites and tools of Late Prehistoric Deigueño/Kumeyaay peoples who occupied this region prior to the mid-nineteenth century.

All of these concerns are important and need to be taken under consideration by your committee.

Thank you for your time and your efforts to help save Lakeside's beautiful valley.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth K. How

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