County of San Diego Planning & Development Services
5510 Overland Ave., Ste.#310
San Diego, CA 92123

September 10, 2015
El Monte Sand Mining (NOP) of Environmental Impact Report
Public Review
Public Scoping Meeting Comment Sheet:

1. This written Comment Form is specifically directed at those in attendance from San Diego County on the Public Scoping meeting on 8/26/15.

My husband, Larry E. Hayes, and I, Linda Hayes have, since 1986 (29 years), have lived on, and payed property taxes for, the property, located at 15466 El Monte Road. I am writing to you in response to the EIR committee's inquiry regarding the perspective and objections, of El Monte Valley residents regarding the proposed "sand mining operation" proposed in the El Monte Valley.

El Monte Valley is one of the last unspoiled valleys in Southern California, and is designated as an official "Scenic Corridor". The proposed sand mining operation is not compatible with the "Scenic Corridor" and will effectively destroy, the current, tranquil quality of life chosen by **all** of the inhabitants of the valley, as well as thousands of citizens who travel to the El Monte Valley, in order to enjoy the two county parks (Lake Jennings Park, El Monte State Park, and the El Capitan Reservoir that are located in the El Monte Valley. The sand mining project, will also negatively impact the extremely expensive residences of Blossom Valley, who prize the "million dollar views" from their properties above the El Monte Valley.

Although the **sand mining project** (in order to gain public approval) is called a "Habitat Restoration Project", in truth, before (**and if**) a restoration takes place, the sand mining project, first, **will decimate all wildlife and plant life** currently existing in the projected sand mining swath through the valley. Species to be obliterated include several endangered animal species, including the Golden Eagle, and centuries-old California Live Oak Trees that grow, **only** in very limited areas in Southern California. **Animal displacement,** of those creatures fleeing their destroyed habitats, onto existing residential properties, will occur. **Fleas** from mice, squirrels, rats, raccoons, bobcats, cougars, can **spread bubonic plague.*** **Poisonous snakes will relocate and be of danger to humans and pets.** Our own dog was bitten by a large rattlesnake, that sought refuge in our own fenced back yard, when new neighbors cleared away debris on the land they had purchased. * See attachment re diseases

The sand mining will destroy the livelihoods, and property values of all El Monte Valley residents, whose land is currently zoned agricultural, and who depend solely upon their wells for drinking water, for human and animal consumption, as well as for irrigation purposes. Residential businesses will be ruined; such as the many horse boarding operations, wedding and party venues, avian breeding facilities, annual pumpkin patch, and field trip destinations for the many schools who bring thousands of children to experience "the country/agricultural life" etc., who, all, "market" El Monte Valley's peace and tranquility, that is so rarely found today.

The sand mining project by ruining wells, will obliterate El Monte Valley residents' property values, and render the properties un-sellable, (all dependent upon wells). Properties will have no water source, after the sand mining operation drains the El Monte Valley aquifer. This aquifer also provides water to citizens beyond the valley itself. In a time of (by the California governor's proclamation) severe drought and water shortage, burdened with an ever increasing population demand upon existing water resources, it is unconscionable that Mark Weston, formerly the Helix Water district's manager, and now the Chair of the San Diego Water Authority, could sanction a mining project, in a populated area, that will destroy a valuable water resource (the El Monte aquifer) that serves many citizens. It is a conflict of interest for Weston to be in a position of responsibility for the preservation of water resources, and at the same time be involved with the proposed sand mining operation, that will destroy an important water aquifer. **Without our wells, we cannot use, nor, will be able to sell our property.**

Owners of the sand mining operation should be insured and/or bonded for an amount equal to the property value

loss of El Monte and Blossom Valley residents, **to enable payment of claims for property value losses due to lack of water**, which will bring about litigations.

There is a strong, constant westerly wind through the El Monte Valley. The proposed sand mining operation will cause the **pollution of the air**, with airborne contaminants, including the existing (in the El Monte Valley) coccidiomycosis "valley fever spores" to residents to the east of the sand mining project, above the project (Blossom Valley) as well as to the thousands of visitors to the El Monte parks and reservoir, as well as to children attending Oma's pumpkin patch and children on school field trips, to the dairy. Those working on the sand mining project, will stand a chance of contracting "valley fever", who then, can spread that disease to others in their realm of contacts. Blossom Valley residents, will suffer from the same airborne pollution.

The El Monte Valley is bordered by steep canyon walls. As the current residents know, well, sound reverberates off of the canyon walls, so the noise of the proposed sand mining project, machinery and 462- 10-wheel trucks, daily, will **cause stressful, noise pollution** to all those residents east (down wind) of the mining project, and above (Blossom Valley residents) the mining project, as well. Noise is injurious to humans, animals, and birds.

The El Monte Valley is designated as a "scenic corridor". We residents of the valley are subject to the scrutiny, and must earn the approval of the County, before erecting any structure on our private properties that could be deemed, by the County, as "unsightly" from El Monte Road. **The proposed sand mining operation is incompatible with the El Monte Valley's "Scenic Corridor" designation, an should be held to the same restrictions, as are the El Monte Valley residents.**

The sand that now filters the water of the valuable El Monte Valley aquifer will be removed to a level of 90 feet. Our own well is currently 80 feet deep. The proposed mining project will last 15 no 20 years, with no guarantee that the mining will end at that point, nor any guarantee that the mined area will actually be restored. **Former mining projects have not been restored, and are left as an ugly eyesore.** My husband and myself are senior citizens, who sought a life in the El Monte Valley, and will not live to see the end of this project.

As the construction of the dam at the El Capitan Reservoir affectively stopped the movement westward of the sand, once removed the **sand will not be replenished, and will leave a mud plain, and a dangerous breeding site for mosquitos and West Nile Virus.**

If the proposed mining project lowers the valley level to 90 feet, then all **properties upstream (to the east) of the project will be subject to losing our own property (soil) during heavy rains, as our own land will be carried downstream, to the lower area of the sand collection pit.** In 1986 a former land owner, in El Monte Valley, owner, to our direct west, stated that he lost 8 acres, of his property, in one heavy rain, when the Nelson-Sloan sand pit was in operation. down stream to his land. Our own fence line to the north, that borders the "riverbed" was washed away when the dam overflowed years ago. We fear that the portion of our land, with which we earn our income, that boarders the "San Diego River bed" will be washed down to lower elevation of the mining pits, in heavy rains.

The availability of sand from other sources, and the re-cycling of cement, should mean that is is not necessary to mine the sand in the inhabited El Monte Valley. There are thousands of miles of unused land, in the US deserts, and in Mexico, where sand can be mined without the destruction of the lives of the pre-existing El Monte Valley residents, flora, and fauna.

The mining operation has been described as a 15 to 20 year project, starting at 7:00 a.m., until dusk, daily, excavation being conducted five or six (description varies) days a week , and requiring **several hundred, DAILY,** ten-wheel truck+trailer trips **in and then out of our narrow valley!** El Monte Road is a narrow, winding road, already noted for numerous fatal vehicle accidents. Even if the mining project builds its own road down the center of the valley, the traffic will ALL converge at the neck of the valley, creating a nightmare bottleneck! The additional truck **traffic will, be hazardous, as El Monte Valley has only one small road for entry and egress.** Such increased truck traffic will cause traffic congestion, and a severe danger, to those trying to escape in the advent of

fire.

El Monte River Valley has been the path for countless horseback trail riders for centuries. (Helix is a relatively recent "owner" of the valley.) After the sand mining project is terminated (at a point which some of us will be too old to still be riding horses) horse traffic will be restricted to a (boring) perimeter, multi-use (a dangerous mix for equestrians; bikes, hikers, and horses **are not compatible**) trail. The El Monte Valley has one of the largest horse-populations in the nation; it is truly a shame to rip this popular recreational activity away from so many horse-enthusiasts, who travel from considerable distances, to board or to ride their horses in the El Monte Valley.

Thank you for taking the time to read, and to consider the objections of the valley (El Monte Valley and Blossom Valley) residents, **and** the thousands of people who visit El Monte Valley, who, all, desire to save the resources and integrity of; the El Monte River Valley, as it exists today. In 1986, we were required to obtain a Major Use Permit, to open our small business, and were made to mitigate **all** the concerns of our neighbors, **which we did**. I hope that the proposed sand mining project will have to thoroughly mitigate **all of the El Monte Valley residents' concerns**, or if they cannot that, that they will abandon the El Monte Valley sand mining project.

Linda and Larry Hayes

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*attachment re diseases

My main concerns for the sand mining in the El Monte Valley are the diseases that may be found from the moving around of sand and dirt. These diseases will not just pose a problem for the residents in El Monte Valley and the residents over the hills in Blossom Valley, but may reach residents of other areas like Alpine, El Cajon, Lakeside. It is possible that the diseases may reach communities even further away. The diseases are as follows:

Anthrax is an acute disease caused by the bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*. Most forms of the disease are lethal, and it affects mostly animals. It is contagious and can be transmitted through contact or consumption of infected meat. Effective vaccines against anthrax are available, and some forms of the disease respond well to antibiotic treatment.

Like many other members of the genus *Bacillus*, *B. anthracis* can form dormant endospores (often referred to as "spores" for short, but NOT to be confused with fungal spores) that are able to survive in harsh conditions for decades or even centuries. When spores are inhaled, ingested, or come into contact with a skin lesion on a host, they may become reactivated and multiply rapidly.

Anthrax commonly infects wild and domesticated herbivorous mammals that ingest or inhale the spores while grazing. Ingestion is thought to be the most common route by which herbivores contract anthrax. The carnivores living in the same environment may become infected by consuming infected animals. Diseased animals can spread anthrax to humans, either by direct contact (e.g., inoculation of infected blood to broken skin) or by consumption of a diseased animal's flesh.

Coccidioidomycosis, commonly known as **cocci**, "**valley fever**", as well as "**California fever**", is a mammalian fungal disease caused by *Coccidioides immitis* or *Coccidioides posadasii*. It is endemic in certain parts of Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, and northern Mexico.

C. immitis is a dimorphic saprophytic fungus that grows as a mycelium in the soil and produces a spherule form in the host organism. It resides in the soil in certain parts of the southwestern United States, most notably in California and Arizona. *C. immitis* is

dormant during long dry spells, then develops as a mold with long filaments that break off into airborne spores when it rains. The spores, known as arthroconidia, are swept into the air by disruption of the soil, such as during construction, farming, or an earthquake.[5] Coccidioidomycosis is a common cause of community acquired pneumonia in the endemic areas of the United States.[1] Infections usually occur due to inhalation of the arthroconidial spores after soil disruption.

Hantavirus normally infects rodents and do not cause disease in these hosts. Humans may become infected with hantavirus through contact with rodent urine, saliva, feces, or bites. Some strains of hantaviruses cause potentially fatal diseases in humans, such as hantavirus hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS) and hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS)—also known as hantavirus cardiopulmonary syndrome (HCPS). HPS (HCPS) is a "rare respiratory illness associated with the inhalation of aerosolized rodent excreta (urine and feces) contaminated by hantavirus particles." In the United States, as of July 2010 eight states had reported 30 or more cases of hantavirus since 1993 – New Mexico (84), Colorado (70), Arizona (62), California (42), Washington (41), Texas (37), Utah (31) and Montana (30).

Yersina pestia is a bacterium that can infect humans and animals. It causes the deadly disease named plague. Human *Y. pestis* infection takes three main forms: pneumonic, septicemic, and bubonic plagues. All three forms were responsible for a number of high-mortality epidemics throughout human history, including: the sixth century's Plague of Justinian; the Black Death, which accounted for the death of at least one-third of the European population between 1347 and 1353; and the 19th century's Third Pandemic.
Every year, thousands of cases of plague are still reported to the World Health Organization, although, with proper treatment, the prognosis for victims is now much better. A five- to six-fold increase in cases occurred in Asia during the time of the Vietnam war; possibly due to the disruption of ecosystems and closer proximity between people and animals. Plague also has a detrimental effect on nonhuman mammals. In the United States, animals such as the

black-tailed prairie dog and the endangered black-footed ferret are under threat from the disease.

The information for previous diseases and infections; was found on Wikipedia.com.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns

Linda Hayes