

SECTION 1

Introduction

This section presents an introduction to the proposed Liberty Quarry project (Proposed Project), including the need for the Proposed Project, project objectives, and the required permits and approvals for implementation of the Proposed Project. This section also discusses the scope and approach to the *Liberty Quarry Environmental Impact Report No. 475* (EIR) and an overview of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) environmental review process (including scoping and public review).

1.1 Proposed Project under Review

The EIR has been prepared to evaluate the impacts of the Proposed Project in southwestern Riverside County. The Riverside County Planning Department is the Lead Agency for the EIR. The EIR has been prepared in compliance with CEQA and the *State Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA* (Title 14 Code of California Regulations [CCR] Section 15000). The EIR documents existing environmental conditions and evaluates potentially significant environmental effects that could result from implementing the Proposed Project. Section 2 provides a detailed description of the Proposed Project.

The primary documents, plans, and policies considered during the preparation of this EIR include the following:

- Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) (Public Resources Code, Section 2710 et seq.) and associated regulations (January 2007)
- State Mining and Geology Board regulations for surface mining and reclamation practice (14 CCR Chapter 8, Article 1, Section 3500, et seq. and Article 9, Section 3700 et seq.)
- *Riverside County Integrated Project 2002 General Plan* (Riverside County, 2003a)
- County of Riverside Ordinance No. 847, Land Use or Zoning Ordinance of Riverside County, as amended by Ordinance No. 348.4573, May 8, 2008
- County of Riverside Ordinance No. 555 (as amended through 555.18) implementing SMARA
- *Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan* (Riverside County, 2003b)
- *San Diego County Draft General Plan* (San Diego County, 2008)
- San Diego County Zoning Ordinance (San Diego County, 2007)

- *Granite Construction Company Liberty Quarry Surface Mining Permit No. 213 Application* (Granite, 2007a)
 - *Granite Construction Company Liberty Quarry Change of Zone Application No. 508*
 - *Granite Construction Company Liberty Quarry Noise Ordinance Exception Application No. 00002*

Other relevant documents are discussed throughout this EIR in the context of the need for the Proposed Project, the project description (Section 2), and the impacts of the Proposed Project (Section 3).

1.2 Need for Proposed Project

Aggregate is used in a variety of construction applications, including portland cement concrete, asphaltic concrete, plaster and stucco, road base, railroad ballast, levees, and fill. Aggregate is required in all construction projects to build, maintain, and repair structures, foundations and infrastructure. California Geological Survey Map Sheet 52 is a statewide map that compares projected aggregate demand for the next 50 years with currently permitted aggregate resources in 31 regions of the state (CGS, 2006). According to the 26-page report that accompanies Map Sheet 52, the Temescal Valley - Orange County Region (which is the region in which the Proposed Project site is located) "...has only 32 percent of the permitted reserves needed for the next 50 years." In the United States, the market value of construction aggregate produced in 2006 (crushed rock, sand, and gravel), was valued at over \$20 billion for construction sand and gravel and crushed stone (USGS, 2007). The state, regional, and local aggregate supply-and-demand projections, the costs of transport relative to the economic feasibility of aggregate mining, and the regional demand for aggregate resources is discussed in detail in Section 3.9, Mineral Resources.

The Proposed Project would provide a reliable and economic construction grade aggregate resource that would help meet the current and projected need for construction grade aggregate resources in Southern California, including the target market area for the Proposed Project. Sand, gravel, and crushed stone extracted from quarries and other mining operations are processed to create construction aggregate.

1.3 Project Objectives

The following are objectives of the Proposed Project.

- Develop a known and State Classified (defined in Section 3.9) aggregate mineral resource consistent with Riverside County Ordinance No. 555 (the Ordinance for Riverside County to implement SMARA) and SMARA.
- Secure adequate aggregate reserves to provide a reliable and economic source that will help meet current and projected demand for construction aggregates in the Temecula-Murrieta area, southwestern Riverside County, and northern San Diego County for the projected life of the reserve (approximately 75 years).

- Reduce truck vehicle miles traveled (VMTs) on I-15 in Riverside County by locating an aggregate source closer to the demand in southwestern Riverside County and northern San Diego County.
- Provide for a maximum, annual permitted production level of aggregate products at 5 million tons per year (MTPY) (based on an average production rate of 16,000 tons per day and a 6-day work week).
- Provide a quarry that has direct access to a major transportation corridor so truck and quarry-related traffic through residential neighborhoods is limited.
- Develop a mineral resource capable of supplying high-quality aggregate for Portland cement concrete, hot asphaltic concrete, road-bedding materials, drainage stone, and specialty drainage rock.
- Provide for a concrete and asphalt recycling facility for reusable products.
- Reclaim the site to a safe and stable condition for post-mining open space uses.
- Contour mining features and revegetate disturbed areas to minimize aesthetic impacts and erosion.
- Reclaim and maintain the site, as necessary, to eliminate hazards to public health and safety.

1.4 Lead Agency, Responsible Agency, and Trustee Agencies

Lead Agency is defined in Section 15051(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, which states:

If the project is to be carried out by a nongovernmental person or entity, the Lead Agency shall be the public agency with the greatest responsibility for supervising or approving the Proposed Project as a whole.

The County of Riverside is the Lead Agency for the Proposed Project. A Responsible Agency is an agency (other than the Lead Agency) with discretionary approval for the Proposed Project. A Trustee Agency is an agency with jurisdiction over natural resources that could be affected by the Proposed Project.

1.5 Purpose of this EIR

The purpose of this EIR is to (1) inform public agency decision makers and the public of the potentially significant environmental effects of the Proposed Project, (2) identify ways to minimize or eliminate the significant environmental effects, and (3) evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives, including the no project alternative, that would meet the major objectives of the Proposed Project but further reduce or avoid significant environmental effects.

1.6 Required Permits and Approvals

The discretionary actions listed in the following sections are required prior to implementation of the development of a new hard rock quarry to provide aggregate resources to southwestern Riverside County and northern San Diego County. The Lead Agency, Responsible Agencies, and Trustee Agencies will use the EIR in their consideration of Granite's application for the various permits and approvals, including the following:

- **Riverside County**
 - Approval of a Surface Mining Permit (SMP) and associated reclamation plan
 - Approval of a Change of Zone for a portion of the site
 - Certification of the Final EIR
 - Approval of a Noise Exception Application to Ordinance No. 847
 - Approval of a Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP)
- **San Diego County**
 - Major Grading Permit
 - Habitat loss permit
 - Site Plan - I-15 Corridor Design Review and Resource Protection Study
- **California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG)**
 - Streambed Alteration Agreement (Section 1602) (as applicable)
- **Caltrans**
 - Decertification of access control
 - Encroachment permitting
- **California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region (RWQCB)**
 - Water quality certification under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act
 - Waste discharge permitting (as applicable)
- **California State Lands Commission (SLC)**
 - Mineral extraction lease for approximately 151 acres in the north half of Site, in Section 36: minerals within the northern half of the Proposed Project area in Section 36 are 100 percent owned by the State of California and managed by the SLC. A mineral extraction lease between Granite and the SLC would be required. The State also possesses 1/16th interest in minerals on the southern half of the Site, within Section 36.
- **South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD)**
 - Air Quality Permit to Construct/Operate for the processing plants and power generators
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)**
 - Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit (as applicable)

Riverside County would require Granite to assure reclamation of the Site is in compliance with Section 2773.1 of SMARA, in the form of a bond payable to Riverside County and the Department of Conservation. The financial assurance would be approved for the implementation of the proposed reclamation plan and would be reviewed and adjusted

annually to account for new lands disturbed, inflation, and reclamation of lands accomplished in accordance with the approved reclamation plan (SMARA, Section 2773.1 [a][3]).

1.7 Scope and Approach of this EIR

This EIR analyzes the impacts of the Proposed Project, including the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts for the following resource areas:

- Aesthetics
- Air quality
- Biological resources
- Cultural resources
- Geology and soils
- Hazards and hazardous materials
- Hydrology and water quality
- Land use
- Mineral resources
- Noise
- Traffic and transportation
- Utilities and service systems
- Vibration and blasting

Section 3 provides a resource area-specific analysis for the Site. Section 4 restates this information and is organized by affected community or adjacent land use; the discussion is derived from the resource-specific analyses in Section 3. Section 4 provides a summary of impacts to the Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve (SMER), the City of Temecula, and the communities of Rainbow, De Luz, and Fallbrook.

1.8 Notice of Preparation and Environmental Assessment/ Initial Study

Riverside County prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) and an initial study¹ (IS) (Riverside County, 2005) for the Proposed Project. The 30-day review period began on July 20, 2005 (in accordance with CEQA Guidelines, Section 15082). Subsequently, the deadline for the NOP was extended to August 30, 2005, because of additional issues raised at the scoping meeting and at the request of the residents.

The IS was prepared to identify potential significant environmental effects of the Proposed Project and determine the focus of the analysis of the EIR (in accordance with CEQA Guidelines, Section 15063). The 2005 NOP, including the IS, is included in this EIR in Appendix A.

¹ Riverside County uses the term "Environmental Assessment" in conjunction with CEQA's requirements that a Lead Agency conduct an Initial Study to evaluate a project's potentially significant impacts. This term should not be confused with an Environmental Assessment conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

Granite submitted a revision to its SMP application and a Change of Zone application to Riverside County on April 24, 2007, after the NOP and IS. The revisions included the following:

- Increase in Proposed Project area from 311 acres to 414 acres through the addition of six parcels on the east side of the Site adjacent to the Caltrans right-of-way (ROW) for I-15.
- A Change of Zone request for 110 acres of the Site from Rural Residential (R-R) to Mineral Resources and Related Manufacturing (M-R-A) to refine the zoning in the location of the operation where the process plants would be located.
- Revised design of the access road to allow for improved traffic circulation and access purposes.

An amended NOP and IS were then prepared and submitted to all responsible and trustee agencies including surrounding cities and San Diego County, property owners within a distance of 2,400 feet (in accordance with a Riverside County ordinance), and interested parties, including those who provided mailing addresses at the August 17, 2005, scoping meeting or through correspondence with Riverside County.

As listed by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), also referred to as the State Clearinghouse, the review period for the amended NOP started on June 26, 2007, and ended on July 24, 2007. OPR also updated the Proposed Project State Clearinghouse Number to SCH #20077061104. The 2007 NOP and IS are included in this EIR in Appendix B.

1.9 Scoping Meeting

A scoping meeting was held on August 17, 2005. Letters submitted in response to the NOP and scoping session have been considered and issues that were expressed are addressed in this EIR, as applicable. In accordance with CEQA and on the basis of the scoping comments received, the following section presents the identified areas of controversy of the Proposed Project.

1.10 Areas of Controversy

CEQA Guidelines, Section 15123(b)(2) requires a discussion of areas of controversy known to the Lead Agency, including issues raised by responsible and trustee agencies and the public. The following environmental areas of controversy were raised at the public scoping meeting and in comment letters to both the July 20, 2005, and June 26, 2007, NOPs. The section that addresses these issues is provided in parentheses, following the issue heading.

- Aesthetics (see Section 3.1)
 - Lighting "Dark Sky" impacts
 - Visual impacts of the access road from I-15 and the community of Rainbow, and of the quarry and plants from all surrounding areas

- Air Quality (see Section 3.2)
 - Air toxics health effects from blasting, mining, crushing, screening, and other plant operations, the power plant, diesel exhaust from equipment and trucks, and entrained road dust (Health Risk Assessment) on sensitive receptors and surrounding communities including the SMER
 - Health effects from dust, noise, asbestos, and crystalline silica
 - Dust impacts on sensitive receptors, agricultural businesses, and native vegetation
 - Greenhouse gases and global climate change
 - Local and regional air quality from blasting, mining, crushing, screening, and other plant operations, the power plant, diesel exhaust from equipment and trucks, and entrained road
- Biological Resources (see Section 3.3)
 - Adjacent location to SMER
 - Relevance to other regional planning documents (draft North County Multi-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP), Western Riverside County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
 - SMER, sensitive species, and the Santa Margarita River Watershed
- Cultural Resources (see Section 3.4)
 - Potential impacts to cultural resources (historic, prehistoric, and Indian artifacts) onsite (Cultural Resources)
- Geology and Soils (see Section 3.5)
 - Seismic activity and rock slope stability of excavations and with proposed end use (Geology and Soils)
 - Earthquakes
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials (see Section 3.6)
 - Use of recycled materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality (see Section 3.7)
 - Impacts on both the local watershed and the Santa Margarita River Watershed water supply and water quality
 - Groundwater supply and quality
 - Drainage patterns and effect on existing drainage systems
- Noise (see Section 3.10)
 - Compatibility with existing adjacent uses and SMER
 - Noise impact to wildlife and SMER
- Traffic and Transportation (see Section 3.11)
 - Traffic impacts to I-15, including Caltrans approval
 - Level of service in both Riverside and San Diego counties

- Access to commercial property
- Utilities (see Section 3.12)
 - Public water supply and long-term availability
 - Emergency services
- Vibration (see Section 3.13)
 - Impact to wildlife and SMER
 - Impacts to nearby residents in nearby communities

1.11 Notice of Completion and EIR Review

The circulation of the Notice of Completion (NOC) for this EIR was filed with the State Clearinghouse. Concurrent with the filing of the NOC, the County provided a Notice of Availability to public agencies, organizations, groups, and individuals that have previously requested information or provided comments. The EIR will be available for a 60-day review period. Comments on the EIR should be sent to:

David L. Jones, Chief Engineering Geologist
County of Riverside
Transportation and Land Management Agency, Planning Department
4080 Lemon Street, 9th Floor
Riverside, CA 92502

Or emailed to: libertyquarry@rctlma.org

Comments regarding this EIR can also be submitted as oral testimony or written comments submitted to the Lead Agency at the public meeting.

1.12 Environmentally Superior Alternative

The Reduced Quarry Footprint Alternative is the Environmentally Superior Alternative. The impacts from implementing the Reduced Quarry Footprint Alternative would be similar to the Proposed Project but of a lesser intensity (based on the reduced acreage for operations) for the following resource areas: air quality, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, land use, hydrology and water quality, traffic and transportation, utility and service systems, and vibration (refer to Section 6).

1.13 Organization of this EIR

This EIR is organized into the following chapters:

- **Executive Summary.** Summarizes the Proposed Project, areas of controversy, issues to be resolved, the potential environmental effects that may result from the implementation of the Proposed Project, the mitigation measures identified to reduce or eliminate significant effects, and a summary of alternatives to the Proposed Project.
- **Section 1 – Introduction.** Presents an introduction to the Proposed Project, including the need for the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project objectives, the required permits

and approvals for Proposed Project implementation, the purpose of this EIR, the scope and approach to the EIR, an overview of the environmental review process (including scoping and public review) and the organization of this EIR.

- **Section 2 – Description of the Proposed Project.** Provides a detailed description of the various components of the Proposed Project.
- **Section 3 – Environmental Impact Evaluation.** Describes the existing environmental conditions on the site and in the vicinity of the Site, the regulatory environment, the methodology used to analyze Proposed Project impacts, and the significance criteria used to evaluate potentially significant effects of the Proposed Project. Section 3 then identifies the potential environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Project, identifies mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate effects found to be significant, and determines the level of significance of the effect after measures have been implemented.
- **Section 4 – Impacts to Local Communities.** Provides a discussion of the affected environment and a summary of the potential environmental impacts to the SMER, the City of Temecula, and the unincorporated Communities of Fallbrook, Rainbow, and De Luz.
- **Section 5 – Other CEQA-required Analysis.** Evaluates the environmental effects of the Proposed Project when considered with the effects of other approved and/or reasonably foreseeable projects that when combined, may be cumulatively significant. Section 5 also includes descriptions of (1) the ways in which the Proposed Project may foster economic or population growth and thereby be growth inducing, and (2) any significant irreversible environmental changes that may result with the implementation of the Proposed Project (CEQA Guidelines section 15126.2[c][d]).
- **Section 6 – Alternatives to the Proposed Project.** Describes a reasonable range of alternatives to the Proposed Project that would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the Proposed Project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects identified in the environmental analysis of the Proposed Project.
- **Section 7 – References.** Includes a list of Lead Agency staff members who participated in the preparation of the EIR as well as the consultants who prepared the technical reports to support the environmental analysis. Section 7.0 also includes a bibliography of information used to prepare the EIR, and lists persons and organizations consulted during report preparation.

