

County of Santa Clara

Office of the Board of Supervisors

County Government Center, East Wing
70 West Hedding Street, 10th Floor
San Jose, California 95110
(408) 299-3540 (650) 965-8737
FAX 280-0418 TDD 993-8272
www.kniss.com



Liz Kniss
Supervisor Fifth District

November 14, 2003

Mr. Jitze Couperus
13680 Page Mill Road
Los Altos Hills, CA 94022

Re: Hanson Quarry Ridgeline

Dear Mr. Couperus:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the Hanson Quarry. Our office has received various complaints about the increasing visibility of quarrying activities at the Hanson Quarry near Cupertino. The County has been investigating these issues for over a year, and has had several meetings and written communications with the Quarry. The visibility issues appear to be related to the buildup of the overburden area and/or the lowering of the ridgeline around the Quarry.

Buildup of Overburden Area

The Quarry's approved reclamation plan provides for the placement of overburden materials in an area on the western side of the Quarry pit. This overburden area has grown in elevation over the years, and is now visible from Rancho San Antonio Park and portions of Los Altos.

According to the Quarry's approved reclamation plan, the sides of the overburden area are to be revegetated as mining progresses. The top of the newly created hill will not be revegetated until mining is complete, at which point the top will be hydroseeded and allowed to naturalize.

Lowering of Ridgeline

The Quarry dedicated a Ridgeline Protection Easement to the County in 1972. The purpose of the Easement was to preserve a ridgeline that provided a scenic backdrop and shielded the quarry and industrial operations from public view. The intent was to keep the ridgeline from falling below a certain elevation so that it would continue to visually shield the Quarry.

There have been several landslides affecting the ridgeline since the ridgeline easement was granted. The major landslides are shown on the attached exhibit.

The first major slide occurred in 1987 and involved a large rock slide on the north face of the quarry pit. The Quarry's geologists estimated that approximately 3.5 million cubic yards of rock material could give way, jeopardizing future Quarry operations and the safety of the quarry operators and equipment. So the Quarry obtained an emergency grading authorization from the County to repair the slide and stabilize the area.

Since 2000, there have been at least three additional major landslides along the ridgeline. The January 2001 slide measured approximately 200-450' wide x 200' long x 20-40' deep. Sliding in this area is expected to continue.

While investigating the 2001 landslide, geologists discovered two additional landslides. The "2002 Slide" is east of the 2001 landslide and encroaches onto land owned by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

In Fall 2002, the Quarry sought another emergency grading authorization from the County on the grounds that immediate action was required to stabilize the slopes in the 2002 Slide area to avoid dangers to Quarry workers and visitors on Midpen land from the 2002 slide. The Quarry estimated that 840,000 cubic yards of material would need to be removed to stabilize this area, including 320,000 cubic yards from Midpen's land. When asked whether all of this work qualified as an "emergency," the Quarry clarified that it only sought an emergency authorization to remove 100,000 cubic yards. Before processing the emergency grading authorization, the County asked the Quarry to provide more information, including how the soil removal and continuing slope instability problems would affect the Quarry's reclamation plan and the County's ridgeline easement. The Quarry responded through its attorney in April 2003 that the slide was outside of the area covered by the easement and that no modification to the Quarry's reclamation plan was required. No action has been taken on the Quarry's emergency grading application.

While investigating the 2001 and 2002 landslides, another major slide was discovered in the area between the 2001 and 2002 landslides (the "2003 Slide" on the attachment).

The County Board of Supervisors is in the process of consulting with its counsel and determining how to proceed with respect to the ridgeline easement.

Reclamation Plan Status

The Quarry's reclamation plan was approved in 1980 and expires in 2005. Based on the numerous landslides and other activities at the Quarry, the County is investigating

whether the Quarry is in compliance with its approved reclamation plan and whether the plan needs to be modified to reflect the lowering of the ridgeline and/or other deviations from the approved plan. The County has selected a qualified consultant to fully investigate this issue, and the investigation is expected to be completed by Summer 2004.

Please be assured that our office is working on this issue and will keep you apprised of its status. Again, thank you for contacting our office and if I could be of any assistance to you in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Yoyi Franco". The signature is stylized with a large initial "Y" and a long, sweeping flourish at the end.

Yoyi Aglipay Franco, Esq.
Policy Analyst
Housing, Land Use, Environment and Transportation
Public Safety and Justice
Office of Supervisor Liz Kniss - District 5

Attachment: Exhibit of Landslides

