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County of Santa Clara
California

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

File No.: 2250-13-66-84P

Sponsor: Kaiser Cement Corp.

Date: March 1, 1985

Project: Reclamation Plan for Kaiser Cement Permanente Quarry

Prepared by: Ransom Bratton

Reviewed by: Hugh H. Graham

RECOMMENDED ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

☐ CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT. Project is within a class of projects determined not to have a significant effect on the environment.

☒ NEGATIVE DECLARATION. The proposed project could not have a significant effect on the environment, or, although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case if the mitigation measures are added to the project. (In this case, if mitigation does not occur through: (1) a change in plans; or (2) an enforceable commitment from the applicant, an EIR would be required).

☐ ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT IS REQUIRED. The proposed project may have significant effects on the environment. These significant effects, as determined by the Initial Study and other sources, will be evaluated in an EIR.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED

☐ Land Use/General Plan	☐ Safety
☒ Geologic	☐ Air Quality
☒ Resources/Parks	☐ Noise
☒ Waste/Sewage/Water Quality	☒ Aesthetic
☒ Flora and Fauna	☐ Energy
☐ Transportation	☐ Historical/Archaeological
☐ Housing	☐ Public Services & Utilities

DISCUSSION (continued on back)

Staff Conclusion: (SEE ATTACHED SHEETS)

DISCUSSION

Staff Conclusion

A Negative Declaration is recommended for this project. The proposed reclamation plan can be carried out without adverse permanent impacts on the environment. The reclamation plan's conditions of approval being established by the Planning Commission will provide adequate protection for surface waters, slope stability, flora, aesthetic and to public health and safety. No environmental factors were found which were incapable of mitigation by the conditions of approval. There will be a period during the expansion of the quarry pit towards the east when the East Rock Storage area will be visible from off the property, but this situation will be eventually eliminated by the revegetation process is implemented by the plan. There is a community benefit from approval of this reclamation plan as there is currently no such plan in effect for the quarry site.

Environmental Setting

The project area is located west of the Kaiser Cement plant area approximately 1-1/2 miles west of the City of Cupertino and 1/2 mile west of the cement plant. The area of the reclamation plan comprises approximately 330 of the 3268 acres owned by Kaiser Cement Corporation. The quarry and reclamation area are accessed by the private road system extending west from Permanente Road.

The site is located in the eastern foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains at the western edge of the valley with elevation ranging from 950 to 1900 feet. The terrain's vegetation has been heavily modified as a result of years of quarry operation along with subsequent revegetation. Varieties of the more native vegetation types include oak woodland, oak savannah, woodland/chaparral and chaparral habitats. There no known rare or endangered plant or animal species to be found in the area of the reclamation plan. The total reclamation area, with the exception of the quarry pit, drain into the headwaters of Permanente Creek. Except for the extreme northeasterly corner of the top of the eventual pit and adjacent rock storage area the project area is totally surrounded by lands owned by Kaiser Cement Corporation, which acts as a buffer to neighboring properties.

Background and Project Description

The proposal is for the approval of a reclamation plan for an existing quarry under the provisions of Section 36-4.3 of the County's Zoning Ordinance. The quarry has no use permit, being a legal non-conforming use, however, it is required by State and local regulations to have a reclamation plan. On July 13, 1982, the County Board of Supervisors adopted regulations that all quarries in the unincorporated County which have been in operation since January 1,1976 obtain approval of a reclamation plan from the County Planning Commission. This reclamation is limited to that portion of the quarry site which has occurred since January 1, 1976, per the limitations spelled out in the State Mining and Geology Act. The project area covers approximately 330 acres of the 3268 acres owned by Kaiser Cement Corporation, the remainder of the site being occupied by the cement plant facilities and open lands buffering this use form adjacent properties.

This reclamation plan has been prepared to address the site's reclamation needs for approximately the next 25 year. At the end of that time, a subsequent plan similar to this will need to be prepared. A previous landscape plan was prepared by Kaiser Cement and implemented in the early 1970's to screen the most visible areas of the quarry and stabilize some of the slopes. However it is not comprehensive enough to comply with the State and local requirements for current and future reclamation needs on the site.

The proposed plan shows excavation of the main quarry pit area in a series of 25' feet wide benches 50 feet in height. This eventual expansion will require the relocation of an existing pile of rock materials which will be relocated further to the east and revegetated, see Figures 6 & 7 of Reclamation Plan report. This will allow mining of the limestone beneath while maintaining a knoll as a visual barrier between the main quarry area and the valley floor to the east. The plan also deals with a second major material storage area west of the quarry. The materials deposited here are not used for the production of cement or aggregate. However, it is expected that at some future date, when the market demands they may be so utilized. Until that time the area will be reclaimed with proper slope, installation of drainage controls and revegetation. For a more complete background and project description, the Reclamation Plan prepared for Kaiser Cement Corp. by Ruth & Going, dated October 1984, should be consulted.

DISCUSSION OF IMPACTS

1. Geologic

The Reclamation Plan Report by Ruth and Going includes a full section on the geology and potential impacts upon the local environment by the results of the quarrying activity in the event of seismic activity. This chapter is based on numerous geologic works performed in the Permanente quarry and surrounding area by Kaiser personnel, consultants, and outside parties such as universities, and State and Federal geologic surveys. Numerous test holes along with geologic maps and cross-sections have been prepared since Kaiser began operating here in 1939.

Numerous faults lie in the vicinity of the quarry. The San Andreas, the fault which would likely have the greatest impact resulting from movement lies approximately 2 miles to the west. The Monta Vista Fault, part of the Sargent-Berrocal System lies 1-1/2 miles to the east. The Berrocal Fault main trace appears to trend northwest across Kaiser property under Permanente Creek where it forms a linear valley between the cement plant and the quarry. The fault does not appear to be active within the Permanente area, although micro-seismicity near Stevens Creek Reservoir, approximately 2 miles southeast, suggests is may be potentially active.

In the event of a major quake it is unlikely that a significant ground failure would occur in the quarry because of the hard rock materials and the pit slope angle of 45°. Any failure would impact the interior area of the quarry pit and no surrounding property. Earth shaking effect on rock storage areas would likely be restricted to ground settlement and local slumping. The coarse nature of the rock in these storage areas will preclude any failure due to liquefaction. Neither area supports any structures or buildings. The revegetation provided and installation of drainage facilities will reduce the potential for erosion during and following completion of the deposition activities in the materials storage areas.

2. Resources/Parks

This quarry currently produces approximately four million tons of rock annually, providing for an annual production of 1.6 millions tons of cement. It acts as a significant source in the Bay Area for high quality crushed stone. Estimated reserves are in excess of 130 million tons. Materials now being deposited in the West Materials Storage Area will possibly be utilized as a source for additional crushed stone for aggregate in response to future market and quality conditions.

The quarry and materials storage areas are bordered on the north by lands of the Mid-Peninsula Open Space District. The existing ridgeline will be maintained by means of the easement agreement and conditions of this reclamation plan to insure neither the quarry pit nor materials storage area will be visible towards the north and east. There will be a 30' minimum setback of the most outward point of the eventual pit area from the nearest property line.

The revegetation process will provide new plant species more similar to what exists in the surrounding area than what now exists on some of the rehabilitated slopes. The long-term effect will be beneficial to the area when those revegetation plantings take hold.

3. Water Quality

One of the main purposes for a reclamation plan is to insure that no degradation of surface waters adjacent to the quarry site occurs during and after completion of this reclamation plan. The engineering consultants feel that the porous material of the deposits of Storage Area "A" & "B" will result in a very high infiltration capacity and low erosion potential, and that revegetation of the slopes will insure that the erosion potential will be adequated mitigated. The materials storage areas will be maintained at a 3:1 gradient in order to maintain stability. The phasing plan provides for installation of revegetation plant materials as soon as each level is deposited in each materials area. Runoff in the materials storage is currently directed to catchment areas which collect sediments. The high percentage of rock and granular materials result in rapid percolation of rainwaters. As Phase "1" of materials storage in west storage area nears final completion a new sediment basin will be installed, the design of which is subject to review and approval by the Santa Clara Valley Water District personnel. Sediment basins will be installed whenever necessary to insure no sediments will be deposited in Permanente Creek. The revegetation plan and drainage controls should adequately mitigate any potential impacts from the proposed use on the local area's surface waters.

4. Flora and Fauna

Both the East and West Material Storage areas will receive revegetation treatment. The west area will be hydro-mulched while the East Area will utilize more plant materials and more intensive type planting techniques. That is because this area is more visible from the valley floor thus requiring a greater degree of treatment to mitigate any permanent visual impacts. The main purpose of revegetation in the west materials area is to stabilize the slopes and prevent erosion. The types of materials being proposed for both areas are native to the surrounding environment and should blend well into the hillsides.

The plantings shall occur in phases so soon as a particular phase of deposition is completed, so that revegetation process will be occur at the same time the period of quarrying is taking place. The natural habitat will be restored once the quarry activity is completed and the selected species of plants will have a beneficial effect on the overall quality of flora on the site. The inner quarry pit area and its operational future and eventual rehabilitation will be addressed in a future plan to be prepared approximately 20 years from now.

5. Aesthetic

One of the purposes of the reclamation plan is to reduce any permanent adverse visual impact of this land use upon the surrounding environment and provide adequate mitigation measures to do so. The East Materials Area is visible from the urbanized areas of Cupertino to the east and south. The Permanente ridgeline and its easement dedication will insure no exposure of the quarry or its material area towards the north and northeast. At the request of the County, the applicant's engineer has prepared cross-sections to judge the quarry's impacts upon Cupertino. These cross-sections show that East Materials Storage Area will be visible during and after deposition and revegetation. Extensive tree and shrubbery planting will be used in this area to incorporate the new hill surface into the surrounding natural setting. To insure survival of plant species protective measures are planned to attempt to protect plantings from deer and rodents. Also because of the southern and westerly exposure and high porosity of the soils temporary watering devices are planned to provide supplemental water to this East Storage Area revegetation. Thus the revegetation plan should reduce the permanent visual impact from the effects of quarrying to less than a significant level.

Persons Consulted

- Sue Tippets, Santa Clara Valley Water District
- Jim Berkland, County Geologist

RB:ad

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