

# SUNOL QUARRY VIOLATED WATER DISCHARGE PERMIT

S. F. SUPERVISORS HEARING ON QUARRY EXPANSION SLATED FOR APRIL 11



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Sunol, CA** – Mission Valley Rock Co. discharged polluted water into Alameda Creek at least 15 times in 2000, according to reports filed with the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). Mission Valley currently operates a gravel quarry on public land leased from the S. F. Public Utilities Commission in the Sunol Valley south of Interstate 680. The S. F. Board of Supervisors approved a lease in September of 2000 allowing Mission Valley to excavate an additional 242 acres north of Interstate 680, adjacent to the newly restored Sunol Water Temple and Alameda Creek. A review of 9 months of self-monitoring reports filed by Mission Valley during 2000 showed water discharges exceeding the allowable limits for turbidity and solids (excessive sediment) and pH. S. F. Supervisor Chris Daly will bring a resolution before a subcommittee of the Board of Supervisors on April 11 to discontinue the approved plans for quarry expansion.

“These violations are an indication of a company unable to control their discharge process,” said Jeff Miller, director of the Alameda Creek Alliance, a community watershed group that has joined forces with Sunol residents organized as Save Our Sunol to oppose the quarry expansion. “There is no reason to reward this failure on the part of Mission Valley Rock to abide by the conditions of their permit with an expanded lease to quarry on our public land” said Miller. “These apparent violations are a misuse of the public trust,” added Pat Stillman, president of Save Our Sunol.

Mission Valley discharges treated water to Alameda Creek under a strict NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) permit authorized by the RWQCB, which establishes limits on turbidity (sediment levels), pH, chlorides (salts), and solids - to protect downstream beneficial uses of Alameda Creek, which include wildlife habitat and drinking water. Although numerous monitoring reports have apparently been lost by the RWQCB, recent records show a pattern of water quality violations at the Sunol MVR plant ranging from minor to extreme. Excessive turbidity is

a problem because high levels of silt can clog the gills of fish and smother the eggs of fish and amphibians. Altered pH can impact the aquatic organisms at the bottom of the creek food chain.

The S. F. Public Utilities Commission had incorrectly asserted (during the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) process for the Alameda Watershed Management Plan) that Mission Valley Rock had no violations of their water discharge permit. A representative of Mission Valley Rock also incorrectly claimed no water discharge permit violations at a hearing on the quarry issue held by S. F. Supervisor Ammiano last year.

The Alameda Creek Alliance has opposed the quarry expansion due to concern over potential impacts to groundwater and surface flow in Alameda Creek, which harbors several sensitive wildlife species. The SFPUC has acknowledged that the planned mining to 200 feet in depth has “potentially significant groundwater impacts from expansion of mining pits...and subsequent impacts to Alameda Creek and associated resources, cannot be ruled out.” Alameda Creek has been designated as critical habitat for federally listed steelhead trout, and portions of the Sunol Valley adjacent to the proposed quarry were designated as critical habitat for the threatened Alameda whipsnake. Other sensitive species such as the California red-legged frog and the California tiger salamander are known to inhabit the Sunol Valley upstream of the quarry area - surveys of Alameda Creek adjacent to the quarries have not been done by the SFPUC.

According to RWQCB records, a leaking fuel tank on Mission Valley property in 1996 contaminated water with MTBE, a known carcinogen, at concentrations measured at over 50 times the allowable standards for drinking water, more than 3 years after the spill. It is unknown how much fuel was spilled, whether there was a plume, or how close to Alameda Creek the spill was. Mission Valley Rock has also had problems with air pollution. The EIR prepared by the SFPUC for the Alameda Watershed Management Plan notes 13 violations by Mission Valley Rock of their Bay Area Air Quality Management District permit between 1993 and 2000.

**The S. F. Public Utilities and Deregulation Committee, chaired by Supervisor Daly, will hold a hearing on the quarry expansion and take up Daly’s resolution on Wednesday, April 11, starting at 1 PM, Room 200, S. F. City Hall.**