

Overview

Neighbors Concerned About Superior Ready Mix

General background of the quarry:

The quarry on Mission Gorge Road (the Canyon Rock quarry) started out small in the **late 1920s**. It operated on the north side of the San Diego River and produced only crushed and broken stones. We can find no evidence of it being a problem for neighbors back then. **By 1954**, Allied Gardens was established in the surrounding area, and most homes were completed by **1968 or 1969**. The first Conditional Use Permit (CUP) was issued for Canyon Rock in **Dec of 1969**. It allowed mining and the use of crushing equipment on 132 acres. In the **1970's**, asphalt and cement plants were operating. (We don't find evidence of the CUP allowing for asphalt or cement plants at that time. However, historic documentation is not always complete.) In **1983**, the CUP was amended to allow for mining plus the production of asphalt, cement, concrete and clay, with sales via trucks. Also, the area was expanded to 250 acres. The decision was appealed by the Tierrasanta Community, but overturned. In **1990**, an amendment to the CUP added an additional 170 acres, expanded hours of operation, and allowed for Saturday work. The decision was appealed by the Navajo and Tierrasanta Communities, but overturned. In **1991**, Superior Ready Mix bought Canyon Rock and dramatically started increasing production. Neighbors tell us that odors, dust and noise got really bad by the mid to late 1990s and that was no use to complain because nothing was done. In **1993**, emissions triggered the need for Health Risk Analysis by the APCD. In **1996**, a new asphalt plant was added that increased potential production capacity by 250%. In **2014**, emissions again triggered the need for Health Risk Analysis. During **2019-2020**, SRM received at least 3 Public Nuisance Violations from the APCD, and it also received many APCD permit violations. They have since received more.

A brief history:

New neighbors moved into the area as older residents left. The new neighbors were annoyed by the dust and odors, but not really aware what was happening to cause them. Around 2018, while viewing an aerial photograph of Mission Gorge, one of the residents saw a huge cloud of dust hanging over Superior Ready Mix. The cause of the dust and odors finally made sense. He figured out who to report the problem to, and started notifying residents of their right to file complaints with the APCD. Suddenly there was a huge increase in the number of complaints to the APCD. Inspections increased and the number of notices of violation that SRM received from the APCD increased. Soon other neighbors joined the cause for clean air. The dust seemed to get better.

We wondered why SRM had ever been allowed to pollute like this. We then noticed that SRM had never (not once in 35 years) been in compliance with certain conditions of its CUP. We began contacting various City officials requesting compliance with condition #4 of the CUP, which requires an annual review of all conditions of the CUP. We were hopeful that if the City could see a complete picture of how SRM was affecting its neighbors, that the city would start enforcing all the conditions of the CUP, and we might get some lasting relief. Recently, the City, which had previously never enforced Condition #4, issued a Notice of Violation to SRM for non-compliance with Condition #4. The review that had waited for over 35 years to happen, was finally being started. Then the City, at our request, set up a meeting to hear our concerns.

What is happening now:

The City is currently examining the many complaints it has received. We are still meeting with the City to let it know of all of our concerns, and we have many. We have neighbors living with literally intolerable noise 6 days a week, sunrise to night. We are continuing to reach out to neighbors.

How many people are involved? We have a petition with 484 valid signatures asking for enforcement of regulations pertaining to SRM. We have a list of equally as many complaints filed with the APCD. The complaints are from an area greater than 1/2 mile from SRM. We know there are other affected people who we have not reached yet. We have very little information about Tierrasanta, so we will not speak for that community. We know that it is affected, however.

What we would like to happen:

We are not recommending any specific remedy. We believe that is up to the City. We are only asking for results: for SRM to be compliant with the conditions of its CUP and other laws.

We are eager to have immediate violations corrected, but we are even more concerned about finding out how the current situation came about and what to do to prevent it from happening again.

We feel that the key almost certainly lies in community engagement and in transparency and cooperation between all of the agencies that deal with SRM (the Community Planning Groups, the City and its various departments, the APCD, the Water Authority, and probably others).

How the NCPG can be involved:

At minimum, we would like for the NCPG to be aware of the problem and the extent of the problem. We would like it to have access to FACTUAL INFORMATION about issues related to SRM. We would like assistance getting the word out to residents so that they can recognize problems and know how to respond, and they know the correct people to report problems to. We want people to realize that if they don't speak up, officials will never know how the dust, the odors, the noise, and toxins affect the neighborhood. We would like a way to reach out to Tierrasanta to see if they have been experiencing what we have, and if together we can formulate something that works for the future.

We are not very familiar with how the City works. As we understand it, the findings of the review need to be brought before the Planning Commission and that the decision of the Planning Commission may be appealed. We know that the Navajo and Tierrasanta Communities appealed the last decision when the CUP was amended in 1990. Should there be a need for appeal, we are hoping the NPG would make that appeal or at least work with us to help us through that process, if all concerned are in agreement.

What we would ultimately like to see, bottom line:

Ideally, SRM should self-police. They should genuinely want to be a good neighbor, to see only good and no harm coming from their operations. They have that ability. If we can see blue smoke (pollution) coming from SRM's equipment, if APCD inspectors can see equipment that is in disrepair, if we can smell odors, if we can hear noises so loud they make our walls vibrate, if we can see fugitive dust blanketing the area, so can the management at SRM. They do not need to wait until they get a notice of violation to make corrections.

Until that day comes, we want our communities and our officials to work together to enforce compliance with all conditions of the CUP and other governmental regulations. We want a system to follow that will help us avoid the pitfalls that have gotten us into the situation we are currently in.