

Valley Springs quarry plan withdrawn

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VALLEY SPRINGS - Ford Construction has withdrawn its application to increase production by 500 percent at its gravel quarry below New Hogan Dam but may resubmit the proposal.

The project has been under fire from Valley Springs neighbors who object to the increased noise and truck traffic the project would cause.

Some also have objected that it could pollute the Calaveras River with sediment and have even posted pictures on the Internet of silt from quarry trucks deposited on a bridge that drains to the river.

Ford Construction last year asked county officials for a permit to increase production to up to 500,000 tons a year.

The Planning Commission hearing on the request was originally scheduled for Jan. 5 but was first delayed and now canceled altogether.

County interim Planning Director Robert Sellman said in a written news release that both county staffers and Ford representatives agreed the mine may have to update its reclamation plan before it can resubmit its application to expand.

In a Dec. 22 letter, the California Department of Conservation Office of Mine Reclamation said the county's initial study of the proposed expansion failed to provide necessary information on a variety of subjects but particularly on what the expansion might mean for wildlife.

The mine's pollution discharge permit requires it to prevent mine sediment from reaching the Calaveras River. Sediment is an issue because both salmon and steelhead spawn downstream. Sediment can ruin spawning beds.

Ford Construction project manager Jerry Middleton did not return a Wednesday afternoon call asking for comment.

