



South Coast Air Quality Management District

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Review of the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Proposed Alberhill Southwest Shale Mine Reclamation Plan

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above-mentioned document. The following comments are meant as guidance for the lead agency and should be incorporated into the final California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document as appropriate.

Project Description

Based on AQMD staff's review of the draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) the project description is unclear. It appears that the draft MND is intended to evaluate the potential environmental impacts from the reclamation of an existing mining site, however, extensive discussion of potential new mining activities at the site are included in the project description. For example, on page seven of the draft MND the lead agency states that during on-going mining operations rock and additional material not suitable for clay products will be excavated and used for off-site fill and for construction materials that will be made available to outside aggregate companies. Also, in written correspondence to AQMD staff on June 8, 2010 the lead agency stated that 60 delivery truck trips per day are associated with the project. It is unclear how many of these truck trips are new trips requiring evaluation under CEQA. AQMD staff requests that the lead agency clarify the project description to reflect all activities that are a part of the proposed project.

Air Quality Impacts

Without a detailed project description it is unclear whether the mining activities and the truck trips are a part of the proposed project or the existing setting. As a result, AQMD staff is concerned that emissions from fugitive dust (PM10) and diesel equipment (PM2.5, NOx, SOx, CO and VOC) from typical mining and reclamation activities (e.g., grading, excavation, material transport and blasting) may present AQ impacts that have not been adequately evaluated pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15064. Therefore, AQMD

staff recommends that the lead agency analyze all potential air quality impacts in the final CEQA document from any new activities not previously analyzed under CEQA.

Sensitive Receptors

Further, AQMD staff is concerned about potential exposure of sensitive receptors (i.e., residences) to significant emissions during operation of the proposed project. The lead agency states that a single family residence is located near the entrance to the project site; however, the lead agency does not provide specific information on the distance between the operation of the proposed project and this or other nearby residences. As indicated above, the lead agency has not provided sufficient air quality information on potential sources of emissions from the proposed project. As a result, the lead agency has not demonstrated that the project will not significantly impact air quality by exposing sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. Therefore, AQMD staff recommends that the lead agency revise the CEQA document as appropriate and if diesel emissions from the project site are found to exceed de minimis levels, AQMD staff recommends that the lead agency conduct a health risk assessment. In the event that the lead agency identifies any significant air quality impacts AQMD staff recommends that the lead agency provide mitigation in accordance with section 15370 of the CEQA Guidelines, to the extent feasible.

AQMD staff is available to work with the lead agency to address any issues identified herein and any other questions that may arise. Please contact Dan Garcia, Air Quality Specialist CEQA Section, at (909) 396-3304, if you have any questions regarding the enclosed comments.

Sincerely,



Ian MacMillan
Program Supervisor, CEQA Inter-Governmental Review
Planning, Rule Development & Area Sources

Attachment

IM:DG

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