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Ethnic Studies Department

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
Board of Supervisors
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Dear County Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to voice my opposition to the proposed development of Sargent Quarry in Santa Clara County. As a Native American Studies scholar I must offer my expertise into questions of religious and cultural conservancy and the rights of Indigenous peoples in California. The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band has survived as a people on this land despite centuries of genocide and forced cultural assimilation policies carried out by Spanish, Mexican and American settlers. Their request for government-to-government negotiations must be honored as an act of reconciliation with the original inhabitants and caretakers of this land, and as an invitation to end centuries-old cycles of violence.

The proposed development project at Sargent Quarry would be nothing short of a desecration of a sacred site; a place of tremendous cultural and spiritual significance. The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band know this place as Juristac; a place of ceremony, healing and ancestral memory. If this site is transformed into an extractive sand and gravel mining operation this will directly contribute to the ongoing historic trauma endured by Mutsun people.

Furthermore, carrying out the proposed development project would be in direct violation of the United Nations Declaration of Right of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP 61/295); Articles 8, 12, and 19. Whereas the United States is a member of this international community, which guarantees Indigenous rights of religious and territorial sovereignty, Santa Clara County has the obligation to protect this sacred site under international law. The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors Resolution of Commendation carried out on April 6, 1993 - recognizing the impact of Spanish, Mexican and American genocide - provided an important local step in this reconciliation process. Today, moving to consult directly with Mutsun tribal leaders for this project would be a concrete step to solidify and continue this important cross-cultural dialogue.

I urge you to take this opportunity to contribute to a long-term healing process in your local community. As we move forward towards an uncertain future given the realities of climate change, the traditional ecological knowledge and practices carried out by the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band represents an important resource for our collective resiliency at large. In this light, the proposed mining project would only bring the region deeper into ecological precarity and irreparable environmental damage. All Californians benefit when Native people's authority and participation in their ancestral cultures is honored. Today, you have an opportunity to defend California's cultural and ecological health for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Marcelo Garzo Montalvo
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