



Opposition to the Sargent Quarry Project (File 10747) / Protecting Juristac Sacred Site

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To: mike.wasserman@bos.sccgov.org, cindy.chavez@bos.sccgov.org, dave.cortese@bos.sccgov.org, supervisor.ellenberg@bos.sccgov.org, supervisor.simitian@bos.sccgov.org, planning.commission@pln.sccgov.org, Rob.Eastwood@pln.sccgov.org, BoardOperations@cob.sccgov.org
Cc: info@protectjuristac.org

December 16, 2021

Dear Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and Santa Clara County Planning Commission:

We at the Ecological Farming Association (EcoFarm) are writing to express our opposition to the proposed Sargent Ranch Quarry mining project, located on Amah Mutsun sacred lands. EcoFarm is a non-profit organization that nurtures just and ecologically sustainable farms and food systems through education, alliance building, celebration and advocacy. As such, we recognize the key role of Indigenous communities in building sustainable, just, and healthy food systems, as well as acting as stewards of the land.

Juristac, as the site is known by the Mutsun people, is of tremendous ceremonial, spiritual, and cultural importance for the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band; for thousands of years, it served as a place where Mutsun ancestors held sacred ceremonies, dances, and burials, before they were forcibly displaced through the Mission system. Desecrating the site by building a sand and gravel mine would perpetuate this history of dispossession and contribute to the ongoing historical trauma experienced by Mutsun people. Moreover, executing the development project would violate the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which stipulates that "Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop, and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites." Construction of the mine would also go against the Santa Clara County Human Rights Commission's recent decision to support the protection of Juristac.

Furthermore, Juristac is also a critical wildlife corridor connecting the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo and Gabilan mountain ranges. It is home to rare and endangered native species, wildlife, and habitats -- all of which are crucial to the natural balance of the local ecosystem. Carrying out the mining project would create irreparable ecological damage, harming present and future generations throughout California.

For centuries, the Amah Mutsun people have acted as environmental stewards of their ancestral lands. As the earliest caretakers of Juristac and holders of invaluable traditional ecological knowledge, the Mutsun people are in the best position to conserve and protect these lands for the benefit of all.

EcoFarm thus joins the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band in urging the County of Santa Clara to deny approval of permits for the proposed Sargent Ranch Quarry project. We also call on the County of Santa Clara to support the efforts of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band in protecting Juristac as a site of cultural, spiritual, and ecological importance.

Sincerely,

Andy Fisher
Executive Director
on behalf of EcoFarm Staff