

### ***Neighbors Protest Gravel Mine***

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By Jeff Duewel of the Daily Courier

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The opposition came out in force against a proposed Sunny Valley gravel mine Monday night, raising questions of traffic, noise and effects on groundwater to Josephine County's Rural Area Planning Commission. It was the third hearing in a month at the Anne Basker Auditorium, and the next is set for June 2.

Sunny Valley Sand and Gravel's proposal calls for it to mine 6 million cubic yards over 20 years. Last week, the planning commission added the 200-acre property to Josephine County's list of significant aggregate sites.

"You drove a stake into the heart of Sunny Valley," said Steve Klapp. "You chose the significance of gravel over the significance of the residents of Sunny Valley."

"I'd like to ask you to look at the human face. I'm appealing to your humanity. None of you live where you'd be affected by the applicant's site," said Wolfgang Nebmaier, who spoke first. "Our personal experience is totally different.

"None of the conflicts are addressed at the level needed to carry the burden of proof."

Steve Rouse, representing Rogue Advocates and Rogue Riverkeeper, produced a letter from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife stating planned reservoirs at the gravel site "pose a significant detrimental impact to fisheries" of Grave Creek, inhabited by spawning coho salmon, steelhead and Pacific lamprey.

The Oregon Water Resources Department has five pending applications from Sunny Valley Sand and Gravel and in 2012 denied one application to use water from wells. The department said it would interfere with flows on Grave Creek. According to Kathy Smith, watermaster for Josephine County, the state still has significant problems with the applications.

A week earlier hydrologists for the company asserted that the operation would not affect Grave Creek, nor would it affect more than one well in the vicinity.

Residents disagreed vehemently on Monday night.

"Some people still survive on 14-foot-deep, hand-dug wells," said Kimberlie Stumbo of Placer Road. "Very few properties have more than 5 to 7 gallons per minute."

Geologist Albert Harris said the idea that taking water out of Grave Creek wouldn't affect wells defies logic.

"My water is in jeopardy," he said.

At last week's hearing, a Josephine County engineer said with an average of 55 truck trips per day on Placer Road, traffic ratios for trucks and other vehicles would compare favorably with those on New Hope Road and Foothill Boulevard near Grants Pass, which also have considerable truck traffic.

Vajra Ma, Nebmaier's wife, said Placer Road's thinner width, multiple curves, tiny shoulders and numerous driveways make those comparisons meaningless. Others cited having to already jump in the ditch to avoid log trucks.

"Foothill is nothing like Placer Road," she said. "We're talking life and death here, in terms of safety."

"Common sense says this isn't an appropriate location for an industrial operation," said Diane Getchell of Placer Road. "I look around, and this is the face of Sunny Valley. To them (Sunny Valley Sand and Gravel), we're just the cost of doing business."

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