

## Tijuana River Valley Mining

by Steve Schoenherr

1970/09/06 Impromptu Parade Protests Gravel Pit, Cement Plant. By MICHAEL SCOTT-BLAIR Eighteen young people, four horses, a pony, two dogs, dune buggy and two motorcycles, paraded in protest yesterday against a move to build a gravel pit and cement works near Imperial Beach. "We don't want a Plaster City in the middle of our community. We want the park which the cities of San Diego and Imperial Beach have promised us." the young demonstrators declared. "We may be few in number but we are deadly serious." they said as they walked, cantered and rolled down Hollister Street toward the international border. There were no parents present but march organizer Miss Patricia Blanco, 15, of 2270 Leon St., said that the adults were fighting the plans for the gravel pit and cement plant. Hearings. The dispute is over a request by San Diego Consolidated Co. (Conrock), to open a gravel pit on 320 acres of land they own to the south side of McPherson Road between Hollister Street and Bay Boulevard. The matter is now before the San Diego Planning Commission and a continued hearing is scheduled for September 16 in the San Diego City Council Chambers. The board of the Imperial Beach Chamber of Commerce have recommended against the permit for the gravel pit and they are being supported by residents from the southwest county area including San Ysidro and over the border into Tijuana. It is argued that a cement plant in that area, known as Smugglers Gulch, would send its dust and smell over the San Ysidro and Tijuana areas. "The wind is from the west for at least nine months a year which would carry all their dust directly over the already distressed Tijuana area," said Imperial Beach chamber president Lt. -Hugh M. Smythe. Smythe said the chamber had held hearings to get both sides of the dispute before registering their opposition. Yesterday's demonstrators stressed that there are more than 100 cement plants and said there is no need to put one right in the middle of one of the last remaining rural areas on the coast. Smythe added that he was well aware of the large quantities of concrete would be needed if and when the planned storm channel was built in the area, but this could be done by building a plant to the east of San Ysidro on other good gravel deposits, without further polluting the populated areas. "I've lived in Imperial Beach all my life and I hope to spend the rest of my life here too. But I don't want to share it with a cement plant." said Miss Blanco. And for the large equestrian set in the area, there is little problem in saving the environment. As several of their signs said: The solution to pollution is Buy a Horse." Picture on Page b-4 (photo) YOUTHS PROTEST 'PLASTER CITY' group of youthful marchers, protesting the possibility of a gravel pit being dug near Imperial Beach, march down Hollister Street. They say it would make a "Plaster City" in the south county area. (San Diego Union, Sept. 6, 1970 )

1970/10/22 Gravel Pit Plan Draws Opposition. IMPERIAL BEACH The City Council has adopted a resolution opposing a conditional use permit for the San Diego Consolidated Co. (Conrock) to operate a 320-acre rock and gravel extracting facility a mile and a half south of here. The council joined with its Planning Commission in opposing the permit approved 4-3 by the San Diego Planning Commission. Malcolm Whitt, a property owner in the area, has filed an appeal with the San Diego City Council which will be heard Nov. 19. Whitt is chairman of a 100-member group known as the Committee to Defeat Conditional Use Permit 251, as it is numbered. OPPOSITION OUTLINED In its resolution, the City Council listed the following reasons for opposing the Conrock facility: 1. It ignores and violates recommendations contained in the San Diego border area plan, adopted Nov. 7, 1967, and the San Diego General Plan, adopted July 20, 1967. 2. It is inconsistent with recommendations contained in the Imperial Beach General Plan adopted Oct. 7, 1969, particularly in respect to the proposed marina here. 3. Erratic wind conditions will create problems of smoke, dust and air pollution. 4. It will impede the acquisition of land and development of an international park and impede development of an international university. 5. It will create an unattractive liability while operating and when removed it will leave an ugly scar on the landscape. OPERATION EXPLAINED Conrock officials have explained the operation and have said when the company is finished with the rock extracting project, the site will be developed into a park. Conrock officials thus far have been unable to convince residents here that the facility, will be in the community's best interest. Most officials, speaking informally, have said they do not regard the facility as being in their best interest, but that they would not interfere. (San Diego Union, Oct. 22, 1970 )



Chula Vista Star-News, Nov. 5, 1970

1970/11/05 Conrock cement plant on Spooner Mesa - (Editor's Note: A week from today, the San Diego City Council will decide whether a massive rock quarry be permitted south of Imperial Beach, along the Mexican border. The following article gives the background in this matter. It also raises questions we believe equally great concern.) by JACKIE DEWEY WELNICK "Hey, Jim! We gotta do something about this cement plant! They're planning to steal our damn mountain!" Actually it is more of a high hill or a mesa. But to the people around it is a mountain. Their mountain. It rises 400 feet above the Tijuana River valley. It lies between Smuggler's Gulch and Goat Canyon. It affords a view of the San Diego Bay area second only to that seen from Cabrillo National Monument. It

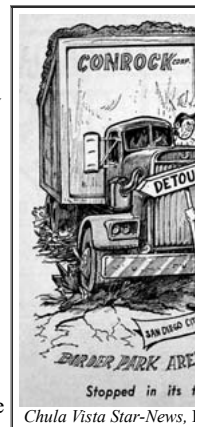
along Monument Road at the foot of Hollister Street. On one side is the Mexican border. Hikers, including Boy Scouts from as far away as Los Angeles, claim their own. It is the only place near the beach for overnight camping south of Carlsbad. The Border Area Master Plan approved by the San Diego City Council envisions 950 acres at that corner for the future site of an international park. Monument Road, at the foot of the slope, has long been a favorite route for hikers and horse back riders. People used to come for miles around because of the wells there flowing with pure cool water. The area is said to provide a haven for different kinds of bird life. The place is unique. Here, where the northwest corner of Mexico meets the "southwest corner of the United States, is a spot rich in physical resources and unspoiled natural beauty. In talks between presidents of the two countries only last month, there was discussion of a border park at the "Remote" and "isolated" are terms often used in discussions about the place. Yet it skirts directly along the Mexican border just three miles from the official Ysidro crossing and one-and-a-half miles away from the Imperial Beach Naval Station, the Imperial Beach city limits and from Interstate 5. There are many residences nearby, as close as next door and across Monument Road. A large corporation known as Conrock (San Diego Consolidated Co.) has purchased a parcel of land in this area near what is known as Smuggler's Gulch. How large Conrock is, the president of the company refuses to reveal. Conrock has sought conditional use permit which would allow it to build and operate a sand and gravel mining operation along with concrete processing facility and asphalt plant would involve carving down the people's mountain. It would result in a valley where the vista point now is. Nearby residents, understandably, have protested conditional use permit. It started with Malcolm Whitt of 2575 Monument Road. He owns 66 acres adjoining this property. A neighbor called to ask him, "What are you going to do about this? I worked for a rock crushing plant in the Tijuana valley in 1943. All day long I was kept busy on a motor grader just keeping the road in repair. The dust on 19th Street (Imperial Beach) was carried as far as San Ysidro. And this outfit wants to put in an asphalt plant. That thing will put out so much smell all over the area like you get when somebody tars a roof!" That is how Malcolm Whitt came to head the Committee to Defeat Conditional Use Permit. At the start many of the people he contacted warned him flatly and finally: "You're wasting your time. You can't possibly beat a huge corporation like Conrock then," said Whitt, "my wife and I really got determined." And a lot of other people really got determined. Visions of Plaster City on the old highway going to Central danced through their heads. Hopes for a border park went winging. The Committee to Defeat CUP (Conditional Use Permit) 251 hired a lawyer. The committee and other opponents of the cement plant attended lengthy hearings. They distributed flyers informing people of what was taking place. They held meetings which saw an increase in attendance from 20 people to 250. Including Ernesto Perez Rul, Mayor of Tijuana. Over 1,000 people signed petitions in Civic organizations including the Imperial Beach City Council, the Imperial Beach Chamber of Commerce and the South Bay District Chamber of Commerce on record opposing the permit. Young people in the area organized a three mile protest march. Sample slogans: "Join the Future & Fight Air Pollution." "We don't want another Plaster City." "Who Wants a Concrete World?" The fact that a large number of people living within this area have an Imperial Beach Post Office address obscures this point: 20,000 of them are citizens of San Diego and therefore potential voters. The matter falls under the jurisdiction of San Diego since the area in question is annexed by a questionable corridor which ploughs through the waters of the bay and in reality exists only on maps. About 200 people appeared at the conditional use permit at the Sept. 16 hearing by the San Diego Planning Commission. They went away with feelings of frustration and futility. Original hearing scheduled for 2 p.m., the hearing finally got under way at 5 p.m. and lasted for an hour-and-a-half. During this time, Paul Peterson, attorney for Conrock, presented that corporation's case in detail and at length. Then time ran out. One member of the commission had to leave to catch a plane. A few opponents of the conditional use permit were allowed to present a condensed version of their views. The hearing was continued, to be resumed in two weeks. The feeling grew among the South Bay residents that a plan was under way to make their portion of the county the dumping ground for the city of San Diego. At the second session of the Planning Commission hearing on Sept. 16, fewer people were present. By this time school was in session. Summer was over. Many had to be at their jobs. Again, Chairman Earl Pridemore gave Paul Peterson, attorney for Conrock, time to give a detailed presentation of his case as he had done before. Pridemore and Peterson are buddies in county Democratic politics. South Bay residents were unmoved when they saw the artfully portrayed 15-acre lake which Conrock assured them would be left on the site after 20 years. They stated they would much prefer the unclouded view of the Pacific they now enjoy. One opponent of the plant was heard. His was demeaning and insulting to hear Conrock's lawyer accuse us of hysteria. I remember the Imperial Beach Planning Commission hearing, clear back on August 16. "Lawyer Peterson assured everybody then that in this day and age the new cement plants are 'relatively free of dust and odors.'" At that time, Don Langdon, chairman, asked Peterson to give us the addresses of these 'clean' plants so we could go look at them and be reassured. "We never have gotten those addresses yet." Then Norman Seltzer, lawyer for the Committee to Defeat CUP 251, spoke. He deplored "the intrusion of the industrial use, as it will defeat the border area master plan developed by the city which calls for parks, open space and residential uses." He told the Planning Commission that South Bay citizens "are asking you for protection." He stated that no one was against "reasonable use" of a man's own property, but that Conrock was applying for a special use - a use which would be a "monstrous operation" and a "dreadful intrusion" upon the locality. A representative told commissioners that odor and dust and fumes from the cement plant would inevitably drift over the people of Tijuana, depending upon wind direction. They gave him scant attention. Some commissioners gave no more than a perfunctory glance at pictures handed them to illustrate various points. Others, they tossed contemptuously aside. An easel was placed at one side of the platform where commission members were seated. When maps and pictures were mounted upon it, they were received with a mixture of boredom and disinterest by the members. Some did not even bother to swivel their chairs or their heads to look. At least three times, chairman Pridemore inquired how much longer the presentation would take. Then, he cut the time down to three minutes for each opponent. Once he curtly interrupted an elderly man to state, "We heard all that before." The man sat through both hearings hoping to be heard. But they remained silent. By now, it was terribly clear that the matter had already been decided. After a 15-minute discussion, commissioners voted, 4 to 3, to grant the conditional use permit for the construction and operation of the cement plant. Nobody there could quit. It was happening. They heard the flat, toneless voice of the chairman, watched the impersonal, inexorable, bureaucratic juggernaut roll on, one more place of natural beauty consigned to cement dust and asphalt fumes. Later, Chairman Pridemore, arguing for their decision, was to say, "We have to go where the resources are, not the cost of building materials, but the cost of hauling them that raises building costs." Apparently he gave neither credence nor attention to the statement made at the hearing by Dr. R. Gordon Gastil, head of the Geology Department at San Diego State College. Dr. Gastil pointed out that all of the western area of San Diego is abundant in deposits of sand and gravel. Sample quotes after the hearing: "I sure hated to hear them keep calling that area 'remote.' Man, I live right across the street from that property." Said another, "No wonder the kids 'drop out.'" And another, "When the chairman began to pick his teeth, I got nervous. When he picked his teeth, I knew we were sunk." And another: "I guess it's really true. The only thing money won't buy is poverty." Following the recommendation of the Planning Commission, the actual granting of the conditional use permit would be up to the San Diego City Council. Malcolm Whitt and his committee appealed the decision to the council immediately. As opponents of the rock plant prepared their case for presentation to the City Council, these questions arose: It is a fact that Conrock has a plant and a permit for its operation in the Tijuana River bed near 19th Street, Imperial Beach. Why would they give up that parcel to the City of San Diego for a parcel which San Diego owned in Lakeside? Permits are hard to obtain. Would Conrock have purchased the land at Smuggler's Gulch unless the same reason to believe that there would be no problem in getting another permit? This is an age when one man's smoke must filter through another man's lungs. It should be considered as morally acceptable for a man or an organization with money enough and power enough, to purchase a parcel of geography and proceed to build it and the air around it? Is it as some of our youth would have us believe? That the "system" is no longer workable? Can the will of the majority still prevail against massive money? Who cares enough? It looks as if the majority had better get willful fast. (Chula Vista Star-News, Nov 5, 1970, Page 23 )



Chula Vista Star-News, Nov. 5, 1970

1970/12/06 No rock plant in Smuggler's Gulch. The Committee to Defeat Conditional Use Permit 251 P.C. can disband, CONROCK HAS BEEN DEFEATED. Imperial Beach area residents are rejoicing this weekend with the news that there will be no rock plant in Smugglers Gulch near the border. The San Diego City Council Thursday reversed its Planning Commission and denied a 25-year conditional use permit to the Consolidated Company for the operation of the rock quarry south of Imperial Beach. Upheld by a 7-1 vote was an appeal by Malcolm Whitt, head of the committee to defeat the permit, and Robert Carter, president of the Otay Mesa Homeowners Association. The decision came after the completion of a lengthy appeal hearing that began Nov. 19. Voting for the appeal were members Leon Williams, Floyd Morrow, Helen Cobb, Henry Landt, Samuel Loftin, Mike Schaefer, and Mayor Frank Curran. Absent was Councilman Bob The lone vote for Conrock was cast by Councilman Alan Hitch. The second session of the hearing included the completion of the formal presentation of the appellant's case, and short summaries and rebuttals by both sides. THE ARGUMENTS raised by both Paul Peterson, attorney for Conrock, and Norman Sel lawyer for the appellants, centered around three of four requirements in the San Diego city code for conditional use permits. 1. That the proposed use is necessary to provide a service which will contribute to the welfare of the neighborhood. 2. That the use will not be detrimental to the health and safety of persons in the vicinity or injurious to their property. 3. That the use will "not adversely affect the adopted plan of any governmental agency." Peterson said the proposed sand, gravel, and asphalt operation would serve the community by reducing the cost of building materials in the South Bay area. He also maintained that the facility would create about 120 new jobs and eventually add about \$8 million to city tax rolls. Peterson maintained that the second requirement had been fulfilled, asserting he had "conclusively shown" the plant would not result in air, water, noise or sight pollution. HE NOTED the firm's plans for re-circulating pond water on the 187-acre site had been approved by the state Water Resources Control Board. (Chula Vista Star-News, Dec 6, 1970, Page 1)

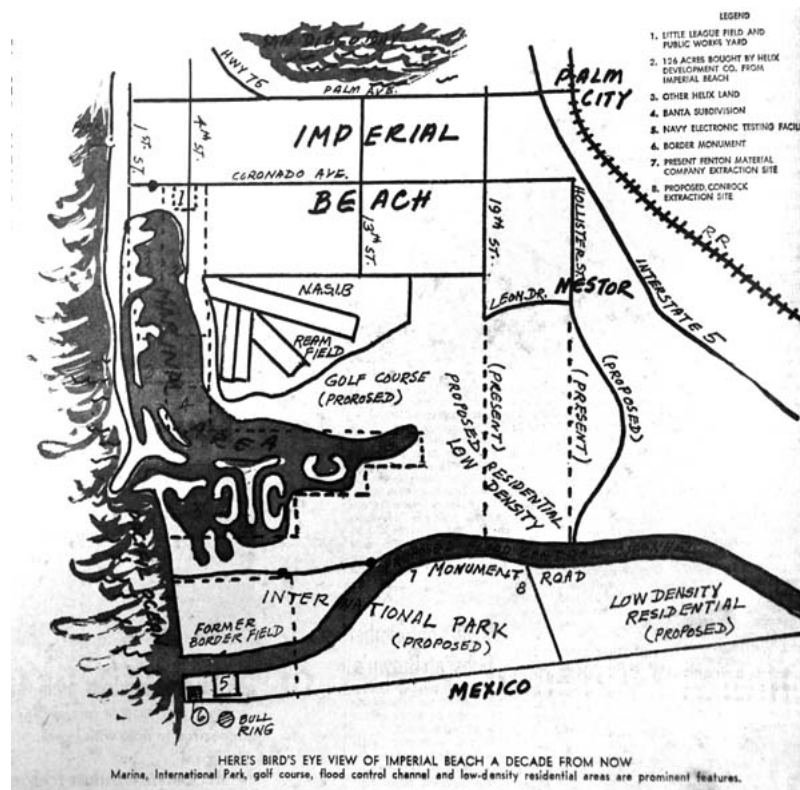
1970/12/06 Editorial Preserving nature. One of the main reasons for the disaffection among many Americans is a hopeless feeling that you can't beat the System; that, when the chips are down, somehow the rich and the powerful are sure to win. Mostly, this is true. But probably the No. 1 reason it is true is that the System counts on the public to be apathetic about what is taking place. When the public isn't apathetic, the System shakes and the People can win. A VIVID example of this was the tremendous victory scored Thursday by the people, little people, mostly, who for five months have been battling Conrock's scheme to slash 55 million cubic yards of rock out of the 187 acres of wooded hills along the Mexican border, just south of Imperial Beach. The San Diego City Council, over-riding its Planning Commission, rejected Conrock's odious scheme to turn this wilderness area into a sand-and-gravel quarry and cement manufacturing operation for the next quarter of a century. The vote was a thumping 7 to 1. The decision was a victory for preserving what little is left of our natural wilderness. It was a victory for picnickers, horseback riders and hikers, who can still find in those hills a rare place of noiseless solitude. It was a victory for those who hope to see established an international border park. And it was a victory for the principle that, if enough people are concerned enough about a situation and are willing to yell and scream and stamp their feet, and also do a thorough job in researching the facts and they can lick the special interests. PERHAPS they were aided by the fact that, at this point in time, San Diego councilmen want to lean over backward so as not to be publicly regarded as a friend of special interests. But the victory could not have been achieved without the tremendous work done by many citizens, the hundreds who showed up at the City Council and other meetings who dug down into their pockets to hire a skilled attorney . . . who convinced people of influence like Senator Jim Mills and Assemblyman Wadie Deddeh and the mayor of Tijuana and Imperial Beach city councilmen and planning commissioners . . . that their cause was just and were able to enlist them in the battle. These people deserve the thanks of all of us and of generations unborn. Hopefully, thanks to their efforts, we can all be assured that at least this one area of unspoiled beauty will not be sacrificed to man's lust for profit. (Chula Vista Star-News, Dec 6, 1970, Page 24)



Chula Vista Star-News, 1970

1971/01/07 Conrock says no decision reached on rebid for Spanish Gulch plant. A member of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors has been convicted on charges of accepting a bribe from the Consolidated Rock Company (Conrock), defeated last month in an attempt to establish a rock plant south of Imperial Beach. According to the Ventura County Press Courier, H. F. Robinson, a three-term member of the board, was found guilty of receiving six bribes which dated back to 1968 and totaled \$3,051. THE BRIBES which Robinson, 47, took were for favorable consideration on votes concerning controversial permits that would have enabled Conrock to continue and expand its gravel, sand and rock operation at El Rio, Calif. Conrock's local subsidiary had sought a conditional use permit last fall from the city of San Diego to establish a similar operation in Smuggler's Gulch, about a mile and a half south of Imperial Beach. The firm's request, approved by the Planning Commission, was rejected after hundreds of irate local citizens, fearing pollution and disruption of plans for an international park, appealed to the City Council. ROBINSON'S CONVICTION came amid speculation that Conrock plans to reapply for a conditional use permit after the required one year from the date of rejection of its first request has elapsed. But William Walker, chief engineer for the local Conrock firm, says no decision has been made on whether to re-apply for the permit. He said the question would probably be discussed at a meeting at the board of directors level later this month, but would not promise that the final decision would be made public immediately. Walker said that officials for his company, which he says has sand, gravel, asphalt and cement operations all over Southern California, "don't consider this an urgent matter," He added that any decision "will be based on an over-all view of the company's recent experience."

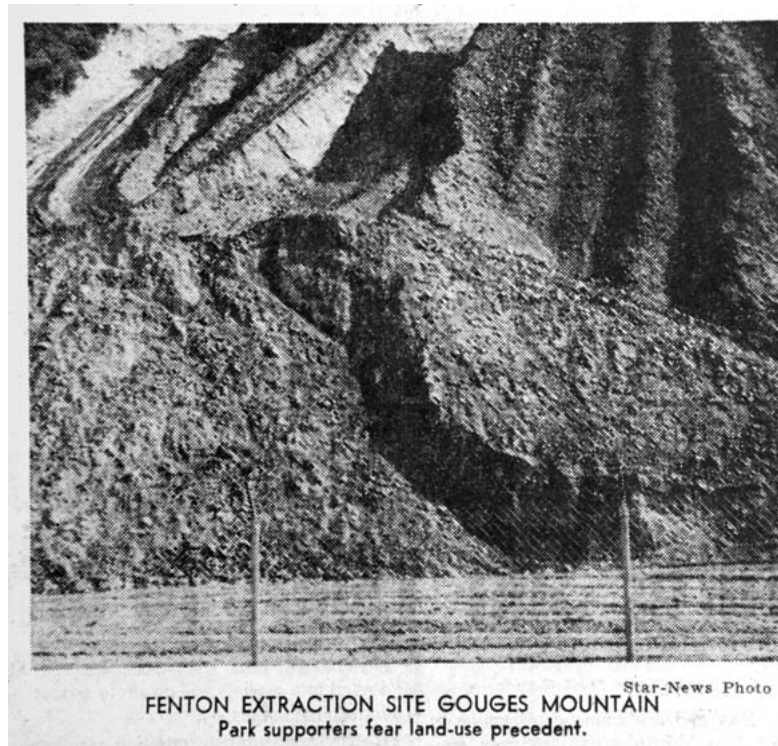
future needs." WALKER REITERATED an earlier statement that Conrock "was not eager" for continued newspaper publicity concerning its recent application for the permit. Conrock operates another large extraction facility at Mission Valley. It also formerly held a tract of land along Hollister St., about a mile north of the 10-acre site for which it had sought a permit. But, over a year ago, Conrock traded the land it owns along Hollister St. for a tract which San Diego owned in the area. THE LAND WHICH the city acquired locally was adjacent to some of its other property and this was also true for the land which Conrock obtained in the Lakeside area. Conrock paid about a million dollars for its land in the Smuggler's Gulch area. Robinson, who was convicted on the Conrock bribery charge two weeks ago, was acquitted on charges of receiving 21 bribes totaling 15,700 from the Larwin Land Development Company. (Chula Vista Star-News, Jan Page 6)



Chula Vista Star-News, Feb. 28, 1971

1971/02/28 Imperial Beach marina mired in manifold hangups. HERE'S BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF IMPERIAL BEACH A DECADE FROM NOW. Marina, International Park, golf course, flood control channel and low-density residential areas are prominent features. (Chula Vista Star-News, Feb 28, 1971, Page 2)

1972/01/06 full page story on Tia Juana River valley area - Tia Juana River: Green Belt vs. Greenbacks, by Jackie Dewey Welnick. Longtime residents recall the Tia Juana River ran a mile wide, bank to bank, in 1927. San Diego Gas & Electric owns over a hundred acres near the new border park. Rumors persist in plans for a nuclear generator in that spot at some time in the future. Three cement companies hold land along Monument Road at the foot of the bluffs. One Fenton, has already extracted some material from the hill near Goat Canyon, but has run into brackish water. Conrock has good water, but was unable to get conditional use permit last year from the San Diego City Council following vigorous protest by local citizens. Nelson and Sloan, another cement company, land nearby. The proximity of 400,000 people just across the border in Tijuana, with their own flood control problems, will be felt more and more acutely in the future. Even now, there are times when the wind is not kind, and it brings dust and smoke. Smoke from the foundries, from the open fires, from the burning of the burning rubber tires of the poor. The Helix Imperial Harbor Development Corp. has acquired 776 acres to the north and west of the valley. It says it will develop a large nautical community with marina and boat harbors, although recent acquisitions by the Navy make this project seem dubious. At the southeast of the valley, the Tia Juana River flows south through the heart of Tijuana. It is only a question of time before residents there will demand an end to the slim streets and seas of mud which follow every rainstorm. The river crosses the international border only a few blocks west of the border crossing at San Ysidro in a gradual curve northwesterly to empty into the Pacific. The river drains a basin covering about 1,700 square miles. On the U.S. side of the flood plain covers about 5,200 acres which form part of the cities of San Diego and Imperial Beach. The amount of land covered by the water at flood tide but according to a report from the International Boundary and Water Commission, this could amount to a flow of as much as 135,000 cubic feet per second. In fact in mind, in 1967 our country entered into a mutual agreement with Mexico for construction of a flood control channel, with our channel to receive the water from the Mexican flood channel where they flow across the border. For years, the coming flood control channel was anticipated as a future fact. Its benefits were unquestioned. But within the last year, suddenly, a wave of opposition built. And now it looks as though the wide concrete ditch that dances like a sugarplum through developers' heads, and like an abominable white elephant in geologists' minds, may never be built. (Chula Vista Star News, Jan. 6, 1972)



Star-News Photo  
**FENTON EXTRACTION SITE GOUGES MOUNTAIN**  
 Park supporters fear land-use precedent.

*Chula Vista Star-News, Feb. 28, 1971*

1972/01/06 The coming flood control channel . . . At the eastern end of the valley some 1,100 acres of land are given over to dairy land and truck farming. This is rapidly being forced out of existence by a combination of high taxes, rising labor costs and salt water intrusion. About 3,500 acres in the valley are presently owned by some 110 different individuals. The valley has not always known peace. Longtime residents recall when the Tia Juana River ran a mile wide, bank in 1927. As recently as 1944 several residents had to jump from the flood waters to higher ground. It is over this tranquil valley that a battle rages, one of perhaps thousands of battles going on all over America. The outcome here may well be a flag pointing toward the outcome in many other places. Arrayed on one side are the property owners and would-be developers who have paid taxes for years. They saw a future with a flood control channel and economic growth. Some favor its natural state as open space or made into a park or wildlife preserve. Somewhere in the middle are the politicians, trying as always, to escape the heat. The question whether the area is even now in its natural state. But one point is crystal clear. The Tia Juana River valley cannot remain in the state it is in now. One factor is the presence of the Naval Air Station with the constant noise (if its helicopters, and its occupancy of over 1,200 acres, plus a five-acre parcel still reserved near the border for an electronics operation. The State of California has 372 acres which were given by the federal government. More land may be added and developed as a park along the border. It is also possible that a second border crossing will be built near the coast to link up with the Ensenada freeway. The border crossing would inevitably require a highway. Spokesmen for the Division of Highways say it would most likely lead south and west from the intersection of Highway 75 and Highway 5. It would cut across the valley toward the Tijuana bull ring near the beach. San Diego Gas & Electric owns 100 acres near the new border park. Spokesmen for the company seem reluctant to discuss future plans, but rumors persist regarding plans for a nuclear generating spot at some time in the future. Three cement companies hold land along Monument Road at the foot of the bluffs. One company, Fenton, has already extracted material from the hill near Goat Canyon, but has run into brackish water. Conrock has good water, but was unable to get a conditional use permit last year from San Diego City land nearby. To the east, near Brown Field, the land is under discussion as a possible site for a major airport. This could give rise to problem flight patterns and noise. The proximity of 400,000 people just across the border in Tijuana, with their own flood control problems, will be felt more and more in the future. Even now, there are times when the wind is not kind, and it brings dust and smoke. Smoke from the foundries, from the open fires, from the bus dump, from the burning rubber tires of the poor. (Chula Vista Star-News, Jan 6, 1972 )

1980/09/11 Talk of TJ Valley gravel plant stirs protests. For longtime South Bay residents, the song sounded strangely the same. Only the tune had changed. A few years ago Imperial Beach and Tia Juana River Valley residents fought loudly to keep a sand and gravel extraction plant from being constructed in the Border Highlands - Spooner Mesa area of the river valley. Their efforts were rewarded with mounting frustration and eventual success when the San Diego City Council refused construction of the plant because of community pressure. It was thought then the issue was dead and that its burial was final. THIS WEEK, the extraction plant proposal was exhumed (in the first in a series of public workshops between San Diego city planners, representatives of three sand and gravel companies and River Valley and Imperial Beach residents. City planners have begun compiling a study on the development of a precise plan for sand extraction, rehabilitation and use of the land, which is supposed to be completed by the end of November. The study was requested by the state Coastal Commission late last year when it approved all but one section of San Diego's Tia Juana River Valley land use portion of the local coastal program. That section, for which the study is now being done, is for the Border Highlands - Spooner Mesa area. EARLY community reaction to construction of a plant south of Monument Rd. was predictably unfavorable at a last week's meeting. "What if we don't want our hill messed with?" said Rocky Chavarria, a valley resident. "We enjoy the serenity of the valley, and it's a consequence most of the people here don't want that hill messed with. "It looks to us like Conrock is in there to do its old thing again, and most of us here don't want it," said Conrock Co., the largest landholder of the three represented at the meeting, was behind the attempts 10 years ago to construct the sand extraction plant in the valley. Conrock owns about 320 acres, about 270 of which are in the potential extraction area. The other two companies represented this week were Nelson Building materials. They own about 170 acres and 53 acres, respectively, in the potential extraction area. . . . City Planner Angela Lelra later that the study is to determine whether there should be excavation there, to what extent and how to rehabilitate the land afterwards. The study will focus on impacts on residents and wildlife in and around the area. (Chula Vista Star-News, Sep 11, 1980, Page 12)

1980/10/03 IN TIA JUANA RIVER VALLEY Residents Vow To Fight Sand-Gravel Pit. By JESUS RANGEL. "I've lived here for 40 years and I want to live the rest of my life," Bill Morris, 75, who lives on a farm in the Tia Juana River Valley, said. "Nobody has the right to build a gravel pit in my back yard." Conrock, its operators say is the largest company of its type in Southern California, has announced plans to dig for sand and gravel in about 270 acres it owns just north

Mexican border in an area called Spooners Mesa. To get to the sand and gravel, the firm intends to lop off about 100 feet of the top of the 300-foot-high hill separate Mexico from the valley. About 22 families live in the isolated area. Last winter's heavy rains washed out the only passable street - Monument Road - than 1,000 horses, many of them thoroughbreds, are kept on the farms and boarding stables. Riders use the deserted natural paths as horse trails and can ride beach. Some residents say a sand and gravel extraction plant would mar the serenity and beauty of the rural surroundings. They contend the operation would create an intolerable level of noise and dust and scare their horses. They also voice fears that runoff from the area where vegetation would be killed would create more problems with flooding. "Horses can get scared by humans, imagine what machines will do to them," Marge Kimzey said. "And the noise and dust will be very irritating to them." "When we look out our kitchen window we can see some breathtaking mountains and lots of wildlife and little animals running around. If the reasons we moved here. But if they level the mountains they'll ruin the view." Morris said the area's scenery and peacefulness are some of the reasons he lives here. "But if they put that plant up I'm going to consider moving." Simon Chavaria said he was worried about the effect on the wildlife. "There's not much left here," he said. "I'm very upset that they would try to tear up these beautiful hills." Wayne Spurling, who owns about 140 thoroughbreds, said he was worried about the effect of the truck traffic on the horses and children. "But it's too soon, to make a decision," he said. "Let's wait and see what plans they bring up and discuss them." Bill Walker, properties manager of Conrock, said that the residents have been invited to observe the company's Mission Valley plant, where it is a lot closer to apartments and houses than the property here, but that there have been no takers. "My problem is how to put up a sand and gravel extraction plant that respects everybody else's rights. But you have to remember I have rights, too," he said. "We don't build a plant to change the environment. We do it because it is needed out there for our products. I understand what the people are saying, but they don't know what they are talking about," he said. Conrock is the largest gravel holder in the valley. Two other sand and gravel companies, Nelson and Sloan and Fenton Building Materials, own about 225 acres. Nelson and Sloan are taking gravel just east of the residential and horse raising area and next to the border fence under a permit obtained before San Diego annexed the area. Walker said he was chosen after the company determined through geological maps, field explorations and personal investigation that it was the only place in the county economically feasible for digging the deposits, which will be used to make cement. He estimates there are over 50 million cubic yards of sand and gravel buried there. He will be able to remove the material to the complete satisfaction of the residents. Walker said the problem with dust could be solved by paving the roads to the plant and washing them and by wetting the truck wheels. "The county Air Pollution Control District requires we have an air pollution permit," he said. "We have that right now and we have no doubt that we could comply with another." He also said that the company would be willing to build settling ponds to catch any of the dust created by erosion. The water stored in the basins would be used again by the company to moisten the ground to avoid dust. About the only thing that has not been solved, Walker said, is how to avoid disturbing the residents with the noise of the 80,000-pound trucks. "We want to avoid using Monument Road," he said. "I don't know if we can." The noise, he added, is not nearly as formidable as the residents imagine. "There are ways of containing it," he said. "The noise would not bother anyone except an unreasonable person." Before Walker can begin operations, city planners have to develop a plan for the sand extraction, rehabilitation and reuse of the land. The study was requested by the California Coastal Commission after it approved all but the Tia Juana River Valley land-use section of the coastal program. (The San Diego Union, Oct. 3, 1980)

1981/03/13 Curbs Urged On New Sand, Gravel Work. A plan to make operators of any new sand and gravel work in the Tia Juana River Valley act to curb the damage to the environment was endorsed yesterday by the Planning Commission. Under the plan, sand and gravel operations would be required to decrease erosion and runoff and increase control of dust, water and noise pollution. The plan will be forwarded to the City Council and state Coastal Commission. "An extraction (sand and gravel) industry is not a best neighbor to have," said Planning Commission Chairman John G. Davies. "But it is a necessary and vital industry, and it has no alternative where it goes." Two sand and gravel companies are already operating in the Tia Juana River Valley and a third is proposing to begin operations. The company Conrock, wants to dig for sand and gravel on approximately 270 acres it owns north of the Mexican border in an area called Spooners Mesa. A new sand and gravel operation would be made to keep hillsides from sliding and restore areas where extraction has been completed. Private roads would have to be built to keep sand and gravel trucks from clogging public roads. Excavation could not exceed seven acres at any one time.

1981/03/19 San Diego planners back gravel plants. A plan emphasizing rehabilitation of sand and gravel extraction sites owned by three companies in the Tia Juana River Valley was approved by the San Diego Planning Commission this week. The plan calls for strict compliance with air pollution and noise regulations and a continued grading and maintenance to control erosion and water runoff in the valley. THE PLAN will be under consideration March 23 by the San Diego Planning, Transportation and Land Use Committee, which will forward it to the City Council for final approval. San Diego Planner Larry Van Wey said he hoped to take the plan to the Regional Coastal Commission by late April or May. Conrock Co., which hopes to dig for sand and gravel on about 270 acres it owns north of the Spooner Mesa, would restore its land to agricultural use as operations are completed, according to the plan. Van Wey said the company was seeking some of the land before, during and after operations begin. Nelson Sloan has proposed storage areas and light industry once its extraction is complete, but plans also to convert some of its land into commercial and recreational areas. Fenton Material, which already has a conditional-use permit to extract material from the west end of the valley, has proposed possible recreational uses for its land. SAND AND gravel operations would be restricted to three to seven acres at one time and would be limited to land behind the hills facing the valley. Except for Fenton, trucks would use an internal road system and would not use Monument Road. Because Conrock already has a conditional-use permit from San Diego, obtained at a time when regulations were not so strict, it would not be as restricted as the others, Van Wey said. Under discussion is a requirement that the plant operators improve and maintain Dairy Mart Rd., which often washes away during winter storms. (Chula Vista News, Mar 19, 1981, Page 41)

1987/09/03 County wants to buy Dairy Mart Ponds. Picture an open area heavily mined for sand and gravel, its natural vegetation stripped away, the ground exposed to wind and weather. One might think it would be a scene of desolation, where man's greed has once again ravaged nature. But at San Ysidro's Dairy Mart Ponds it wouldn't be true. Heavily mined years ago for sand and gravel, this area in the Tijuana River Valley supports fishing, water-loving birds and a wide variety of recreational activities not possible before the gravel pits were dug decades ago. The County of San Diego is now attempting to become the designated governmental agency to manage the property. But many months of negotiation to buy the land from its private owners lie ahead. First, the Wildlife Conservation Board must convince the General Services Department that the asked-for price is fair. Then, the county must convince the state Wildlife Conservation Board and the Department of Fish and Game that it can manage the lands for both environmental protection and public enjoyment. The land must also be cleared of the tires, auto parts and other littering the area. Last week, the Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to approve a resolution to seek the management of Dairy Mart Ponds. Supervisor Bilbray, whose district includes Dairy Mart Ponds, said the ponds "provide an enormous opportunity to demonstrate that wildlife conservation and recreation can go hand in hand if the facility is managed by an agency skilled in both." Bilbray aide David Hutchinson said the county is a logical choice because it already manages many environmentally sensitive areas in cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Game and the Wildlife Conservation Board. "It is anything that would be new to the county," Hutchinson said. "The county is well equipped to manage them." The land is already being "informally used" by the public for fishing, horseback riding and field trips, said Bob Copper, director of county parks. Copper said the Wildlife Conservation Board, if it buys the land would determine who operates it, subject to a veto from the Department of Fish and Game. Copper said that public enjoyment of such land, in most cases, is not incompatible with environmental concerns. "We are of course pretty hopeful," Copper said. "We think we have a good argument." Copper said the area had been improved by sand mining done long ago. "What before was just flat land covered with scrubby vegetation originally now supports a wide variety of recreational uses," Copper said, "so sand mining has done quite a bit to improve it." Wildlife Conservation Board executive officer John Schmidt said that the negotiations to purchase the land were in a very early stage. Schmidt added that even if negotiations go well, purchase of the land couldn't come before early next year.

One question, he said, is who would clean up the litter on the site. "There's no telling what will occur," Schmidt said. "It mainly depends on how much (the owners) want." (Chula Vista Star-News, Sep 3, 1987, Page 1)

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