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Application to reopen San Juan Ridge Mine put on hold

A controversial application to reopen the San Juan Ridge Mine has been put on hold for what the mining company says is “legal clarification” regarding a well-monitoring program that was part of Nevada County’s environmental review process.

“The project applicant informed the county that its ‘Board of Directors, effective March 26, 2014, had decided to temporarily stop all work on the San Juan project until (they are) able to definitively evaluate the work necessary to complete the prolonged environmental review process,’” Nevada County Senior Planner Tod Herman said, quoting from communications he received from the applicant, [San Juan Ridge Mining Corp.](#)

Well monitoring was being done to establish a water quality and water level baseline for consultants to use in completing the EIR. Jason Fouyer, chief operations officer of Grass Valley-based Cranmer Engineering Inc., said his company had been collecting well data to give to the project’s environmental consultants for a few months prior to the suspension.

More than 100 wells within a two-mile radius of the proposed mine were on the program, according to an article in the San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association newsletter.

“San Juan Mining Corp. is still monitoring static water levels via ‘in well’ electronic data loggers,” Tim Callaway, San Juan Ridge Mining Corp. chief, said Monday. “Water quality monitoring in homeowner wells was temporarily suspended pending some legal clarification regarding CEQA requirements for pre-EIR baseline information requirements.”

Sol Henson, president of the taxpayers association, said his group was “left in the dark” about the details of the suspension.

“The SJRTA is concerned that the Baseline Groundwater Monitoring Program that was agreed upon by the county and the mine operator, and acceptable to the community, has been unilaterally halted by the mine operator with little explanation,” he said. “Everyone is being left in the dark about why this has happened.”

Herman said he had no word from the company since the suspension.

“Per their notice, staff has been expecting the applicant to contact the county to discuss their project application, but thus far no contact has been made,” Herman said. “We informed the applicant that we have put our EIR consultant on hold, and have stopped all work on their application until we hear from them.

“As such, the delays in the collection of the groundwater well data may have an impact on our ability to complete the assessment of the potential project impacts on the local groundwater wells in the area,” Herman added.

Henson said his group wondered about the future of the project.

“Without good baseline data on groundwater, we can’t see how the application to re-open the mine can move forward,” he said. “We appreciate the time spent by county planning staff in developing the monitoring plan, and their accessibility and responsiveness to our input and concerns throughout the mine application process.”

Callaway said he “will be contacting the Nevada County Planning Department in the near future to discuss these issues in detail.”

He said he had no further comment, “as we have not had the appropriate conversations with Nevada County Planning yet regarding these issues.”

In February, both the SJRTA and the South Yuba River Citizens League staged a “Rally for Clean Water” on the steps of the county’s Rood Building to oppose the mine reopening. Following the rally, group members packed a Nevada County board of supervisors meeting and delivered 1,300 postcards from residents to the board, asking that the mine be kept closed.

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