NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: OPR / State Clearinghouse
1400 Tenth Street, Suite 222
Sacramento, California 95814

From: County of Fresno
2220 Tulare Street
Fresno, California 93721

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

The County of Fresno will be the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a proposed Jesse Morrow Mountain Mine and Reclamation Plan Project (Proposed Project) located in the County of Fresno. A complete project description is provided below.

We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the Proposed Project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The project description, location map, and summary of potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this Notice of Preparation (NOP). Please send your response to the NOP by March 31, 2005 to the attention of:

Mr. Steven Greer
Planning & Resource Analyst
2220 Tulare Street, Street Level
Fresno, California 93721
(559) 262-4453 (Telephone)
(559) 262-4893 (Facsimile)

Project Title: Jesse Morrow Mountain Mine and Reclamation Plan, County of Fresno, California

Project Applicant: RMC Pacific Materials, Mr. Peter H. Cotter, (925) 426-8787

Date: March 2, 20005

Signature: Steven Greer
Title: Planning & Resource Analyst
Telephone: (559) 262-4453

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

RMC Pacific Materials, Inc., (RMC) is proposing to operate a hard rock aggregate mining operation along the southern side of Jesse Morrow Mountain. The project is intended to help meet part of the Fresno P-C Region's projected demands of 5 to 6 million tons per year. This site is approximately eight miles east of Sanger and fifteen miles east of the City of Fresno in the eastern foothills of Fresno County. California State Route 180 (SR 180) forms the southern boundary of the Proposed Project site. Historical use of the proposed project site has been for livestock grazing.

RMC owns approximately 2,200 acres on Jesse Morrow Mountain of which 824-acres along the southern side of the mountain contains the project area. The overall mining operation will consist of hard rock aggregate extraction, conveyor system to move material to an aggregate processing facility, a concrete batch plant, recycling of excess concrete and asphalt concrete returns, truck distribution of aggregate products, and various support facilities (e.g., weighing station, office, and maintenance). An asphalt plant will be located and operated at the site by a third party.

RMC is proposing to operate 315 days per year. Mining and asphalt plant operations will likely be from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and concrete batch plant operation will normally be from 3:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Scheduled maintenance activities are expected to occur on any day, including Sunday. Additional nighttime operations are possible for responding to public construction projects or emergency situations. The Proposed Project is expected to employ 40 people at the site. Transportation of aggregate, cement, and asphalt products will be from the mining location along SR 180 to project sites throughout Fresno County and surrounding areas.

Approximately 400 acres of the 824 acre site would be mined, and the support facilities (plant operations) would utilize approximately 100 additional acres. Only 150 acres would be actively mined at any one time; reclamation will occur in phases concurrent with subsequent mining stages. At full production, RMC proposes to remove up to two-million tons of aggregate per year from the site.

Mining of aggregate will be performed using bench cutting. The quarry operation during the first 30 year period of mining operations would occur from an elevation of approximately 1,750-feet msl (mean sea level) to about 1,100-feet msl. The lowest point of the existing ridgeline is at an elevation of 1,180-feet msl. This would be a reduction in upper ridgeline elevation of 80 feet. During the next 30 year period the upper ridgeline would be lowered to an elevation of approximately 1,000-feet msl. This would be a reduction in ridgeline elevation of an additional 100 feet. At the end of the proposed project's 100-years of operation, the finished elevation at the bottom of the quarry pit would be approximately 500-feet above msl, (about 1,250 foot lower than existing high point of the site), while the finished elevation at the upper ridgeline would be maintained at approximately 1,000-feet msl (about 180 feet lower than the lowest point of the existing ridge to be mined), creating a saddle feature. The amount of change in elevation may be reduced depending rates of extraction as they are determined by market conditions.

The benching process involves clearing the loose overburden (topsoil) to expose the Nevada Batholithic basement rock. A flat area will be excavated and the igneous rock will be removed

by blasting. RMC has indicated that blasting would likely occur about two to three times a week between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. during the development and start up period. Emergency blasting may occur after 4:00 p.m. on very rare occasions for safety purposes. After a development and start up period of up to two years, RMC will evaluate reducing the blasting to once or twice every two weeks to reduce the costs of operation and potential impacts to surrounding properties.

Loose rock will be removed by large front-end loaders for transport to a belt conveyor system or to a crusher to reduce the rock size to a manageable size for the conveyor belt. The conveyor system will transport the loose material to the processing facility at the base of the mountain. Water for dust control and processing will come from wells on the RMC property. The processing facility at the base of the mining operation will consist of the following:

- Paved access road from SR 180 to the plant;
- Aggregate storage areas;
- Maintenance and repair shop;
- Fuel and oil storage tanks;
- Asphalt plant;
- Concrete batch plant;
- Truck bins;
- Rock crushers and sorters and screens;
- Parking areas and ramps; and
- A vegetated berm along the east, south, and west to obscure the facility from SR 180 observation; and
- Several water reclamation ponds.
- Wheel loaders, Roadgraders, Water Trucks, Haul Trucks and associated equipment.

Once a given amount of rock has been removed from the bench, the surface will be graded to a 1:2 (vertical to horizontal; 26 degrees 34 minutes) slope. The reclaimed slope, on average, would be less than the existing area to be mined. Removed top soils will be spread over the slope and the area revegetated with a native plant grass seed mix. The benching will progress from the top of the proposed mining area to the lower portion. The Reclamation Plan includes measures to reestablish upland cattle grazing, control erosion, and develop a self sustaining vegetative cover for both erosion control and to reduce the aesthetic contrasts created by mining. An access road will be constructed from the plant area to the mining operation for servicing vehicles and providing general access to the site.

The total 2,200 acre site is divided into large and small parcels. A portion of the property on which the plant and supporting facilities will be located was subdivided into smaller parcels in the past for possible residential development, and some parcels are subject to Williamson Act contracts. Therefore, final project approvals may include parcel lot line adjustments to eliminate inapplicable lot line setback requirements, and Williamson Act contracts may need to be cancelled to accommodate the processing operations. Finally, the project will require a zoning variance to allow for processing plant structures that exceed normal height limitations.

PROJECT LOCATION

This site is approximately eight miles east of Sanger and fifteen miles east of the City of Fresno in the eastern foothills of Fresno County (See **Figure 1** **&** **2**). California State Route 180 (SR 180) forms the southern boundary of the Proposed Project site. Historical use of the Proposed Property has been for livestock grazing. RMC owns the entire 824-acre section along the southern side of Jesse Morrow Mountain, but only approximately 500 acres is planned to be used for mining (400 acres) and support facilities (100 acres).

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Based on a preliminary assessment of potential environmental effects, the County of Fresno as the Lead Agency under CEQA has determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will need to be prepared for the Proposed Project. The following issues are anticipated to be further analyzed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics / Visual Resources
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology / Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology / Drainage / Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Transportation / Circulation

These issues, along with an analysis of potential alternatives to the Proposed Project, cumulative impacts, and potential growth inducing effects will be discussed in the EIR for the Jesse Morrow Mountain Mine and Reclamation Plan.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Consistent with Section 21083.9 of the CEQA Statutes, a public scoping meeting will be held to solicit public and agency comments on the scope and content of the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held on:

Wednesday, March 9, 2005
6:30 pm to 8:30 pm
Sanger High School
1045 Bethel Avenue
Sanger, California 93657

Any questions regarding the NOP, scoping meeting or the Proposed Project should be directed to Mr. Steven Greer, Planning and Resource Analyst, at (559) 262-4453.