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EARTH DAY ANNOUNCEMENT

Public Comment Period Yields Overwhelming Public Support for Protecting Juristac - Sacred Landscape and Local Open Space

More than 10,000 comments submitted to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors voice concerns about proposed open-pit mine at Juristac

GILROY, Calif. – April 18, 2024 – Final counts reveal that more than 10,000 letters were submitted to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors during the public comment period for the Sargent Quarry Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) regarding a proposed open-pit mine at Juristac (Sargent Ranch) in southern Santa Clara County.

The majority of letters came from Santa Clara County voters, plus scientists, academics and interested parties from across the region. Of those comments, the overwhelming majority - 99.99% of submissions - oppose the proposed mine and raise concerns and questions about the mine's social and environmental impacts. Fewer than 10 comments, or 0.1% of all comments received, supported the project.

"Our Tribe never could have imagined that local residents would offer this kind of support when we started our efforts to oppose the sand and gravel mine more than eight years ago," commented **Chairman Valentin Lopez** of Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, to whom the land at Juristac is sacred. "It is so important to us to have environmentalists, Indigenous and human rights advocates and many others stand in solidarity against this project. This is the first time that all religious leaders in Morgan Hill and Gilroy have stood up to support protection of a Native American sacred site. It's encouraging even as we still have a long way to go to remove the threat entirely."

Information about the public comments was obtained through a public records request to the County. County officials are still reviewing all the letters submitted during the DEIR public comment period, which ended on November 7, 2022. The public comments will be considered as the County prepares its final EIR, which is expected to be released sometime in 2025.

"This is a truly astounding volume of comment letters submitted on a DEIR," said **Alice Kaufman**, policy and advocacy director for Green Foothills. "Personally, I've never seen a DEIR receive even a fraction of this number of comments. And to have them almost unanimously opposing the open-pit mine and

calling for the protection of Juristac is an incredibly powerful statement by the public as to the future of this sacred landscape and critical wildlife corridor."

The proposed mine would be located on ancestral land that is sacred to the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and home to critical environmental habitat and resources. Juristac is a key wildlife corridor linking the Santa Cruz Mountains to the Diablo Range to the east and the Gabilan Range to the south.

In recent months, Santa Clara County residents have continued to voice their opposition to the mine. On March 27, the Associated Students of San José State University, which represents more than 36,000 students, passed a resolution to support the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and the protection of Juristac. In the resolution they stated, "the Associated Students at San José State University supports the efforts of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band to preserve Juristac as an open space in perpetuity and to regain access to their cultural and spiritual land at Juristac." They went on further to urge the County of Santa Clara to deny the approval of permits for the proposed Sargent Quarry Project.

More than 25,000 people have signed a petition to stop the mine. The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and Green Foothills have released a Statement of Opposition to the proposed mine, signed by more than 50 current and former elected officials and more than 75 community and nonprofit organizations. Six local City Councils have formally adopted resolutions opposing the mine: Gilroy, Morgan Hill, Mountain View, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and Sunnyvale. Dozens of tribal governments, labor organizations, academics, scientists and faith communities from across the region have submitted letters of support to the County calling for protecting Juristac and denying permits to the proposed mine.

For more information: http://www.protectjuristac.org.

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About the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band: The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band is comprised of descendants of the Indigenous peoples taken to the missions at San Juan Bautista and Santa Cruz during the Spanish colonization of California's Central Coast. The traditional territory of the Amah Mutsun encompasses all or portions of the modern counties of San Benito, Santa Clara, Monterey and Santa Cruz. Today's tribe represents the surviving descendant families of 20 distinct historic tribal groups and currently has an enrolled membership of nearly 600 people.

About Green Foothills: The mission of Green Foothills is to protect open space, farmland, and natural resources in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties for the benefit of all through advocacy, education, and grassroots action. The organization envisions a resilient region where wildlife thrives, everyone has natural beauty to enjoy, and communities live in balance with nature.

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Media Resources

Folder of press courtesy photos: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1x6D0UhXSH4TPnSVOAWo-ap-uy7k7H1h_
Folder of press courtesy video and b-roll: https://protectjuristac.org/pressvideo
Campaign to Protect Juristac website: https://protectjuristac.org

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