**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**
**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**
**PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE**

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
**EA Number DOI-BLM-CA-060-0012-017**

---

**DATE:** May 17, 2012

**TITLE / PROJECT TYPE:** Dillon Road Sand & Gravel Mine (RCL 152R1), 125.2 Acre Expansion/Mineral Sales Contract, Noncompetitive.

**CASE FILE / PROJECT NO:** CACA-53440

**BLM OFFICE:** Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262

**APPLICANT/PROPONENT**: Simon Concrete & Aggregate, LLC
35905 Dillon Road
PO Box 10990
Indio, CA 92202

**ACTION LOCATION:** 3905 Dillon Road, Indio California. South ½ Section 30, Township 4 South, Range 8 East

**PROJECT ACREAGE:**

| | |
|---|---|
| BLM | 125.2 |
| Other Federal | |
| State | |
| Private | |
| Other(specify) | |

**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC Map:** West Berdoo Canyon, California, 7.5 minute Quadrangle, Provisional Edition, 1988.

## I. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

### Background

Simon Concrete & Aggregate, LLC, (the Operator) has been operating a sand and gravel quarry and concrete mixing plant on BLM lands in the lower desert region of southern California, northeast of Palm Springs, since 1987. The site is located on the west side of Dillon Road and south of Berdoo Canyon Road. The plant and quarry together occupy approximately 79.3 acres within the Southeast ¼ of Section 30 of Township 4 South, Range 8 East, of the San Bernardino Base and Meridian system (SBBM). The existing operation is conducted pursuant to an approved plan of operation and Riverside County Reclamation Plan, RCL 152.

In November of 2001, the Operator submitted a request to expand the existing quarry by 269.4 additional acres. This plan was subsequently withdrawn and in October of 2009 a new request was submitted to expand the existing quarry by an additional 125.2 acres. The existing plant, quarry, and proposed expansion area are illustrated on the attached Plan of Operations, Mine Plan, prepared by Webber & Webber, Mining Consultants, (Plate 1 back pocket).

### Purpose

The purpose of the action is to allow the Simon Concrete & Aggregate LLC, to continue to supply the sand and gravel materials to their concrete plant from BLM land by approving the expansion of the existing 79.3 acre quarry by an additional 125.2 acres.

### Need

The need for the action is established by the BLM's responsibility under FLPMA to place for sale mineral materials, such as sand and gravel, under the Mineral Materials Act of 1947, if feasible and environmentally acceptable.

### BLM Decision to be Made

The BLM must choose to: approve the expansion; deny the application; recommend an alternative; or specify additional information to be obtained prior to the decision.

## II. SCOPING, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AND ISSUES

Internal

In order to determine the scope of issues to be addressed and to identify the significant issues related to the proposed action, internal scoping was conducted by the BLM Palm Springs Field Office staff. During this time the project issues, alternatives, and data needs for the EA were analyzed.

During internal scoping the following resource issues were considered:

- The loss of 125.2 acres of vegetation.

- The loss of 125.2 acres of wildlife habitat.
- Loss of the soil and mineral materials.
- The degradation of groundwater quality.
- Impacts on the air quality by dust.
- Loss of recreational areas due to the removal of roads and hiking areas.
- Visual impacts to the vicinity.

External

External scoping, consultation with other agencies, tribes, local government etc., was not conducted during the initial internal scoping for this project, as the project was not considered precedent setting or one with any significant controversy. Various agencies were contacted during a later stage once the initial issues were determined. The agencies contacted during the EA process are listed in section VII Agencies Contacted.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Palm Springs South Coast Field Office (PSFO) is offering two-week public comment period for the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared for the site (this document) from October 10 through October 24th, 2012, by listing this document on the BLM PSFO Environmental Notification Bulletin Board at http://www.blm.gov/ca/forms/nepa/search.php?ud=DESC&fo=Palm%20Springs and posting it on the BLM PSFO website at http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/palmsprings/national_environmental.html

The document name is "Dillon Road Sand & Gravel Mine 125.2 Acre Expansion/Mineral Sales Contract, Noncompetitive", document # DOI-BLM-CA-060-0012-017-EA. Written comments are requested to be mailed to the Bureau of Land Management, Palm Springs South Coast Field Office, 1201 Bird Center Drive, Palm Springs, CA 92262-8001 (Attn: Jeffrey Johnston), or by fax to (760) 833-7199. Electronic comments may be submitted to: jjohnston@blm.gov . Comments must be received by end of business day on October 24, 2012.

## III. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION and ALTERNATIVES

### 1. Proposed Action

Simon Concrete & Aggregate LLC (the Operator) currently maintains a concrete processing facility located on public federal lands at 35905 Dillon Road, Indio, California. The sand and gravel materials for this plant are obtained from a quarry located adjacent to and just west of the plant. The entire facility occupies 79.3 acres, west of Dillon Road, within the west ½ of the southeast ¼ of Section 30, of Township 4 South, Range 8 East (SBBM). To insure the supply of sand and gravel over the next 25 years, the Operator proposes to expand the existing quarry operation by an additional 125.2 acres.

The proposed quarry expansion would be accomplished by extending the existing quarry

toward the north and west. This has been estimated to increase the annual sand and gravel extraction rate limit from 200,000 $yd^3$ to 300,000 $yd^3$, total extraction volume from 2 million $yd^3$ to 7.5 million $yd^3$, and extending the termination year to 2034. Reclamation would require approximately five (5) additional years, ending in 2040.

The expansion would be conducted in an incremental fashion to an average depth of 70 feet below ground surface, with a maximum slope angle of 3:1 (horizontal:vertical), resulting in a pit floor that parallels the slope of the surrounding natural alluvium.

The additional area would be mined in a similar manner as is used in the existing operation. Loaders and dozers are used to place material into the primary (mobile) crusher, which in turn feeds material to conveyors that deliver material to the processing plant near the southeast corner of Section 30. Material is washed, screened, sized, and loaded for delivery at the plant, which has public access via Dillon Road. The existing asphalt/portland cement plants and office building would remain in their current location.

Excavated aggregate material would continue to be transported to the existing onsite processing plant. All other operational aspects (days, hours, etc.) would remain the same as with the existing permitted operation.

Upon completion of mining, reclamation of the site would include revegetation with a native plant community similar to the existing plant cover. The reclaimed site would be approximately 70 feet lower in elevation than the surrounding land surface and would consist of an earthen basin covering the 204.5-acre site.

## 2. No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no expansion of the existing quarry would occur beyond the currently permitted limits. Existing management and use of the site would continue subject to applicable statutes, regulations, policy and land use plans. After the final utilization of the current quarry, the existing plant could be operated with aggregate supplied from other sites and hauled to the existing processing plant, and the completed quarry would be reclaimed pursuant to the existing RCL 152.

## 1. Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Two other alternatives were briefly considered but eliminated from the detailed analysis. These included obtaining the sand and gravel materials from a quarry operated by Calportland located adjacent to and north of the project, and/or expanding these two quarry sites into one large “super-quarry” region.

Both of these action alternatives were eliminated from a detailed analysis as they were considered to not adequately meet the stated purpose and need, and/or were not technically or economically feasible, and/or did not address resource impact or conflict, and/or did not provide benefits over the proposed action or other alternative actions already considered.

It was determined that the first alternative did not provide any benefits over the proposed action and simply moved the issues to the lands adjacent to the north of the existing project; and it was determined that there was no interest by the operator in expanding the two quarry sites into one single quarry site. However, these actions were not ruled out for future considerations.

## IV. LAND USE PLAN AND OTHER REGULATORY CONFORMANCE

In accordance with Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations §1610.5-3, the proposed action and alternatives are in conformance with the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) land use plan of 1980, as amended, to date, and the Coachella Valley CDCA plan amendment of December 2002.

Two of the four goals stated in the Geology, Energy, Minerals Resources Element of the CDCA Plan are:

1.) Within the multiple use framework, assure the availability of known mineral resource land for exploration and development.
2.) Encourage the development of mineral resources in a manner which satisfies national and local needs and provides for economically and environmentally sound exploration, extraction and reclamation processes.

The site is not designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, nor is it designated wilderness. Although the site is located within the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Community Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP) area (CVAG, 2007), it is not located within a conservation area designated within the CVMSHCP.

## V. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

### 1. Vegetation

The proposed action would result in the complete removal of the vegetation across an additional 125.4 acres in incremental phases during the quarrying operation. Currently vegetation cover on the proposed expansion area consists predominately of creosote bush scrub, with lessor amounts of sage, and sparse field grasses. Utilizing Google earth aerials and photographs taken of the site during our field reconnaissance, vegetation cover was estimated

at 30 to 40 percent across the proposed expansion area, which is similar to the undisturbed portions of the surrounding region.

A Biological Assessment study of the site was prepared in 2009 by an outside consultant on behalf of the Operator and provided to the BLM for our review (Cornett 2009). This study noted the presence of two plant associations at the site: Sonoran Creosote Bush Scrub, and a poorly developed Desert Dry Wash Woodland. The study noted that no plants found at the site are listed on the inventory of rare and endangered plants of California.

The vegetation type and coverage across the proposed expansion site is similar to the surrounding desert region in the valley the site is situated in, extending from the Sky Valley area to the northwest, into Indio. This represents an area approximately 15 miles long and on the order of 2 miles wide, for a total area of 30 square miles (19,200 acres) of similar terrain and vegetation.

## 2. Wildlife

The proposed action would result in the complete removal of the 125.4 acres of wildlife habitat in incremental phases during the quarrying operation.

The Biological Assessment study (Cornett 2009) noted the presence and/or habitat of invertebrates of the giant hairy scorpion, eleodes beetle, harvester ants and the painted lady butterfly. Reptiles included the side-blotched lizard, western whiptail, desert iguana, and sidewinder rattlesnake. Birds included the mourning dove, rock wren, house finch, common raven, and red-tailed hawk. Mammals included the white-tailed antelope squirrel, Merriam kangaroo rat, black tailed jackrabbit, and coyote. No threatened or endangered species were observed.

The wildlife in the region is similar to the site along the desert valley region described above, or representing a wildlife resource area of approximately 30 square miles (19,200 acres).

## 3. Soils and Mineral Materials

The proposed expansion area is underlain by Holocene aged alluvium consisting of unconsolidated stream channels and alluvial fan deposits of decomposed granite deposited from ephemeral flows originating from nearby Pushawalla Canyon, West Berdoo Canyon, and Berdoo Canyon located generally northeast of the site. The depth of these materials was not determined during this assessment; however, mining activities in the region indicate they extend to a minimum depth of 100 feet, and most likely much greater. The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) has classified the site soils as the Carrizo stony sand (gravelly, cobbly, or stony coarse sand) to the SCS study depth of 5 feet below ground surface and characterized by

relatively low organic levels similar to many desert environments. Our onsite observations conducted of the adjacent quarry noted the presence of coarse grained alluvial materials composed of layers of well graded sands with gravel and cobbles and silty sands. Occasional boulders were noted up to 4 or 5 feet in diameter. The alluvial units were thickly bedded, and relatively unconsolidated to the depths noted at the bottom of the quarry, approximately 50 to 70 feet below the original ground surface.

## 4. Groundwater

According to the 2003 Bulletin 118 of the State of California Department of Water Resources, the site lies along the southeastern end of the Desert Hot Springs sub-basin of the larger Coachella Valley Basin. This sub-basin is made up of unconsolidated Pleistocene and Holocene alluvial deposits. The primary water-bearing unit is the Ocotillo Conglomerate which is greater than 1,000 feet thick in some areas. Recharge is from surface runoff of the adjacent mountains and the aquifer is unconfined.

Water level data is sparse, but has been documented to range from 12 feet below ground surface near faults to over 300 feet. Groundwater flow is generally southeastward, following the valley topography. Chemical analysis noted in DWR study indicated TDS and Chloride values were high, from 800 to 1000 mg/l, and 100 to 150 mg/l respectively (DWR 2003). Volume and recharge rates are not generally available for this aquifer. However, some simplified assumptions can be made given that the aquifer is a relatively shallow, unconfined aquifer recharged from run-off of the adjacent highlands and infiltration of rains into the coarse grained alluvial materials. Using the generally reported yearly rainfall levels of 2-4 inches over the 30 square mile valley would result in a recharge rate of 3200 to 6400 acre-feet per year.

According to the hydrology report conducted for the existing plan of operations (Coachella Valley Engineers 2002), the levels of contaminants in the groundwater preclude the use of this aquifer for domestic use.

Operational water for the proposed expansion would be utilizing an offsite groundwater well which is currently supply the water needs for the existing quarry site. The operator reports groundwater in this well at an elevation of 330 feet above sea level, which is approximately 100 feet below the deepest elevation of the proposed pit floor at 430 feet. The majority of the site water use goes for dust control which the operator estimates to range from 16,000 to 24,000 gallons per day. This indicates there will be a minimum separation of 100 feet from the quarry workings to the water table.

## 5. Air Quality

The proposed action area lies within the Salton Sea Air Basin, which is under the management

of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). This, along with the adjacent Coachella Valley, located to the west, has been designated as a serious nonattainment area for PM10. PM10 refers to small suspended particulate matter, 10 microns or less in diameter. The SCAQMD currently monitors ambient air quality pollutants at two air monitoring stations in the Coachella Valley, at Indio and Palm Springs. The Indio station has been operational since 1985, and the Palm Springs station has been operational since 1987. At both stations, samples are taken every 3 days for particulate matter, (PM10 and PM2.5) carbon monoxide (CO), ozone (O3), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), sulfur dioxide (S02), PM10, and lead (Pb). The yearly averages and summary reports are available on the SCAQMD website. According this data, suspended particulate matter of PM10 is the most serious air quality issue faced by the region, which occasionally exceeds both State and Federal standards for PM10 of 50 and 150 *u*g/$m^3$ in a 24 hour period respectively.

Starting with the most recent summary report, approximately 53 tons of PM10 were released into the atmosphere in Coachella Valley on an average day in 1995. The yearly average charts note that during the period from 1999 through 2001, PM10 dust levels rose to exceed the annual average PM10 standards and standards for ozone, with levels recorded at the Indio monitoring station exceeding the Palm Springs station. The 2010 data sheet listed that the Indio station collected 119 samples for PM10 in 2010. The average value listed as 29.3 *u*g/$m^3$, with a maximum value of 107 *u*g/$m^3$.

## 6. Recreational Resources

Recreational activities currently permitted in the region include hiking, sightseeing, and rock collection. However, on the site these activities are precluded by an existing fence that encloses the current 79.3-acre quarry and facility as well as the proposed 125.2-acre expansion area. This fence was previously installed as a public safety measure for the existing plant under the current plan of operations. Therefore there are currently no opportunities for recreational resources available to the public on the site.

There are dirt roadways extend along the north, south and west perimeter of the site; however, locked gates on private lands severely limit access to the site and other public lands via these routes. Off-road travel in this area is prohibited by the Regional Management Plan.

## 7. Visual Resources

Visual quality within the study area consists of: (1) mountainous terrain composed mainly of steep, rocky, barren slopes; and (2) relatively flat or rolling desert land dissected by manmade facilities, such as roads, power lines, and undeveloped desert land.

Visual resources of the first type occur at the site by relatively unobstructed views of the Indio

Hills to the west and north-west, which lie approximately ¼ mile from the site, and of the Little San Bernardino Mountains to the north and northeast, approximately 1 mile to the north. The valley floor provides views of the desert land that combine the vegetation, consisting of various species of brush with interspersed grasses, and the surface desert floor offers softly contrasting tans, browns and greens.

Landscapes that contain visual variety such as those described above are generally more aesthetically pleasing than landscape alterations that create disharmony, which are generally considered unattractive.

## VI. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

### 1. Vegetation

#### 1.1 Proposed Action

The site is situated along the valley floor between the Indio Hills and the Little San Bernardino Mountains. This valley encompasses approximately 35 square miles, which contains sparse vegetation of creosote bush scrub, with lesser amounts of sage, and field grasses. No plants found at the site are listed on the inventory of rare and endangered plants of California.

The proposed action would result in the complete removal of 125.2 acres of vegetation from the approximately 22,400-acre region in incremental phases during the quarrying operation. The proposed expansion area therefore represents a reduction of approximately 0.5 percent of the total vegetation habitat in the region.

#### 1.2 No Action Alternative

Quarry extension on an additional 125.2 acres of public land would not occur. Disturbance to the vegetation would continue on the currently permitted (79.3 acres) quarry area located on BLM land to the east. Reclamation and re-vegetation would occur on this area when reserves are economically exhausted or when the current contract expires.

#### 1.3 Mitigation Measures

The proposed plan of operations submitted by the Operator includes re-vegetation procedures during the 5-year reclamation phase after 25 year quarrying operation. Similar re-vegetation efforts on the Yeager 1000 Palms quarry, located in a similar terrain 12.5 miles to the northwest, were conducted over a 3-year period starting at the closure of the quarry in 1996. A survey conducted by an outside consultant in 2010,

after 14 years, noted a 20 to 40 percent of re-coverage in vegetation at that time. This value would appear reasonable as a base line on the residual impacts to vegetation for the proposed action discussed below. On the Yeager site there was no evidence noted that the original surficial topsoil materials were saved for later dispersal and use. This practice, if conducted, would be expected to increase the effectiveness of the re-vegetation, as discussed in section 3.3.

### 1.4 Residual Impacts

As noted above, residual impacts to the vegetation are anticipated to include a total removal of the vegetation at the end of the quarrying period, and then a gradual re-growth to 20 to 40 percent coverage after a 3 to 5-year period. Comparing this to the existing condition of an estimated 30 to 40 percent coverage, this would result in a 10 percent reduction in vegetation.

### 1.5 Cumulative Impacts

As noted above, the direct effects of the action would result in a reduction of approximately 0.5 percent of the total vegetation habitat in the region, and residual impacts of up to 10 percent. The total (cumulative) affect, adding the previous disturbance of 79.3 acres, will result in a 10 percent vegetation reduction on an area that represents approximately 1 percent of the total regional vegetation.

## 2. Wildlife

### 2.1 Proposed Action

The proposed action would result in the complete removal of the 125.2 acres of wildlife habitat in incremental phases during the quarrying operation, consisting of presence and/or habitat of invertebrates of the giant hairy scorpion, eleodes beetle, harvester ants and the painted lady butterfly. Reptiles included the side-blotched lizard, western whiptail, desert iguana, and sidewinder rattlesnake. Birds included the mourning dove, rock wren, house finch, common raven, and red-tailed hawk. Mammals included the white tailed antelope squirrel, Merriam kangaroo rat, black tailed jackrabbit, and coyote. No threatened or endangered species were observed.

The total reduction quantities for loss of wildlife habitat would be the same as the ratio utilized in the vegetation analysis given above, resulting in a total wildlife habitat for 0.5 percent of the region.

### 2.2 No Action Alternative

Quarry extension on an additional 125.2 acres of public land would not occur. Disturbance to the wildlife would continue within the currently permitted (79.3 acres to the east) quarry.

### 2.3 Mitigation Measures

No additional mitigation measures to reduce or avoid the impact to wildlife were proposed.

### 2.4 Residual Impacts

Residual impacts of the operation would include removal of the majority of all wildlife for the duration of the proposed 25 year quarrying operation over the 125.2 acre project site. Wildlife would be anticipated to return to similar pre-use levels if successful reclamation activities are achieved.

### 2.5 Cumulative Impacts

As noted above, the total reduction quantities for loss of wildlife habitat would be the same as the ratio utilized in the vegetation analysis given above, resulting in a total wildlife habitat for 0.5 percent of the region and a cumulative reduction of about 1 percent when the previous disturbance of 79.3 acres cumulative impact is added on.

## 3. Soil and Mineral Materials

### 3.1 Proposed Action

The proposed action has been estimated by the Operator to increase the annual sand and gravel extraction rate limit at the existing site from 200,000 $yd^3$ to 300,000 $yd^3$, with a total extraction volume from 2 to 7.5 million $yd^3$ over a 25-year period. This will result in a loss of 2 to 7.5 million $yd^3$ of the sand and gravel mineral materials described above, leaving the waste materials of silt, cobbles and boulders at the site.

The proposed action will also strip off 125.2 acres of the Carrizo stone sand topsoil, a poorly developed topsoil that develops on stony surfaces, characterized by low organic content. A design feature proposed in the Plan of Operations calls for stockpiling the upper 6- to 12-inches of the native surface materials for later use to minimize this impact. To reduce the erosion potential, slopes are proposed at a maximum grade of 3 horizontal to 1 vertical (3:1).

### 3.2 No Action Alternative

Quarry extension on an additional 125.2 acres of public land would not occur. The sand and gravel quantities listed above for the current operation on the 79.3 acre existing site would continue at an anticipated rate of up to 200,000 cubic yards per year.

### 3.3 Mitigation Measures

The referenced Plan of Operations submitted for the proposed expansion states that the upper 6 to 12-inches of materials (topsoil and vegetation) will be stripped from any new areas and stockpiled for future re-vegetation use during the proposed reclamation activities. Slopes are to be contoured at a maximum of 3:1 to reduce erosion.

The effectiveness of these measures to minimizing the impact on the existing topsoils would be anticipated to contain similar results as those quantified under section VI Section 1.3 of the Vegetation analysis.

### 3.4 Residual Impacts

The residual impacts of the proposed operation will be similar to the impacts discussed under the vegetation analysis after the reclamation efforts within the design features are conducted, and will be partially impacted by the effectiveness of these efforts.

The proposed re-contouring of the site during this portion will leave perimeter slopes at angles of 3:1. Additional residual impacts to the soil materials will include an increase in erosion potential along the sloped areas which would cover approximately 10 percent of the total expansion area after reclamation is completed.

### 3.5 Cumulative Impacts

No direct cumulative impacts to the soils and minerals environment are anticipated at the project site as a result of the proposed action. Cumulative regional impacts would include the increase of materials removed from both sites, which may be as high as 7.5 million cubic yards of construction grade sand and gravel during the 25-year lifetime if both projects run at full capacity consecutively.

## 4. Groundwater

### 4.1 Proposed Action

Groundwater is currently utilized by the existing 79.3 acre operation for production and dust control using a private well owned by the current operator. According to the

operator, this use is approximately at 16,000 to 24,000 gallons per production day, the bulk of which is utilized for dust control. The proposed action may increase the overall sand and gravel and concrete production by an estimated 50%, while the dust control area would increase from 79.3 acres to 204.5 acres, or approximately 1.5 times. This could conceivable result in an increased water usage of 1.5 times the current levels, or up to 36,000 gallons of water per production day total use on both sites. Assuming a maximum of 360 production days per year, and a conversion factor of 325,851 gallons per acre feet, this would result in a maximum increase in the groundwater use from an estimated high of 26 acre-feet per year to 39 acre-feet per year. Therefore, the proposed action could conceivable result in an increase of 13 acre feet per year reliance on the underlying aquifer, which is less than one half of a percent (0.37%) of the lowest assumed recharge rate of 3500 acre feet per year.

As the aquifer is not utilized for domestic use, no impact to domestic use is anticipated by the action.

Contamination of the water table was not analyzed due to the low potential for the occurrence of significant levels of surface contamination and the large separation to the groundwater table, estimated to be on the order of 100 feet or greater.

### 4.2 No Action Alternative

The expansion of the current operation onto an additional 125.2 acres of public land would not occur. The dependency on groundwater for aggregates production at the existing site could possibly increase as the production at the existing plant may be increased to offset demand; however, the amounts utilized for dust control would remain unchanged.

### 4.3 Mitigation Measures

As the bulk of the water use is for dust control, a dust control treatment such as a chloride polymer blend could be sprayed onto exposed grounds periodically. The purpose of these measures is to provide a polymer blend to bond to the dust and aggregate, lowering migration of the dust, reducing the amount of water required.

However, direct, cumulative, and residual effects of using such methods, if any, were not analyzed within this EA due to projected low water use increases.

### 4.4 Residual Impacts

No residual impacts to the groundwater are anticipated after the operations cease.

### 4.5 Cumulative Impacts

No cumulative impacts to the groundwater, other than the combined use effects discussed under the proposed action section above, are anticipated at the project site as a result of the proposed action.

## 5. Air Quality

### 5.1 Proposed Action

The proposed project will generate air emissions during operations and periods of high winds. The current (79.2 acre) site produces emissions from open pit extraction of sand and gravel, operation of an aggregate processing facility, an asphalt concrete production plant, and Portland cement concrete plant. The proposed action will result in additional emissions predominately of fugitive dust (PM10) and diesel particulate matter from the earth moving equipment.

The proposed Plan of Operations does not anticipate a significant increase in earth moving equipment or a significant increase in plant activity on the adjacent site, as the main purpose of the action is to extend the lifetime of the currently existing operation. The predominant increase in air emissions from the proposed action will therefore be due to wind-generated dust from the additional surface area.

The State of California has designated the Coachella Valley Air Basin (CVAB) area as being in non-attainment for ozone and PM10. While dust control methods are proposed as operational features of the proposed action, i.e., spraying work areas and haul roads with water, this would only be conducted during work periods. During periods of non-production these mitigation actions are not proposed.

The proposed project is located in an area that is relatively sparsely populated. The nearest community is Sky Valley, located approximately 12 miles north of the project site. The project site is surrounded by open space on all sides in the proximate vicinity and no known sensitive receptors are located within one mile of the project site.

Subsequently, the potential for the proposed project to expose sensitive receptors to substantial concentrations of air emissions is less than significant.

### 5.2 No Action Alternative

The expansion of the current operation onto an additional 125.2 acres of public land would not occur. The current air emissions associated with the existing (79.3 acre) plant would continue.

### 5.3 Mitigation Measures

The normal measures for dust control of the surface areas exposed by the proposed action include spraying with water trucks during operations. These methods are contained within the Plan of Operations and are thus considered design features.

A dust control treatment such as a chloride polymer blend could be sprayed onto exposed grounds periodically. As noted in the previous section, the purpose of these measures is to provide a polymer blend to bond to the dust and aggregate, lowering migration of the dust, reducing the amount of emissions from this source. However, the application of these methods was not analyzed in this EA as they did not appear to resolve any need or conflict.

### 5.4 Residual Impacts

The impacts to air quality from PM10 and other dust emissions would continue during the proposed 25 year life of the project. The residual impacts after reclamation of the site would gradually be reduced at a rate depending on the success of the re-vegetation and re-establishment of the topsoil layer, until the site reaches base levels equal to the surrounding region, estimated to be within 3 to 5 years of the completion of the re vegetation activities.

### 5.5 Cumulative Impacts

No cumulative impacts to the air quality are anticipated at the project site as a result of the proposed action.

## 6. Recreational Resources

### 6.1 Proposed Action

The proposed project has no effect on the current recreational resources at the site during the proposed 25 year operation. After site closure and reclamation, the public access would most likely be returned.

### 6.2 No Action Alternative

The expansion of the current operation onto an additional 125.2 acres of public land would not occur. The 125.2-acre site would continue to be closed to public access during the operation of the existing, 79.3-acre site. After site closure and reclamation of the 79.3-acre site, public access would most likely be returned.

### 6.3 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures were analyzed in this EA regarding the loss of recreational resources due to the current low levels of use in the surrounding regions.

### 6.4 Residual Impacts

No residual impacts, other than as discussed in the Proposed and No action impacts above, are anticipated.

### 6.5 Cumulative Impacts

No cumulative impacts to the onsite recreational resources are anticipated at the project site as a result of the proposed action.

## 7. Visual Resources

### 7.1 Proposed Action

The proposed project has only a very limited effect on the visual resources since the sand and gravel extraction activities are below the existing surface topography and at great distances could not be seen.

### 7.2 No Action Alternative

If the expansion onto the additional 125.2 acres of public land does not occur, the visual resources would remain unchanged.

### 7.3 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures were analyzed in this EA regarding the loss of visual resources due to the current low levels of use.

### 7.4 Residual Impacts

No residual impacts, other than as discussed in the Proposed and No action impacts above, are anticipated.

### 7.5 Cumulative Impacts

No cumulative impacts to the onsite recreational resources are anticipated at the

project site as a result of the proposed action.

## VII. AGENCIES CONSULTED

County of Riverside, lead agency, SMARA

Simon Concrete & Aggregate, LLC, has applied for a surface mining permit with the County of Riverside. Within Riverside County they are the "lead agency" for the State requirements under the surface mining and reclamation act (SMARA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The application process requires project approval of the Land Development Committee (LDC) and internal County scoping. The LDC has set the project number of RCL-152 R1 for SMARA review.

South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD).

Mr. Kevin Derkec, (909) 396-3168, Air monitoring station data, Palm Springs, Indio.

**PREPARED BY:**

| Interdisciplinary Preparers | Title | Resource Values |
|---|---|---|
| Cheryl Martinez | Supervisor Lands/Minerals | Project lead |
| Jeffrey Johnston | Geologist | Geology/Minerals/Soils/hydrology/regulations |
| Greg Kline | Archaeologist | Cultural Resources |
| Mark Massar | Wildlife Biologist | Wildlife |
| Jennifer Taylor | Outdoor Rec. Planner | Recreation and Visual Resources |
| | | |
| | | |

**REVIEWED BY:** Holly R Roberts
for Environmental Coordinator

10/9/12
Date

## VIII. REFERENCES AND APPENDICES

Coachella Valley Engineers, Inc. (CVE), 1997. Hydrology Study for Section 30 Mine Site, June 1997.

Earth Systems Consultants, 1995. Slope Stability Evaluation, Simon Aggregate Pit Reclamation Project, 35905 Dillon Road, Indio Hills Area, Riverside County, California, 18 August 1995.

James W. Cornett Ecological Consultants (JWCEC) 2001a. Biological Assessment and Impact Analysis of the Proposed Simon Section 30 Quarry Expansion, 25 June 2001.

_____, 2001b. Revegetation and Habitat Restoration Plan for the Reclamation of the James E. Simon Company Section 30 Sand and Gravel Pit, 25 June 2001.

_____, 2009. Biological Assessment and Impact Analysis of the Proposed Simon Quarry Expansion, 21 May 2009.

State of California, Department of Water Resources, California's Groundwater Bulletin 118. 2003.

Webber & Webber Mining Consultants, Inc. (W&W), 2009. Simon Concrete & Aggregate, LLC, BLM Plan of Operations and Reclamation Plan (RCL 152R1), 18 November 2002 (revised 1 October 2009).

Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG), 2007. Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Community Conservation Plan, September 2007.

Riverside County Planning Department (Riverside County), 1999. Riverside County Planning Department Staff Report (RCL 152), 9 June 1999.

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT CONSIDERATIONS:**

Public comments submitted for this environmental assessment, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**
**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**
**PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**
**DOI-BLM-CA-060-0012-017**

**NAME of PROJECT:**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:** Environmental impacts associated with the proposed action have been assessed. Based on the analysis provided in the attached EA, I conclude the approved action is not a major federal action and will result in no significant impacts to the environment under the criteria in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.18 and 1508.27. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement to further analyze possible impacts is not required pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

Hully L. Roberts
Field Manager
Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262

10/10/17
Date

**APPEALS:** This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations at Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4, and the information provided in Form 1842-1 (enclosed). If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in the Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office, Bureau of Land Management, 1201 Bird Center Drive, Palm Springs, California 92262, within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, pursuant to Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 4, Subpart E, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

**Standards for Obtaining a Stay**

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulations, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

(1) the relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
(2) the likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
(3) the likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
(4) whether the public interest favors granting the stay.