

February 27, 2008

TO: County of Sonoma Permit and Resource Management Department

PROJECT TITLE: Dutra Haystack Landing Asphalt and Recycling Facility

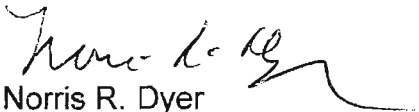
CONCERNS ABOUT DRAFT EIR

AMENDMENT TO WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUBMITTED ON FEBRUARY 4, 2008

Attached is an article and editorial from the February 21, 2008 issue of the Petaluma Argus Courier regarding the DEIR, and plans for the Dutra Asphalt Factory.

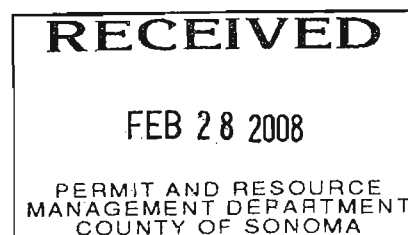
Please supplement my submission of February 4th with these two attachments.

Sincerely,



Norris R. Dyer
Senior Wetlands Docent, City of Petaluma

B10-1



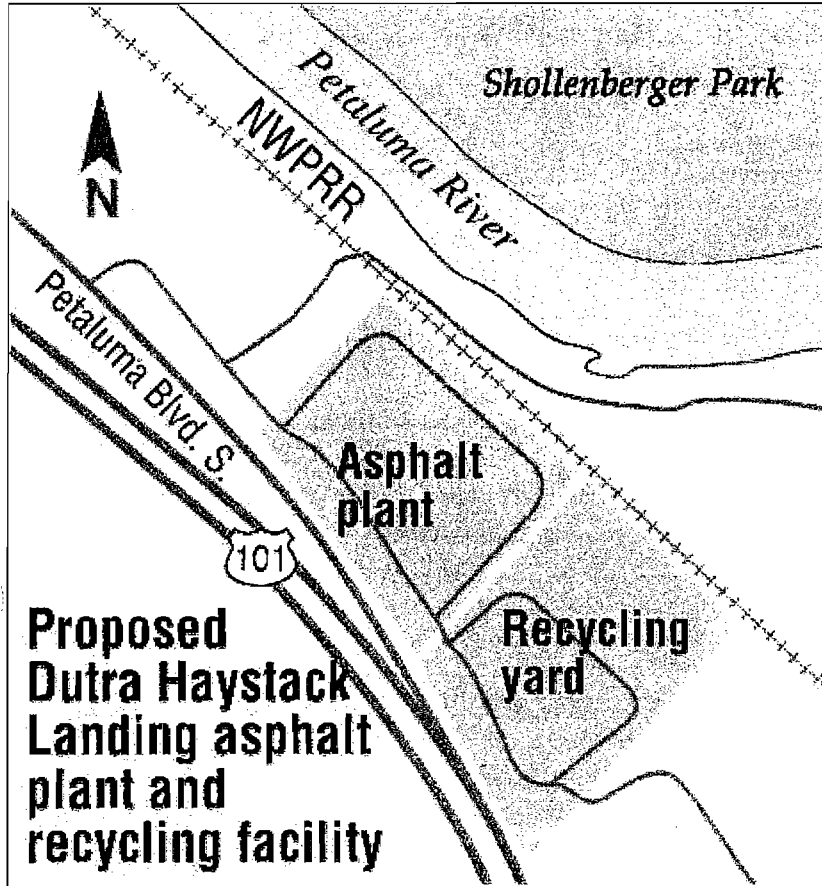
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Article published - Feb 21, 2008

Wetlands advocates say asphalt plan stinks
Proposal to build asphalt production and recycling plant across river from
Shollenberger Park needs serious revision, critics say



A proposed asphalt plant could be a boon for road projects, but wetlands advocates think it's a bad idea to locate it near Shollenberger Park.

By Corey Young
 ARGUS-COURIER STAFF

Docents and advocates for the Petaluma wetlands don't dispute that a new asphalt plant in the south Sonoma County area could be a boon for freeway widening and other road projects in the works.

But they believe a North Bay company's proposal to build that plant between Highway 101 and the Petaluma River across from Shollenberger Park is a case of a good idea in the wrong place.

"We think it's going to have a negative impact on the quality of life for the wildlife and for the people out there," said Gerald Moore, chairman of the Petaluma Wetlands Alliance. The wetlands alliance says a draft environmental impact report on the project confirms their concerns, highlighting the expected impacts of the project on air quality, noise and scenery as "significant and unavoidable."

The asphalt plant "would dominate the views in the area, standing out against the setting and attracting attention away from the surrounding landscape," the report concludes. "Due to the project's scale, many other visual characteristics of the area would be diminished."

In addition, the report says pollutants created by the plant's operation, including nitrogen oxides, would exceed air-quality standards — even after mitigation measures, such as using the latest emissions technology on vehicles and equipment, are applied.

Plant operations would also exceed daytime noise standards for nearby residents and users of Shollenberger Park, the report found.

Dutra Materials, a supplier of aggregate rock from a San Rafael quarry and former operator of the now-closed Petaluma quarry, is proposing the asphalt plant for a 38-acre site between the northbound Highway 101 off-ramp at Petaluma Boulevard South and the railroad tracks.

The project includes a parcel of land east of the tracks along the river, where barges would dock and off-load aggregate materials onto a conveyor belt that crosses over the tracks to connect with the rest of the facility. Dutra would relocate its current operation from 1601 Petaluma Boulevard South, across from the former quarry, to the new site — an area known traditionally as Haystack Landing, where a historic farmhouse stood until a fire destroyed it several years ago.

Both sites are outside of city limits and the Sonoma County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors will decide whether the project can proceed.

At the new plant, 160,000 tons of recycled asphalt and concrete would be imported by truck each year, with about 500,000 tons of material brought from the San Rafael quarry by barge.

The plant would operate from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays, with evening and weekend hours "as needed" to meet delivery schedules for road projects, the draft EIR states.

Night and weekend operations would only add to the project's already significant impacts at Shollenberger, Almy Marsh and the planned public-access trails at the city's new sewer plant, Moore said.

Those areas comprise more than 500 acres of public wetlands, serving as a draw not only for tourism and outdoor enthusiasts but also a successful docent-led education program for schoolchildren, he said.

Noise is also a big concern because of a nesting rookery on the northwest corner of the project, said Bob Dyer, senior wetlands docent at Shollenberger.

Since monitoring of the rookery began in 2003, Dyer and others have counted about 250 Great Egret, Snowy Egret and Blue Heron chicks born there, he said.

"It's been a productive colony and we're concerned about the impact of a noisy asphalt factory very close by," he said.

Putting a large industrial plant in the middle of such an area can be done in a more environmentally sound way, the wetlands alliance believes.

The group would like to see the plant redesigned, night operations be prohibited and the asphalt-recycling component dropped to avoid the most significant noise impacts.

Those steps are called out in the draft EIR as part of an alternative plan for the plant, which would result in fewer truck trips and air-quality impacts, along with less visibility from both Shollenberger and Highway 101.

A Dutra representative did not return calls for comment.

Moore said the company shouldn't be prevented from establishing an appropriate project site along the river, since river-dependent businesses are needed in Petaluma. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will dredge the river every few years if the waterway is used for commerce.

And existing industrial uses near the Petaluma wetlands can be good neighbors, he said, citing Shamrock Materials' barge site north of the proposed Dutra plant.

"It's important to keep them here along the river," he said of Dutra. "That said, the Petaluma Wetlands Alliance feels they should do everything technically possible to make themselves invisible from us, across the river."

Copies of the EIR are available at the Petaluma library and online at www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/docs/eir/dutradeir.

Comments on the draft EIR will be accepted until Wednesday, Feb. 27 by e-mail at spadovan@sonoma-county.org or by mail to the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Dept., 2550 Ventura Ave., Santa Rosa, 95403.

(Contact Corey Young at corey.young@arguscourier.com)

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Article published - Feb 21, 2008

Editorial Comment

Explore alternative plan for asphalt plant

With major road improvements and freeway widening projects either in the works or on the horizon, a new asphalt plant in the south county area sounds like a good idea to easily provide the key ingredient for the work. But is Dutra Materials' proposal to build a plant on a 38-acre site next to the southern gateway to Petaluma and right across from Shollenberger Park a good plan and the right location?

A draft environmental impact report on the project — located between Highway 101 and the railroad tracks near the Petaluma Boulevard South offramp — states that the expected impacts of the project on air quality, noise and scenery would be "significant and unavoidable."

The report goes on to say that the asphalt plant would dominate the views in the area and would stand out against the setting and attract attention away from the surrounding landscape.

Pollutants would exceed air-quality standards — even after mitigation measures are applied, the report concludes, and noise from the operation would exceed daytime standards for nearby residents and visitors to Shollenberger Park.

Shollenberger, Alman Marsh and the planned public-access trails near the city's new sewer plant make up more than 500 acres of public wetlands, which attracts tourists, bird watchers and others who enjoy the outdoors.

Also, wetlands advocates say, the noise levels could disturb a nearby nesting rookery where about 250 Great Egret, Snowy Egret and Blue Heron chicks have been born in the last five years.

However, an asphalt plant is important to the area and Dutra should be allowed to establish an appropriate project along the river. The company has an existing, but smaller operation at 1601 Petaluma Blvd. South, across from the former quarry. River-dependent businesses like Dutra are important to Petaluma. Because of them, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredges the river every few years.

The draft EIR spells out an alternative plan for the plant that would result in fewer truck trips and air-quality impacts, and have less visibility from both Highway 101 and Shollenberger Park. We suggest that Dutra explore alternatives such as this in order to lessen the negative impacts.

If you would like to comment on the draft EIR for the project, the deadline is Feb. 27. Comments may be e-mailed to spadovan@sonoma-county.org or sent by regular mail to the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Dept., 2550 Ventura Ave., Santa Rosa 95403. Copies of the EIR are available at the Petaluma library and at the PRMD office, and online at www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/docs/eir/dutradeir.

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