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ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS AND OWNERS OF OJAI QUARRY SETTLE CLEAN WATER ACT AND ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT CASE

**COMPANY AGREES TO IMPROVE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES,
WILL PROVIDE \$60,000 OF ROCK PRODUCT TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA STEELHEAD
RESTORATION PROJECTS ALONG AREA CREEKS**

A federal judge with the United States District Court for the Central District of California has approved a settlement agreement between environmental organizations Santa Barbara Channelkeeper and the Environmental Defense Center and the owners of the Ojai Quarry in Ventura County. The environmental organizations' lawsuit alleged that stormwater management practices at the Quarry were violating requirements of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) and the California "General Permit" for stormwater discharges from industrial facilities, as well as provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Quarry is located on the Lower North Fork of Matilija Creek, a major tributary of the Ventura River, which is an important waterway for numerous species of plants, fish, and wildlife, and is designated as "critical habitat" for the endangered southern California steelhead under the ESA. The Ventura River also serves as a primary source of drinking water for Ojai and Ventura residents. The environmental groups' lawsuit alleged that operations at the Quarry resulted in polluted run-off that threatened water quality as well as the ability of steelhead to migrate upstream as a necessary part of their life cycle.

Under the Settlement Agreement, the Quarry's owners have agreed to: 1) increase stormwater retention capacity sufficient to capture all runoff from the large majority of rain events; 2) pave, maintain, and inspect Quarry access roads; 3) install best management practices (BMPs) to control and channel runoff from roads; 4) cover dirt and other stockpiles to reduce erosion and runoff; 5) restrict future mining in a very steep rock face area of the Quarry; 6) suspend all mining activities during rain events; and 7) conduct annual inspections of North Fork Matilija Creek for blockages or impairments to migration of steelhead caused by rockfall or landslides from the Quarry. In addition, the Quarry owners have agreed to donate \$60,000 of rock product to South Coast Habitat Restoration for steelhead passage projects being constructed at Maria Ygnacio, Tajiguas, and Carpinteria Creeks.

"These are meaningful commitments to address the environmental concerns raised in our lawsuit," said Ben Pitterle, Watershed and Marine Program Director for Santa Barbara Channelkeeper. "We've been monitoring this site for many years, and we look forward to seeing these on-the-ground improvements translate into a cleaner, healthier river."

"We are pleased to announce this settlement agreement, and commend the Quarry owners for taking actions that will benefit water quality and endangered species," stated Brian Segee, Ventura-based

Senior Attorney with the Environmental Defense Center. “We believe this settlement agreement will contribute to larger efforts to restore the Ventura River waterway and the population of endangered steelhead that depend on the watershed.”

Quarry owner and operator Larry Mosler stated that he appreciated working cooperatively with Channelkeeper and the Environmental Defense Center to address their concerns. After having resolved other issues with regulatory agencies in the past few years, he stated it appeared the recent controversies surrounding the Quarry seem to have ended. Mosler stated he is “committed to operating the Ojai Quarry in a way that complies with all environmental regulations.”

Stormwater runoff is generated when rain flows over land and impervious surfaces, accumulating sediment, chemicals, debris, and other pollutants. Stormwater discharges from municipal storm drains, construction activities, and industrial sites are among southern California’s most significant sources of water pollution. Channelkeeper and EDC filed their case after stormwater sampling by Channelkeeper and the Quarry showed high levels of pollutants—in particular sediment—being discharged from the facility. In addition, landslides and rock fall from the Quarry have in the past blocked steelhead migration routes to valuable upstream habitat necessary for the species to migrate, spawn, and rear their young. The Quarry owners’ commitments under the settlement agreement will greatly decrease the volume of stormwater discharged from the facility, and significantly improve the quality of stormwater that is ultimately discharged. It is anticipated that these measures will reduce pollutants and benefit water quality and fish habitat in the Lower North Fork of Matilija Creek and Ventura River.

The Ojai Quarry is an approximately 30-acre facility located in Ventura County at 1555 State Route 33, a few miles north of the City of Ojai. The Quarry provides high-quality rock material for a wide range of marine and public works uses. Rock from the Quarry is often used for flood-control projects throughout Ventura County and surrounding areas.

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***Santa Barbara Channelkeeper** is a non-profit public benefit corporation whose mission is to protect and restore the Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds through science-based advocacy, education, field work, and enforcement. To learn more about Channelkeeper, please visit www.sbck.org*

***The Environmental Defense Center**, a non-profit law firm, protects and enhances the local environment through education, advocacy, and legal action and works primarily within Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties. Since 1977, EDC has empowered community-based organizations to advance environmental protect. Program areas include protecting coast and ocean resources, open spaces and wildlife, and human and environmental health. Learn more about EDC at www.EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org.*

***Gralar LLC** is a family-owned business that operates the Ojai Quarry and is based in Ventura County.*