



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 4/16/2026

---

**File #:** 26-336

---

**To:** Zoning Administrator

**From:** Planning and Building Department

**Agenda Section:** Consent

**SUBJECT:**

Mason Materials LLC, Conditional Use/Surface Mining Permit and Reclamation Plan Renewal  
Assessor Parcel Numbers (APN) 316-163-002-000  
Record No.: PLN-2021-17298  
Blue Lake area

A 15-year renewal of an existing surface mining and reclamation plan permit SMR-02091X and conditional use permit CUP-14-91X for the Mason Quarry. The project includes intermittent and on demand extraction of heavy construction rock and rocky fill material. Mined material is used for road/highway maintenance and construction projects. The quantity of extracted materials is dependent upon state and county contracts as well as private sector demand with a maximum of 65,000 cubic yards per year.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Zoning Administrator:

1. Adopt the Resolution, (Attachment 1) which does the following:
  - a. Finds a Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration (SMND) was previously adopted for the Mason Quarry pursuant to Section 15164 of the CEQA guidelines and that no further environmental review is required; and
  - b. Makes all of the required findings for approving the 15-year renewal of the Conditional Use/Surface Mining Permit and Reclamation Plan PLN-2021-17298, based on the substantial evidence submitted; and
  - c. Approves the Conditional Use/Surface Mining Permit and Reclamation Plan Renewal.

**DISCUSSION:**

**Project Location:** The project is located in the Blue Lake area, on the North and South side of

Sabertooth Road, approximately 1.4 miles from the intersection of State Highway 299 and Sabertooth Road, on the property known to be in Section 23 of Township 06 North, Range 03 East Humboldt Base & Meridian.

**Present General Plan Land Use Designation:** Timber Production (T). Slope Stability: E Moderate Instability (2) High Instability (3)

**Present Zoning:** Timberland Production (TPZ); Agriculture Exclusive (AE)

**Environmental Review:** A Negative Declaration was adopted with the original permit approval, and a Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration was approved with the previous modification that allowed for an expansion of up to 65,000 cubic yards of material. No changes to the mining operation are proposed as part of this renewal.

**State Appeal:** Project is NOT appealable to the California Coastal Commission.

**Major Concerns:** None.

**Monitoring Required:** Annual Compliance Monitoring.

**Executive Summary:** A 15-year renewal of an existing surface mining and reclamation plan permit SMR-02091X and conditional use permit CUP-14-91X for the Mason Quarry. The project includes intermittent and on demand extraction of heavy construction rock and rocky fill material. Mined material is used for road/highway maintenance and construction projects. The quantity of extracted materials is dependent upon state and county contracts as well as private sector demand and allows up to 65,000 cubic yards of material per year. The permit term is 15 years and will expire June 21, 2036.

Large rip-rap and smaller rocky embankment material is used primarily for maintenance of the County and State-road system, Operations include extraction, processing, stockpiling and transporting. Material is mined by ripping with a bulldozer, separating with a bulldozer or an excavator and static grizzly, and loading onto trucks with a loader. There is no on-site processing with crushers. The typical types of equipment to be used Include: front-end loader, bulldozer, excavator and dump trucks.

Activity in the quarry will continue to be intermittent. Project frequency of operation is expected to be several times a year for periods ranging from a few days to a few weeks; duration and intensity of activities depend on demand. Final reclamation includes final grading, drainage improvements, restoration of surface soils and revegetation to reclaim the land consistent with agriculture and timber harvesting.

Background:

The Mason Quarry is located approximately 1.5 miles south of State Highway 299 from the east end of Redwood Creek Bridge on Old Chezem Logging Road, a private road. The project site is within the Redwood Creek Watershed area. The property is planned Timber Production (T) and split-zoned Timber Production Zone (TPZ) and Agriculture Exclusive (AE). Vegetation within the project limits is minimal, although adjacent lands are timbered with second-growth forest.

The Mason Quarry was originally developed in 1953 for the construction of the road now known as Old Chezem Logging Road. The road was constructed to provide access to the upper Redwood Creek Valley. Since 1954, the quarry was mined for maintenance of the Old Chezem Logging Road and County and State roads and highways. Both Humboldt County and the State of California have contracted with the operator for maintenance material since 1964.

The County approved permits for existing operations in 1991 and allowed for the total extraction volume of 200,000 cubic yards of material over a 15-year period. A Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted with the project approval. Based on the staff report for the 1991 permit, the applicant could have requested a vested rights determination but instead went through the permit process to allow for public comments and to allow the County and other responsible agencies to regulate and monitor operations.

Activity in the quarry will continue to be intermittent. Project frequency of operation is expected to be several times a year for periods ranging from a few days to a few weeks; duration and intensity of activities depend on demand. Final reclamation includes final grading, drainage improvements, restoration of surface soils and revegetation to reclaim the land consistent with agriculture and timber harvesting.

Noise:

There are two vacation homes north of the quarry and one home below the quarry. The landowner's residence is the nearest residence at one-quarter mile or more away from the quarry. The nearest residence, not owned by the landowner is approximately 1.5 miles away and protected by rugged, forested terrain. Noise levels will be equivalent to typical road construction sites. Operations are intermittent, and noise is generated only during periods of operation. Operations are limited to daylight hours.

Blasting has not occurred in the past. However, the operator would like the option of blasting if required and this was included as part of the previously issued permit. Hours for blasting are restricted. Blasting is further restricted to address the Northern Spotted Owl nesting season and is conditioned to provide 24-hour advance notice to adjacent occupants.

Water Resources:

The Engineering Geologic Investigation prepared by LACO Associates in 2006 characterized site conditions, evaluated suitability of extraction and stockpiling operations, discussed potential impact

to Redwood Creek and provided recommendations to be utilized during continued operation of the quarry site. The investigation concluded that no defined drainage swales or channels are present in the immediate vicinity of the quarry. Relative to the surrounding areas, the quarry site is located atop high ground and is isolated from the existing drainage network of creeks and streams, Drainage of surface runoff along ridge face and side slopes occur via sheet flow. Material from the quarry is coarse rocky material which does not convey surface runoff for significant distance before infiltration.

#### Biological Resources:

The project site is within the Redwood Creek Watershed area and is surrounded by timber consisting mostly of Douglas-fir and oaks. The quarry operation is separated from Redwood Creek by two or more natural benches and approximately 3,000 feet of naturally vegetated, highly permeable ground. Riparian habitat occurs along the haul roads but not within the mining area. Operations have been in existence since 1953. Per LACO, existing site conditions, grades and sediment-control structures appear adequately designed and functioning properly, and the project does not appear to have potential to impact Redwood Creek.

A Biological Assessment and a Botanical Survey and Impact Assessment were prepared by Pacific Northwestern Biological Resources Consultants, Inc. The assessment identified habitats where wildlife species could occur based on habitat and geographic location. The area is potential habitat for wildlife species of concern, especially for the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO). There are four NSO activity centers within 0.7 miles of the project area and are located within the Green Diamond Resource Company (GDRC) ownership. GDRC has monitored adjacent areas for over 30 years and is continually monitoring as required by their Habitat Conservation Plan. Two known NSO centers are located approximately just one-quarter mile from the quarry. The US Fish and Wildlife Service estimates a maximum distance of one-quarter mile wherein harassment due to elevated, action-generated sound levels occurs. The Service recommends that no blasting be permitted during the NSO nesting season which occurs from approximately February 1 through July 31 in this area, and the project is conditioned accordingly.

The rock quarry has been in operation since the 1950s. The quarry site contains no wetlands or riparian vegetation. The site is located in a matrix of managed timberlands, and the project area is comparatively minor in scale. This matrix will continue to support wildlife. Per the botanical assessment, no rare plants were found during surveys and no impacts from the quarry are expected. Continuation of the quarry is not likely to degrade the environment.

#### Energy:

Policies and standards recognize the importance of mining and energy production to local and regional economy, and set criteria and restrictions to ensure health, safety and general welfare of persons, property, and public resources. Many of these policies and standards have been incorporated into the implementing Surface Mining Ordinance as performance standards required of all mining activities.

Access:

The quarry is accessed from the east end of the Redwood Creek Bridge on State Highway 299 via a private road, Old Chezem Road, a well-maintained gravel road, that parallels the east side of Redwood creek and Windy Creek, a tributary to Redwood Creek. Old Chezem Road serves several property owners and provides access to timberlands and grazing lands. The areas above the quarry are accessed by a secondary road that traverses up the southern flank of the ridge through forested ground.

Traffic on State Highway 299 will not be impacted by the project. Traffic on Old Chezem Road is light even when the quarry is active. Mason Quarry supplies road maintenance material to the Humboldt County Department of public Works and CalTrans and provides aggregates to other locations for processing for public and private construction projects. It is estimated that a bulldozer working for five days can generate enough material for one month. A frontend loader distributes material and typically one to three trucks haul intermittently during the construction season. Occasionally, during the construction season and depending on demand, trucking could last four or five days and involve four to six dump trucks per day. Operation of the mine ensures continued maintenance of the road from the State Highway to Mason Quarry.

The project will be subject to extensive local, state and federal regulation. In any given year, project extraction volumes, locations and methods will be submitted by the applicant for approval by local, state and federal agencies, including the County of Humboldt, Department of Fish and Game, Cal Fire, US Fish and Wildlife Service and Office of Mine Reclamation.

The actual and potential environmental effects reviewed by County staff and referral agencies in relation to the project include noise and hazards, traffic, dust, safety concerns, water quality degradation, impacts to sensitive habitat areas, and depreciation in open space aesthetics. Staff supports approval of the application because, as mitigated and conditioned, it is anticipated to have less than significant impact on residential uses; and potential impacts to resources have been addressed through mitigation and operations restrictions. Based upon the operational and performance standards included in the mining operation and reclamation plan, staff and the referral agencies have concluded that the operation can be conducted in a safe and appropriate manner provided these standards are made conditions of project approval.

Geologic Suitability:

The project site is in an area rated “moderate and “high instability”. The mining operation is required to comply with guidelines and requirements established by the California Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) and the Office of Mine Reclamation (OMR).

Timber Conversion:

Surface mining is not specifically identified as a primary and compatible use. However, in previous project reviews, the County has found surface mining to be a compatible temporary use. The site has been used as a quarry since prior to the 1960s. The acreage to be utilized will eventually be reclaimed and reverted to land use consistent with the plan designation.

Security and Safety:

Based on information submitted by the applicant, contained in the environmental documents, and referrals from jurisdictional agencies and interested parties at present, staff believe that the project as conditioned will not cause significant environmental effects nor to be detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare.

Public safety concerns include both on-site and off-site impacts. This project will not pose a significant increase in risk to people on-site due to the following factors: the quarry is in an isolated location, access is on a privately maintained road, the quarrying method does not leave large pits or holes, and the material to be mined is structurally stable.

Potential impacts off-site include truck traffic, wildfire hazard, noise, and dust. Traffic generated by this project, as discussed within this report, will occur intermittently, and will not significantly change the current level of traffic. This project is located in a high wildfire hazard area. Though operations require fuel for equipment, standards of operation will minimize any potential impacts from this project. Most activities will be occurring more than 50 feet from retained mature vegetation. Material will be adequately wet during active periods. Hazards from the project are limited. Once final reclamation efforts are completed, no unstable rock piles or excavation "holes" will exist. No attractive nuisance to encourage trespass will remain. No residual equipment, structures, refuse, etc. will remain on the reclamation site or elsewhere on the parcel.

Tribal Consultation:

The project site was reviewed by the Northwest Information Center in 1997 with the review of the renewal of Conditional Use and Surface Mining Permits. Although no further investigation was recommended, an informational note has been added to the Conditions of Approval stating that work must be halted if cultural resources are discovered during the construction process. An informational note has been included with the Conditions of Approval indicating the steps to be taken should cultural resources and/or human remains be discovered during ground disturbing activities.

Another referral response was received in 2021 from the NWIC was received regarding the renewal of this project. Again, a request for the standard inadvertent discovery protocol was requested, which is included in the conditions of approval.

Environmental Review:

A Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted in 1991, and a Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration was approved December 19, 2012, with the permit modification approval. No other reviews have been requested.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The project was referred to responsible agencies and all responding agencies have either responded with no comment or recommended approval or conditional approval. (Attachment 3).

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Zoning Administrator could elect not to approve the renewal. This alternative is not recommended as the mining operation has been operated and maintained in good standing and no changes from the original approval are proposed.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
  - A. Conditions of Approval
  - B. Reclamation Plan
  - C. Location Map and Site Plan
2. Mason Quarry Mitigated Negative Declaration 2012
3. Referrals
  - A. Humboldt County Public Works Land Use
  - B. Humboldt County Building

APPLICANT, OWNER, AGENT, AND PLANNER INFORMATION:

Applicant:

Mason Materials, LLC  
3445 Central Ave  
McKinleyville, CA 95519

Owner:

Wayne Mason  
1633 Henry Rd  
McKinleyville, CA 15519

Agent:

Pacific Affiliates  
Travis Schneider  
990 W Waterfront Dr  
Eureka, CA 95501

Please contact Michael Kein Name, Planner, at [MKein2@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:MKein2@co.humboldt.ca.us) or 707-268-3739 if you have questions about this item.