

# Meeting doesn't ease concerns over quarry

[By Zeke MacCormack](#) - Express-News

A face-to-face meeting last week hasn't eased worries among residents of upscale subdivisions in northeastern Medina County about a rock quarry proposed on land they border off FM 1283.

"We're even more concerned now than we were before," said Theron Mund, president of the Ranchland Oaks Homeowners Association, after the briefing Tuesday by agents of the H.L. Zumwalt Construction Co.

About 150 people turned out in Lakehills for the presentation by the San Antonio firm that's seeking state permits to mine and crush limestone on 30 acres at the site flanked by Ranchland Oaks, Bear Springs Ranch and the new Kings Gate.

Asked to abandon the project, Zumwalt officials instead pledged to be good neighbors, said Ken Leard, who moderated the event.

Quarry opponents, which include the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, are scrambling to organize before a Jan. 29 deadline for comments set by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

"This caught us by surprise," said Mund, who said the top concern among the owners of roughly 300 nearby homes was the depletion or contamination of residents' wells due to blasting.

There also are worries about dust, noise, cracked foundations, traffic and pollution of the underlying aquifer.

Matt Bellos, who prepared the permit application and spoke at the meeting, said the actual quarry was expected to cover no more than 15 acres and that rock wouldn't be sold but used for company projects and roads on site.

The firm is also seeking permission from authorities in Medina County to pump up to 500,000 gallons a year from an existing well there, primarily for dust suppression, said Bellos, an employee of Westward Environmental.

He said trees would help reduce neighbors' views of the quarry pit, which is to become a stock tank when digging concludes.

Company owner Henry Zumwalt plans to build a retirement home on the parcel, so he has an interest in keeping the quarry unobtrusive, said Lennie Turpin, general manager of the construction firm.

"Henry's been in the crushing business 40 years," Turpin said Thursday. "Everything Henry

does, he does by the book.”

Leard said the audience was “incredulous” that Zumwalt planned a quarry on the site of his retirement home.

And, he said, assurances of regulatory compliance prompted critics to bring up the mulch fire that burned for three months in 2007 on property outside Helotes owned by Zumwalt.

“They refused to talk about the fire” at the meeting, Leard said of Bellos and Daryl Zumwalt, Henry's son, who attended.

The state cited Henry Zumwalt for alleged code violations concerning the brush-disposal site and the fire, and it filed suit against him in Travis County to recover some of the \$5.8 million firefighting bill.

TCEQ Spokeswoman Andrea Morrow said Zumwalt's compliance history is classified as average, but that could be affected by the litigation.

Annalisa Peace of the aquifer alliance, said her group is concerned about all quarries over the recharge zone but that there's little recourse to those in unincorporated areas due to the limited authority counties have over land use.

“Unless the TCEQ steps in to deny the permits for Zumwalt's quarry, these homeowners are in for a long, hard and expensive fight,” she said.

## Medina quarry controversy

H.L. Zumwalt Construction Co. is seeking state permits to mine and crush limestone at a site in northeastern Medina County. Neighbors have raised questions about the proposal.



Source: Medina County Appraisal District & Westward Environmental

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