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Local Group - 800 strong - Joins Forces with Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance to Save Neighborhood from New Quarry

NEW BRAUNFELS -- After collecting more than 800 petition signatures opposing a new rock quarry near New Braunfels, the leaders of Comal Residents for Rural Heritage have teamed up with Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance to continue the fight. The two groups will meet Thursday, April 3rd at 6:30 p.m. at the Senior Citizens Center, 655 Landa Street in New Braunfels.

The Comal Residents for Rural Heritage generated 800 signatures over the past few months on a petition soliciting county-wide opposition to Holcim Inc., which is planning a quarry south of route 1863, north of 482 and west of Loop 337. The petition states: "As residents of Comal County, we oppose Holcim Inc.'s attempt to build a new quarry here and urge all state and federal officials to reject it. We believe all permits should be denied and ask for a public hearing for each permit. We are concerned about threats to water quality, and believe another gaping hole over the Edwards aquifer so close to Cemex poses a threat to aquifer recharge. We also believe the presence of the endangered golden cheeked warbler should be taken into consideration. The destruction of this songbird's habitat to dig another quarry robs the Hill Country of the character that makes the area desirable. We believe that another quarry would adversely affect our quality of life. As Texans, we do not want our private property rights violated by more blasting, dust, dangerous trucks, and traffic. There are already two quarries close to the newly proposed quarry and that is enough."

"Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance sees the potential for this quarry to damage our water quality and water quantity," said Annalisa Peace, the Alliance's executive director. "And Holcim does not have the best track record when it comes to pollution," citing reports of large fines for pollution at their Midlothian, Texas, plant.

These fines and other penalties applied to Holcim, a European Company, are detailed on a new web site, www.nomoreblasting.com. The web site notes that Holcim was cited by the Texas Air Control Board for emitting excess sulfur dioxide in Midlothian, Texas, and fined \$135,000. When the problem worsened, Holcim was fined an additional \$233,000. Investigators found that Holcim had falsified emissions reports.

Presently there are two quarries operating near the site. A third one, says the organization's web site, will bring "more blasting, more dirty trucks, more dust, more pollution, more traffic and lower property values."

Charles Hair, who signed the petition, said, "I am sick and tired of having these filthy operations turn public roads into dirty, dust covered, publicly subsidized private driveways for their businesses. We, the taxpayers, bought and paid for these roads, and now many such as 482 are almost useless for public travel. Environmental damage is evident to the most untrained eye while driving through areas surrounding quarries and plants. A flight over the area reveals an even more telling picture." Hair added, "Anyone happy with the presence of operations such as Holcim and Cemex should be required to live within a mile downwind of their favorite plant."

The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance (GEAA) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote effective broad based advocacy for protection and preservation for aquifer protection throughout the twenty-one county Edwards region. To achieve this mission, The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance unites 42 member organizations in support of a comprehensive plan to protect and preserve the Edwards Aquifer, its springs, watersheds, and the Texas Hill Country.

For more information about the Aquifer Alliance visit our web-site at www.AquiferAlliance.org.

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