

4. QUARRYING ACTIVITY

General Manager responsible:	General Manager Peter Mitchell, DDI 941-8549
Officer responsible:	Inspections & Enforcement Manager
Author:	Julie Burgess & Richard Purdon (Environment Canterbury)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To provide the Board with a report on quarrying issues in the vicinity of Miners Road.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

2. Not required

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee receive the information.

BACKGROUND ON 137 MINERS ROAD & QUARRYING ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY

3. In June 2006 the Yaldhurst Rural Residents Association raised concerns about a contracting activity operating without resource consent from 137 Miners Road. The situation was investigated and an abatement notice issued imposing a number of conditions on the company concerned and requiring them to cease further activity, pending the outcome of their resource consent application.
4. Environment Canterbury also took enforcement action by way of an abatement notice, as they too had issues with the non-consenting activity at 137 Miners Road and we worked closely with them to resolve the matter.
5. The resource consent application was withdrawn late November because the company making the application had gone into liquidation.
6. New abatement notices were issued to 137 Miners Road in early December, in light of the fact that the site was to be sold, those notices required any new owner to restore the site to as close as practicable, it's natural state.
7. Ongoing monitoring of 137 Miners Road has been maintained and at the date of writing this report we have been advised that the new owner (through his solicitor) has taken over the abatement notice and has undertaken to apply to the Council for consent on his proposed activities. Monitoring to date has determined there are no non-compliance issues in relation to current activity at 137 Miners Road.
8. Two meetings were held with the Yaldhurst Rural Residents Association, the first at their behest, the second arranged by the Council to update the residents on what action was being taken and/or being considered.
9. In parallel with that process and in conjunction with Environment Canterbury the Enforcement Team undertook to investigate issues related to quarrying activity in the Christchurch area.
10. That investigation revealed there were issues around extraction, backfilling and stockpiling of materials (clean fill and hard fill), on numbers of the quarry sites.
11. Letters have now been sent to nine quarrying sites requesting that they self-audit and self-rectify any non-consenting activity by the end of June 2007 with a further three sites still to be contacted. Some of the sites have already undertaken surveys. In some instances a resource consent will be required to enable them to rectify some of the issues identified. Regular ongoing monitoring will continue until compliance is achieved. Should compliance not be achieved by the end of June 2007, consideration will then be given to what, if any, enforcement action will be taken against any site found to still be in breach.
12. The Yaldhurst Rural Residents Association has been provided with an update on the steps that are being taken in relation to the Council management of the quarrying activity.

GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION – RICHARD PURDON, ENVIRONMENT CANTERBURY

13. All recorded groundwater quality data for hard fills in the Recharge Zone has been assessed by an Environment Canterbury groundwater scientist; he concluded there is evidence to suggest the hard fills have raised aesthetic parameters (e.g. hardness), but other than the faecal coliform counts, there is no evidence to date indicating health parameters are being exceeded and threatening drinking water quality. He has concluded that because the faecal values are relatively low and vary greatly, the hard fills are not seen as the most probable source. More likely sources include seepage, animal faeces, and sampling error. It is for this reason no additional sampling, other than that required by the resource consents, has been carried out.
14. I have also been working with the Christchurch City Council Monitoring team in regard to the filling of quarries to 1m above highest groundwater to fulfil our desire to protect groundwater and meet City Plan requirements, this is progressing well. All quarries have made some movement towards this and some are well on the way to achieving it. Continued vigilance is required and we may well consider joint enforcement action if compliance is not achieved.
15. Constant checking of the depth of quarry excavations in the future will also be required by regulatory officers to ensure excavations do not go below the 1m above highest groundwater when groundwater levels are lower.