



Neighbor John Tyler on a property bordering the butte, which has been logged prior to starting gravel mining

Saving the Butte

A strip mine is starting up in the middle of a small town

Parvin Butte, or what's left of it, sits in the middle of the small town of Dexter, just 20 miles southeast of Eugene out Highway 58. About a year ago, neighbors noticed activity on the tree-covered butte that is surrounded by homes, but according to Dexter resident and butte neighbor Kim Metzler, the neighbors thought it was a logging operation. And it was. Or part of it was. To the neighbors' dismay, their scenic Parvin Butte has been slated to be turned into a gravel pit and the process was already under way.

Though Lost Creek Rock Products has a logging permit from the Oregon Department of Forestry and a mining permit from the Oregon Department of Geology and Minerals, Parvin Butte has yet to go through the Lane County site review process that would allow the public to have a say on the mining operations before the trucks, noise and dust begin, but neighbors say they have already seen illegal gravel mining going on at the site, and have video footage to back up these allegations. The videos show McDougal Bros. trucks leaving the Parvin Butte site and taking and dumping the gravel at another site, also populated with McDougal Bros. trucks.

McDougal Bros. is listed as a member of Lost Creek with the Oregon Corporations Division. Greg Demers' name shows up on the rock test that Lost Creek has on its website. The McDougals and Demers are also partners in Willamette Water Company, a quasi-municipal water source that is looking to dramatically increase its water right on the McKenzie. Parvin Butte was once, but is no longer, listed for sale on the Oregon Land Company website, which features many of the thousands of acres of natural resource and development lands owned by the McDougals and Demers.

The rock test done for Demers' ATR Land, LLC by Steve Wilder of Professional Service Industries of Springfield,

says Parvin Butte has "some of the best rock I have seen." The Lost Creek Rock website says it has jetty rock, rip rap and crushed rock and features images of massive moss-covered boulders as well as smaller 3/4 inch rock. The land is zoned for a quarry, but it has been dormant for over 50 years says neighbor Arlen Markus.

The neighbors of Parvin Butte, the Dexter-Lost Valley Community Association, have united through their efforts to save the butte and prevent the onslaught of water, dust, noise and traffic issues that having a mine so close to their homes will bring. There are at least 353 homes within a 2,000-yard radius of Parvin Butte according to the research of neighbor John Tyler. This radius includes the rural community of Dexter and the post office. All of these neighbors could be impacted by the future dynamiting and blasting that is associated with gravel mining, Metzler says.

The neighbors have formed "Save Parvin Butte" and have hired attorney Daniel Stotter, who says "McDougal

Lost Creek Rock Products displays a boulder on Parvin Butte



Bros. seems to be flaunting the law and intentionally." Neighbors have alleged before that the site was being mined without the appropriate permit from Lane County, but the county has "never caught them with their hands in the cookie jar." Metzler says the videos have been submitted to county compliance officer Jane Burgess.

"They're calling it forestry, and it looks like gravel mining," says Stotter.

The company has put in for a permit to build a concrete bridge across Lost Creek to the Parvin Butte site. Neighbors like Markus worry that the proposed bridge could lead to flooding and debris build-up in an area historically prone to it. They are challenging the bridge based on the flooding concerns as well as possible threats to endangered species-listed salmon and western pond turtles, Stotter says. The creek is part of the last remaining habitat for spring Chinook in the Middle Fork basin, according to the Middle Fork Watershed Council.

Markus attended a hearing on the bridge issue on Nov. 10 and says Kim Odea, attorney for the gravel mine, claimed the bridge was for forestry purposes. When contacted for comment on Parvin Butte, Odea's fellow attorney on the issue, Bill Kloos, responded "We are not authorized to discuss this with EW."

Markus says 40 people attended the hearing and "no one spoke in favor of the applicant" except attorney Odea. Markus says since logging has already occurred on the site, it's not clear to him what "forestry" is left to do that would need the bridge.

'They're calling it forestry, and it looks like gravel mining.'

– Attorney Dan Stotter

The logging itself caused friction with the neighbors when Lost Creek Rock Products clearcut the area, right up to the neighbors' yards. The DOGAMI mining permit calls for a 200-foot buffer between the mining operations and the property line and permit boundary, but under the forestry permit no buffer was needed, as long as the trees are replanted. As a result some neighbors who once had scenic views of the butte and its wildlife, now have a view of clearcut and a mining operation.

When the site review begins it will address the possible adverse impacts of the proposed quarry mining operation to the surrounding community, and whether this mining operation would be compatible with the existing uses in the area, and there will be an opportunity for public input.

The Save Parvin Butte effort is fundraising to help pay for legal fees. The group has held rummage and bake sales and has made T-shirts. Metzler says the only silver lining to the mine is that "it brought the community together." For more information or to buy a T-shirt, go to www.saveparvinbutte.org

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