

Haywood County “Toeprints”

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Vol. #1 Issue #25 (Subject: * **SPECIAL EDITION** * Quarry Update.)

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What’s Happening?

This is a **SPECIAL EDITION** of Toeprints...

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform Haywood County Taxpayers of what transpires at the bi-monthly County Commission Meetings. This newsletter will be written from the perspective of a casual observer, myself. Any opinions expressed will be mine.

Quarry Update.

I was minding my own business Wednesday afternoon, November 17th, when Todd Quigg, President of Harrison Construction Company called me about 1pm. He asked if I was interested in getting a tour of the quarry. Sure, that would be a treat, I said.

As it turns out, the real reason for the invitation was to get an update on what was happening at the quarry regarding remediation of the slide that occurred almost two years ago.

Some Background.

A landslide occurred on March 12th, 2009. In an e-mail from Jim Simons, head of DENR:

From: Simons, Jim
Sent: Tuesday, May 18, 2010 11:23 AM
Subject: RE: FW: Permit by Harrison Construction (Allens Creek Quarry)

“...However the schedule for public hearing should have no relation to the delays of holding the public hearing Harrison Construction was authorized to do a limited amount of land disturbing activity within the next area because the company was directed by the Federal Mine Safety and Health (MSHA) to stabilize the upper end of the slide area. **Because they are a Federal agency and because safety to humans is involved, their directive overrides the Mining Act.** Our last inspection of the Harrison Waynesville Quarry indicated that the company appeared to be staying within the MSHA directive...”

So you see, Harrison Construction Company is compelled by the genius, Dai Choi, the civil engineer with the US Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration, to make the slide safe, which overrides DENR’s directives.

Dai Choi dictated at the time that Harrison Construction Company repair the slide from the top down, rather from the bottom up. If Harrison Construction Company employees touched a rock in the slide area, they would be thrown in jail.

Harrison Construction Company applied for a Permit Application to expand the land area above the slide. That

met with community resistance over the summer and culminated with a Public Hearing held by DENR at the old County Courthouse. Since then, DENR has requested additional information from Harrison Construction Company, and Harrison Construction Company has 180 days to comply.

Fast forward to now...

Harrison Construction Company is in the process of completing information requested by DENR. If DENR requests additional information beyond what has been asked, Harrison Construction Company will have an additional 180 days to respond. This could go on for years.

In the meanwhile, the slide has blocked a significant percentage of the stone required for making gravel in the quarry. (See the outline of the slide in the aerial photo below.) In order to access the stone, the slide has to be cleared. Harrison Construction Company is currently in the process of clearing the land above the slide to start attacking and clearing it from above and behind.



Aerial Photo of Quarry taken 6/2/2010

The good news and the bad news.

Work has progressed since this picture was taken. The slide remains untouched (otherwise people would be going to jail), but the land on the ridge above the slide has been removed, flattened, and now extends into the 100 foot buffer zone on what was the far side of the original ridge. The part of the ridge directly above the starting peak of the slide is going to drop about 100 feet. That’s the bad news.

The good news is that the part of the ridge continuing above where you see the work being done is not going to be affected, too much.

Before entering the quarry, Todd Quigg drove in the neighborhood at the base of the quarry on the east side, looking west. He indicated where the ridge was going to drop about 100 feet, and explained people would not be able to view the inside of the quarry from that vantage point.

Todd Quigg then drove me up to the top of where the work was being done. It had rained a couple of days before, and the dirt road was slippery and muddy. On the way up, I noticed what looked like erosion, a “V” cut, at the top point of the slide. He indicated that was an intentional cut in the land to allow water in the working area to run off into the quarry.

At the top, he indicated the first line of a bench. A bench is the recommended treatment for the side of a quarry to prevent slides. Todd Quigg indicated: “All proposed safety benches, as designed and modeled are a minimum 30 feet to allow access by machinery to clear any debris that may fall onto the bench. And the lift will be 50 feet, what you saw was the first pass at our first safety bench. That bench will be 50’ in height when complete, then 30’ of safety bench, then 50’ drop again.”

[Editors Note: It was explained that there has been an evolution in benches in quarries. At the original rock crusher (described later), the walls of the quarry were sheer cliffs. Later benches were 10 feet, dropping about 40 feet, no slope. Current benches are deeper, with slope between benches.)]

There was evidence of solid rock at the first bench at the top, which is a good thing. That means that it is not all dirt. He indicated significant seismology measurements have been taken in the area down and behind the original slide, enough I guess that it is worthwhile to attack the slide from above. It appears, after a summers worth of analysis, that attacking the slide from above is the only reasonable and economical way to fix it.

I saw the cut made in the ridge at the peak of the slide to channel rain water down the slide into the quarry. Additionally, there was a high dirt wall in the 100 foot buffer zone which prevented any rainwater going down the hill into the Gunters and Rogers property on the Lickstone Road side.

As we drove back down (slid down the hill in his red pick up truck), I noticed numerous settling (sediment) ponds for run off water to accumulate. I lost count how many there were. One had something I had not seen before - a large white hose suspended in open air above one of these sediment ponds. It was explained that when the water fills the pond, the theory is that the most sediment goes to the bottom, and the cleanest water remains at the top. The hose then syphons off the top water and channels that down the hill.

To complete the tour, we drove past the primary rock crusher (originally purchased when Harrison bought the property), and a truck was loading stones in the hopper. There were two conveyor belts removing stone. One went all the way to the end, and the other carried stone to a second crusher. This had a water washing system, and the crusher was capable of

crushing three grades of stone, in three separate piles.

At the end, we each had questions for each other. Todd Quigg was completely forthcoming with any question I asked.

Why did I get the invitation?

As I looked over the work being done at clearing the land behind the top of the slide, I thought Harrison must be violating every DENR rule in the book. They are going into the permitted area which has not been granted yet, dropping the ridge, etc., etc., etc... But this is all under the auspicious of MSHA. On the other hand, they are complying with all DENR’s questions, working with McGill Associations who are doing the design of the construction, and what would appear to be in compliance (to the untrained eye) if DENR were administering control. **[Editors Note:** McGill is the engineering company the County Commissioners use to contract work for the land fills].

Todd Quigg extended an offer to Michael Rogers and the Gunters to take the same tour offered to me, so that they could get an idea and perspective of the work that was going on.

I believe it is Todd Quigg’s desire to make the effort to inform the community of what is happening before things happen, rather than have the community find out after it is done. I think Harrison Construction Company was ill prepared to deal with the initial reaction of the community when the permit application notices were delivered to the adjacent homeowners. Todd Quigg indicated: “The reason for this catching us off guard was the recent (2008) permit modification that involved 130 +/- acres that was not an issue with the community and the slide and subsequent 13 acre permit modification were totally unplanned for.” It’s always better to be forthright and let everyone know what is going to happen, rather than get a surprise.

Additionally, seismologists hired by Harrison have been checking at various homes adjacent to the quarry to monitor blasting events.

Some trees are expected to be planted in December and the coming months. Additionally, a new fence has been installed on the Lickstone Road side of the ridge, a request Hanna Parrot made at the DENR Public Hearing.

Any questions local folks have can be initially answered by Michael Rogers or the Gunters.

[Editors Note: I requested that Todd Quigg review this **SPECIAL EDITION** of Toeprints so that my facts were straight. He added two comments to clarify and correct my original. Otherwise, he was good with it.]

Monroe A. Miller Jr.,
Haywood County Taxpayer
19 Big Spruce Lane
Waynesville, NC 28786
www.haywoodtp.net