

Decision delayed on quarry's habitat proposal

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The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors postponed Tuesday a decision on whether county-protected open space can be used to mitigate for natural habitat damage caused by a recently approved rock quarry off Roblar Road west of Cotati.

A current proposal calls for quarry owner John Barella to re-create habitat for the endangered California tiger salamander and red-legged frog on dairy pasture adjacent to the quarry. That pasture is protected by a taxpayer-funded conservation easement held by the county's open space district.

Use of the property for mitigation could require more than 100 acres of the pasture land and include the creation of artificial wetlands. But it is not clear whether that use would be consistent with the open space district's policy and the easement it holds on the dairy land.

The district's citizens advisory committee unanimously disapproved of the use last month. Bill Keene, the district's manager said the mitigation could be legal if the easement is amended and owners of the protected property agree to the change.

Supervisors said they need more time and feedback from state resource agencies to make the decision.

The issue is set to return to the board Dec. 7.

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