Dutra Materials Haystack Landing Asphalt Project: FAQs

Q: Will the plant operate 24 hours per day, 7 days per week?

No. Normal operating hours for the plant will be 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and will only operate at night or on the weekends when required to do so by Caltrans, County or municipal projects that require nighttime or weekend deliveries.

Q: Will toxic diesel fumes, PAHs or "blue smoke" be released by the plant and threaten the health of visitors to Schollenberger Park including children on educational field trips, seniors and residents in the area?

No. As part of the environmental review, Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) conducted a Health Risk Screening Analysis for this project and found that emissions posed no significant risk, even to the residents who live just across the rail line adjacent to the facility, and even assuming that they lived there for 70 years. BAAQMD will conduct further evaluations in permitting the new facility. Obtaining and maintaining BAAQMD permits for all operations is a Condition of Approval for the project.
The new plant will be state-of-the-art, providing clean and efficient operations, and will be fully contained from the point where aggregate is loaded into the hoppers for asphalt production until the loaded trucks leave the facility. Air from these contained areas will be processed through two filtering systems before being released to the atmosphere.
The Astec fiber bed system to be installed was specifically developed to control "Blue Smoke". These systems have been installed at numerous asphalt facilities in California and elsewhere, and have been determined to meet the Best Available Control Technology (BACT) standards required by state and federal environmental regulatory agencies.

Q: Will the trucks enter or leave the plant using Petaluma city streets?

No. Trucks will not travel on city streets. Trucks entering or leaving the plant will use Highway 101 and the freeway off-ramp portion of Petaluma Boulevard South. Immediate access to Highway 101 and continued barge access on the Petaluma River were among the primary advantages of this site, and will reduce noise, traffic and emissions compared to other sites.

Q: Will the smell of asphalt be carried by prevailing winds from the plant to downtown Petaluma, Shollenberger Park, SMART trains or Highway 101 commuters?

No. The new plant will be state-of-the-art, providing clean and efficient operations, and will be fully contained from the point where aggregate is loaded into the hoppers for asphalt production until the loaded trucks leave the facility. Air from these contained areas will be processed through two filtering systems before being released to the atmosphere.
Additionally, the potential for odors will be evaluated by BAAQMD in permitting the new facility. Obtaining and maintaining BAAQMD permits for all operations is a Condition of Approval for the project, and these permits will provide further restrictions on odors and emissions.

Q: Will the location of the moored barge and tug at the river frontage obstruct the Petaluma River and pose a navigation safety hazard in the river for boaters or other barge operations?

No. When the barge is moored, the outer edge will leave more than 100 feet of navigable channel width in the Petaluma River. Barges delivering materials for the facility will be operated and moored in full compliance with the requirements of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Coast Guard for operating in the federal channel. The Army Corps of Engineers reviewed the barge off-loading facility as part of the EIR for the project.
The Conditions of Approval also limit the number of barges that deliver material to Haystack Landing to125 per year. When present, on the average of twice per week, the barge will be at the site to unload aggregate for four hours.

Q: Will the barging operations interfere with rowing teams or the Annual Wine Country Classic Regatta?

No. The Conditions of Approval for the project specifically require Dutra Materials to meet annually with the North Bay Rowing Club to ensure that barge operations do not conflict with this annual club event. Barges are already used on the Petaluma River to deliver materials to the Shamrock and Jericho facilities upriver from Haystack Landing, and barges have been delivering materials to Dutra Materials former asphalt plant, located upriver for more than 20 years.

Q: Will the removal of 20,000 gallons of water from the Petaluma River daily for dust suppression impact the fish and wildlife in the river? Will the salt in the water degrade the asphalt product?

No. The average water usage will be approximately 10,000 gallons per day and only during the seasonal months when dry conditions require watering for dust suppression. Water used for dust control will be extracted from a tidal watercourse on the Haystack Landing property subject to Conditions of Approval that protect the river's ecology, prohibit pumping at low tide and require an intake design that minimizes agitation and entrainment of sediments. Due to the location of the site, Dutra Materials has a legal right to use this water. Salt does not impact the performance of asphalt. Most sand and aggregate used for Bay Area roads comes directly from the Bay.

Q: Will the noise from the asphalt plant, recycling operations or fire station drive out the egrets and herons or wildlife in the area?

No. The egret and heron colony and other wildlife were studied as part of the EIR. Clear evidence exists that the bird populations have adapted to the industrial surroundings of the site, which includes Shamrock immediately to the north and Highway 101 immediately to the west, and that they use three different tree nesting areas.
Furthermore, operations creating noise are restricted by the Conditions of Approval. Asphalt production is restricted to 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays, except when required by Caltrans or other public works projects that require delivery of asphalt at other than normal business hours, and recycling is restricted to 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. As noted above, sound walls and stockpiles will be constructed and maintained to reduce noise.

Q: Several community members traveled with Dutra employees to see the All American Asphalt plant in Southern California as an example of a plant with equipment similar to what is planned for the Haystack Landing plant. Some of these community members reported that asphalt odors and "blue smoke" emissions were visible and a strong odor present just outside the load-out facility in the plant. Is this what will happen at the Haystack Landing asphalt plant?

No. There are significant differences between the two plants and operations.
The plant in Southern California is much larger (2-3 times) than the Haystack proposal and the plant is 12 years old. Many advances in control technology have occurred in the last 12 years and are included in the Haystack Plant. On the day of the site visit, the Southern California plant was manufacturing rubberized asphalt and the doors to the load out garage were not closed, allowing fumes to escape. Rubberized asphalt will be less than 10% of the total annual production at Haystack. Proper management of the process eliminates the smell associated with rubberized asphalt. In addition, Dutra will not manufacture rubberized asphalt if the load-out facility is not in proper working order.

Q: Why does Petaluma need an asphalt plant?

Asphalt must be delivered hot, shortly after it is produced in order to spread it, roll it, and for the asphalt to properly bond and cure for pavement. Asphalt is a heavy material. Trucking asphalt longer distances increases costs and environmental impacts—including greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion. (See Greenhouse Gas emissions below) It is therefore important to have a local source of asphalt for projects such as the recently-approved Caltrans Marin-Sonoma Narrows project for widening Highway 101, as well as County and municipal public works projects.
The Petaluma area has had an asphalt plant for more than 20 years. Dutra Materials operated an asphalt plant at their former quarry site on the west side of Highway 101 and for the last three years at a temporary plant and barging offloading facility across the Petaluma River from the Sheraton Hotel. Dutra has operated these facilities in compliance with local agency and Bay Area Air Quality Management District permit requirements and as a good neighbor to residential, commercial and other industrial users.
The new plant at Haystack Landing will enable Dutra Materials to continue serving the needs of southern Sonoma County by replacing the older asphalt, aggregate distribution and barge offloading facilities with state-of-the-art, efficient operations that reduce environmental impacts and enhance esthetics.
Over 80% of the aggregate and asphalt that leaves the Dutra Materials plant will be used for publicly funded road and infrastructure projects either for the County of Sonoma, the City of Petaluma, Caltrans or other government agencies. Sonoma and Marin voters overwhelmingly supported sales tax measures in November 2008 to support funding of significant highway and local road projects. The cost to truck asphalt from other communities would add an additional $5 – 6 per ton to the cost of road construction if Petaluma did not have a local asphalt plant. The Petaluma area uses approximately 500,000 tons of aggregate every year which means taxpayers would have to pay an additional $2.5 million or more per year in additional trucking costs without the Dutra plant.

Q: What is the impact on Greenhouse Gas emissions with the plant or without the plant?

The majority of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions related to the project come from diesel emissions from trucks and barges. While the plant will generate GHG from truck and barge operations, the impacts to air quality without the plant are significantly higher.

Having a local source of asphalt and aggregate in southern Sonoma County reduces GHG emissions by eliminating the need to truck aggregate and asphalt from Santa Rosa or Vallejo which keeps hundreds of trucks per day off of Highway 101 and Highway 116. Recycling of asphalt and concrete at the plant reduces the need for mining of natural resources and reduces GHG emissions by trucking of new materials. The barging operations to the Dutra plant will reduce traffic and GHG emissions by removing over 80 trucks per day—which equates to over 21,000 trucks per year otherwise needed to deliver material to the project—from Highway 101.

Consider the following example by Steve Geney, President of North Bay Construction- local Petaluma construction company, experts in road construction in Sonoma County.

If Caltrans needed 100,000 tons of asphalt for the Highway 101 widening project between Petaluma and Novato, the following would be the GHG generated by the plant operations vs. without the plant requiring the trucking of material from Santa Rosa:

With Plant: 270,000 pounds of GHG

Petaluma Dutra Plant would produce 270,000 pounds of GHG from barge and truck operations

Without Plant: 2,000,000 pounds of GHG

Trucking aggregate from Vallejo to Santa Rosa and trucking asphalt from Santa Rosa to southern Sonoma County would produce 2,000,000 pounds of GHG

Q: What would be the additional cost to Petaluma taxpayers, the City of Petaluma, and the County of Sonoma without the plant?

The additional cost without the plant could be $2.5 million or more per year. The cost to truck asphalt from other communities would add $5 – 6 per ton to the cost of road construction. The Petaluma area uses approximately 500,000 tons of aggregate every year. 500,000 tons x $5 = $2.5 million more per year in additional trucking costs without the Dutra plant.