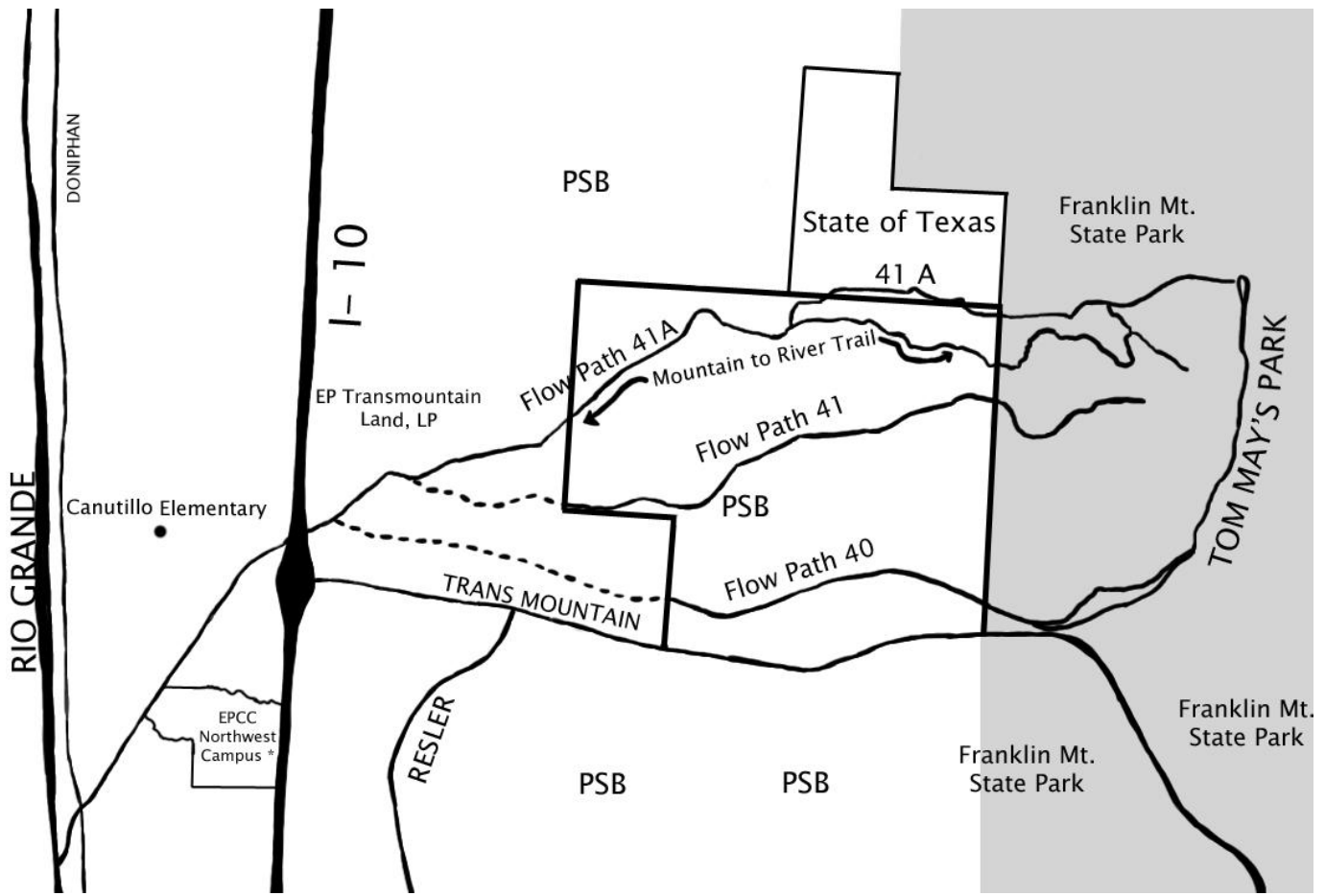


**Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition
Mountain to River Trail Petition Information**

“HEY, HEY, WHAT DO WE SAY? STAY AWAY FROM 41A !

The Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition is leading efforts to prevent quarrying next to the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park just north of Transmountain Road and East of I-10. Jobe Materials of El Paso recently leased land owned by the People of the State of Texas and managed by the General Land Office. The land abuts the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park and includes a portion of Arroyo 41A, the last unobstructed arroyo connecting the Franklin Mountains to the Rio Grande. The City of El Paso’s Open Space Master Plan calls for a mountain to river trail using this same arroyo. Jobe has stated unequivocally that it intends to mine all 480 acres of this pristine land including 41A.



PLANNED QUARRY LOCATION ON STATE OF TEXAS PARCEL

* EPCC Northwest Campus: area includes El Paso Community College Northwest Campus, Jenna Welch/Laura Bush Community Library, Northwest Early College High School, Canutillo High School

Of 42 desert arroyos stretching from the Franklin Mountains to the Rio Grande, only one, 41A, is undeveloped. The El Paso City Council proudly declared in 2008 that Arroyo 41A is now part of the official “Mountain to River Trail” in the Open Space Master Plan. 41A can be seen from Upper Sunset Trail in Franklin Mountains State Park - - recently about 160 acres of it appeared surrounded by a rectangle bulldozed in the surface to mark the partial boundary of a new rock quarry. Take a look at the above map: look at that neat L-shaped parcel of land marked “State of Texas” which belongs to Texas citizens. Now imagine a huge, gaping moonscape of destruction obliterating that neat “L” and forever altering the face of our beloved mountain.

If your imagination fails you, just take a trip to any of the nine quarries in El Paso, the most dramatic being the massive, 750 acre McKelligon Canyon quarry, and view firsthand what “excavation” does. The first change is likely to occur after vegetation is removed. Wind-borne loose soil can cause breathing difficulty and poor visibility. Deeper excavation entails drilling and blasting rock, can shake even distant buildings, and causes fine particulate matter to be air-borne. Particulate matter in the Montana Vista neighborhood near a far East quarry caused widespread breathing problems for adults and children and lowered land values, according to an El Paso Times report from June 22, 2006. Further, the Mine Safety and Health Administration (2000) describes the dangers to mine workers themselves from fine particulate matter. It is worrisome that there are several schools in the fallout range of this proposed quarry at 41A.

Water quality and flow issues are also likely. Runoff from rain events naturally follows arroyos to the Rio Grande. However, if these conduits are blocked, as arroyo 41A may soon become, the water flow path is less predictable. Runoff will not only carry quarry waste, but it can become a destructive force, as in the heavy storms of August 2006, when widespread flooding damaged homes, businesses and roads (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, August 2006).

Clearly, the quarry would likely change the air and water quality and flow, but it may also dramatically alter the gateway to the city. From I-10 heading east toward El Paso, the quarry could mar the natural beauty of the Northern Chihuahuan Desert and prompt visitors to wonder about the city’s values and priorities.

A quarry would also impact wildlife. If the quarry is excavated, the attendant stresses on the deer population may drive them deeply into the park. Particle fallout could dust vegetation so that growth is hampered and food supply for deer and other plant eaters is diminished. The effects of a quarry could compound the difficulty wildlife have surviving in this increasingly urban setting. We have enough species of concern as is.

The Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition began in 1978 when concerned citizens organized after a developer began bulldozing in the north Franklins – an area that El Pasoans had long hoped would become a wilderness park. Less than a year after the area had been scarred by bulldozing, the Texas legislature passed, and the governor signed, a bill creating the Franklin Mountains State Park, now the largest urban park in the United States. The Coalition was at the center of the effort to create this beautiful park.

Once again bulldozers have scarred the area, torn up hiking and biking trails and threaten a major riparian corridor critical to the ecology, recreation and tourism of El Paso, Texas. The urgent question: what will citizens who live here; former El Pasoans and visitors who love it here; and elected officials, who vowed to promote El Paso’s best interests, do about this imminent ecological disaster?