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A cycling FORCE to be reckoned with

Megan Walchuk

Published on Jul 28, 2006

Cyclists from across the region, with the organizational support of FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment) are hoping to raise awareness about how a proposed quarry could affect them.

The Tour de FORCE, a 50 and 100 km bike rally, will be held Sunday, September 10, to give cyclists a way to express their concern over the proposed St. Mary's limestone quarry, which, if approved, would be built on the 11th Concession.

The area's tranquil beauty and low traffic volume have made it ideal terrain for road cyclists, who come from across the GTA to tour the area.

But many are concerned the peace may be broken if the quarry goes ahead. It's estimated that there could be 1100 trucks per day, or a truck every 30 seconds, claimed event organizer and avid cyclist, Darcie Pytel.

"Cyclists are vulnerable," she noted. "They're so big and we're so unprotected. Safety is a big concern."

"There's a delicate balance of road use from a cycling perspective," added co-organizer and Carlisle resident Gwen Todd. She feels dust could damage the air quality in the area for athletes. "You need good lungs to do these kinds of distances."

She's also concerned that the trucks will alter the traffic flow for the area's many commuters, and "take away the rural flavour. There will be trucks, noise and traffic."

According to John Moroz, vice president and general manager of CBM Concrete, the company fully intends to work with the community and road users - including cyclists - to reach a workable outcome. They plan to do a traffic study in the near future, to determine traffic use patterns in the area. "It's premature to be talking about number of trucks," he said.

In an effort to raise awareness about the quarry's possible impact on traffic flow, and bring the cycling community together, Pytel and Todd have teamed up to hold the event

They're hoping for a turnout of 200 to 300 cyclists, to cover their expenses. Although the goal of the event isn't to raise funds, the organization welcomes donations.

The ride will begin at Carlisle's Courtcliffe Park, and will travel past the proposed quarry site, along possible trucking routes. The day will wind up with a barbecue, courtesy of Harvey's Restaurant.

The pair is pleased with the level of corporate support the event has attracted. Several have stepped forward to offer raffle prizes and other services for the event. Several local massage therapists are donating their time and effort to keep the cyclists limber. More donations are welcome.

"This is more than just a Carlisle problem," said Pytel. "This is going to affect a lot of people from across the region."

To sign up for the Tour the FORCE, visit any bike shop in the area, including Bicycle Works in Waterdown.

You can also register online, at www.stopthequarry.ca. The deadline for registration is August 21, and the fee is \$25 per cyclist.

Megan Walchuk can be reached at mwalchuk@flamboroughreview.com



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