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Modern quarries different from what the general public may perceive

By Melanie Furlong Special Features Writer
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Aggregate, defined as materials such as sand, gravel and rock, or crushed stone, is an important element of road construction, building construction, landscaping and much more.

According to the department of natural resources, Nova Scotia's pits and quarries produced 6,931,074 metric tons of crushed stone and 3,913,303 metric tons of sand and gravel in 2006.

Peter Oram, president of the Nova Scotia Mining Association, says most materials used in road building are blasted from quarries and then crushed. Sand, gravel, and pea gravel are usually freely dug from pits.

"You want the rocks to be nice and angular so the asphalt or concrete can stick to them and compaction is easier to achieve," says Oram.

"You can picture pea gravel that's nice and rounded from pits, but when you make concrete and asphalt, it's not going to stick as well to that rounded surface."

Oram says that modern quarries are very different from what the public may perceive.

"Historical issues with quarries included noisiness, dust, and damage to domestic wells," says Oram, "but in a properly designed modern quarry you can address all those things."

Oram says it's important to note that the modern approach to quarry development and operation is very different.

New quarries are required to have specific set-back distances from homes as well as environmental monitoring for things such as water levels and water quality that are reported to Nova Scotia Environment.

"Before a quarry is developed there are environmental baseline surveys to complete to

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make sure no special features are being impacted," says Oram.

Previously, quarries were projects of the department of transportation, not contractors, and reclamation was not required.

People may still see abandoned quarries on the side of the road that weren't reclaimed properly, which leads to misconceptions about them.

"Afterwards, quarries are required to be reclaimed. You can fill them up as lakes, re-shape them or create recreational opportunities out of them. While they are being developed, the soil can be saved and used for reclamation later."

Today, more than 100 quarries are operating in Nova Scotia under guidelines administered through Nova Scotia Environment.



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