



7/27/2021

Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Conditional Use Request
Record Number 217-21-000436-PLNG

Crook County Planning Commission:

I have considered the Prineville valley home for over 15 years now, and while I have been away getting my degrees in Environmental Science and Biology that will be finished next fall. When my education is completed, I will be moving back to our family farm. In the meantime, I travel back to visit and keep tabs on the volcanic caldera I consider my home as often as I can.

As someone who has trained for years in Environmental Science and Biology, the state this mining issue has come to is an appalling mockery of our system of protections put in place to protect people from the very health concerns that have been presented by locals and the mining companies own admittance under required documentation for the exception and mining operations they have been granted. It should go without saying that open pit mining for sand and gravel are a hazard to our local health and quality of life. It cannot be overemphasized how many people do not want this project to go forward. We understand the risks open pit mining presents for dust, runoff, and infiltration, but I will reiterate them here for the record and to fill any gaps you might have as to what this is doing and will do over time to the people that are forced to deal with it.

To start, there is the issue of runoff. While we may be a known as the high desert, we still see rain. Due to the lack of vegetation and other things to hold soil in much of the high desert we see exceptional rates of runoff when the snow melts or the rain comes. The mine is a place with specifications fit for maximizing the runoff of pollutants. This runoff's avenue of flow is into adjacent canals which drain towards the Crooked River. Anything that is in that mine, is going into people's fields, and then the Crooked River which is already inundated with silts on a good day. For the many interested in fishing this is damaging to their catch. For those interested in the water use for watering crops. If something is in the mine and it makes it to your irrigation pipe it is going on to your crops.

When it comes to infiltration it should be noted that anything that is in that mine has the potential to become mobile and seep through the ground, flowing with the surface ground water. While clays can create near impermeable barriers to the aquifer and can greatly slow the flow of infiltration downward, but that does not stop the surface water table from flowing just as a river does towards the sea through more permeable soils at the surface. That infiltration will move towards the rivers through the soil, and it will drag any mobile minerals along with it. This will mean that anything toxic in the mine passes just as the runoff does through multiple farms where children play and animals drink. This runoff and infiltration will be joined by windblown dust.

The windblown pollutants such as the dust blown from digging, transit of materials away from the site, and the large mounds of gravel and sand they have at their pit mine will impact people miles away. Atmospheric circulation isn't as simple as moving a particle from one acre to the next. It travels for miles. This mine will impact not only people who can see it but also those that do not even know it exists. Dust will be blown onto anything occupying the lands around it. This includes local gardens, pastures, hay and crop fields. Even if you wash this dust off the crops can uptake the dust pollutants along with anything from runoff and

infiltration through their roots as they grow and accumulate them in their tissues. If you then eat the vegetable in your garden, those accumulated toxins are now inside you. If your cows eat it, it concentrates further within them before being passed on to you or your customers in even greater quantities than the cow receives. Bioaccumulation such as this is why there are recommended stopping points at which you should cease eating seafood due to the potentials of mercury poisoning. We pride ourselves on our cattle. The valley lives and breathes off the production of hay and movement of healthy cattle to market. People expect more from us, and the pride I see our vast herd of cattle ranchers take in their work tells me they expect just as high a quality of beef as I do.

In response to remediation. The owners of the mine have agreed to remediation of the surrounding lands, but their remediation areas have simply become zones overgrown with invasive grasses, and planted with non-native trees. As someone who has trained in Environmental Science what I have seen is basically the bare minimum executed so poorly it fails to meet proposed standards. Its really hard to fail at this measure and is why it is so often happily adopted by industrial and commercial operations. This one is supposed to be an easy bit of gardening, and fun for the whole company. They could not pull that off. A bar so low that even a limbo world champion would fail to go under it. It is abysmally depressing to drive past. I cannot imagine living across from it.

Finally, open pit mining is simply unpleasant, and no one wants to live in proximity to a mine. It should not be near housing of which there is a great deal nearby. The simple fact of the matter is your constituents don't want a mine in their back yards. They purchased farmland in the hopes of living some semblance of the American dream. They wanted to live peaceful lives, living off the land and raising families. We don't want to see or hear a mining operation, but we are forced to. The industrial land could be used for any number of supplementary farming production practices as it was intended to be. The new zone they want to move into is farmland that will forever be changed if you mess with the layering of the soil to such a depth. You will forever change how water moves through that area. We have raised our voices in opposition time and again and been dismissed. Those at home during the day have to see and hear it as it has become an unavoidable part of the background ambient noise that was not there when I was young and came to love this valley as my home. The mine owners and operators can leave at the end of the day, but the local farm and home owners simply have to deal with the sight and on occasion the sounds of it. It is something we get to deal with every day. Every day we are reminded that no one wished to listen to our complaints the first time.

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