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Crook County
Community Development

08.11.2021

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

Crook County Planning Commission:

I have owned my Prineville Farm about 20 years. I supplement farming as an international management consultant, working with companies such as, Shell, Suncor, Newmont, Hess, and Chevron. Relevant specialties include subsurface data management, economic analysis, and the land lease process.

The goal of the resource companies is to locate low cost resources that can be extracted for profit. To get landowners and planning commissions to approve the permitting and leasing processes operators limit information to ensure approval.

The landowners and permitting agencies are given incentives and assurance (money, incentives, promises) by the operator, in exchange for approving the lease agreements/permits. Operators promise to return the land at the end of the lease for viable land use. This is where the problem lies. Transparency of current and future cost/benefit are not provided; because if they were known; then the permit application(s) would be rejected.

Extracting minerals from the North Valley to support mining will forever change the subsurface geophysical structure. The land structure, water flow, and the land use will be changed. The future value of the land (including all land in the valley) will be less than the total land lease payments to the landowners(s). Every farmer / gardener knows that the garden bed must have drainage to produce crops. With this type of mining the drainage is extracted. The cost to restore the land to support crop or livestock production livelihood will be cost prohibitive. Alternative land usage of any type is cost prohibitive.

Mining is a water intensive business that uses a lot of water and lowers water quality. It is false thinking to think the water is returned for reuse. Prineville has limited water, and the quantity of water is disappearing. Mining will speed up this process. The negative impact on water quality and quantity will impact everyone.

The oversight of mining operators is limited due to cost, staffing and ordinances. Oversight has been pushed to the adjacent landowners, which has not been working. This means little or no oversight has been provided or is planned. Agreements without oversight will lead to broken promises. The current permit has many compliance violations, expect this to continue.

The hydro designs and limited well monitoring the operator promised are a mask that will not provide viable risk mitigation, some of these activities, such as trenching, could have a worse impact to the land.

I urge the planning commission and the judge overseeing this permit to consider the full impact and stop this permit. All other scenarios are a win for the mining operator and loss for everyone else.

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