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Dan Harrell

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March 30, 2016

DIVISION OF RECLAMATION
MINING AND SAFETY

Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety
1313 Sherman Street, Room 215
Denver, Colorado 80203

Re: Transit Mix Concrete Company application for Reclamation Permit, Hitch Rack Ranch
Quarry (# M2016010)

Dear Madam or Sir;

I am writing to express my opposition to the referenced quarry permit application. I live in the Piñons of Turkey Cañon Ranch, just south of the proposed Hitch Rack Ranch Quarry operation.

The implementation of yet ANOTHER quarry represents a threat to home values, the safety of the residents and wildlife in the area, and most of all the very reason that my family has chosen to make Colorado our home. It would simply burden an already burdened community even further as it relates to its water supply, wildlife preservation, community safety, and home appreciation. **Our community is prepared to use whatever means are at our disposal to block such an expansion which exposes our community to a variety of health and financial risks and is clearly in violation with the policies set forth by local commissioners who established policy to attract families like ours to this natural setting.**

I, along with all my neighbors within the Piñons, am opposed to bringing yet another large-scale aggregate mining operation to our community, in addition to the three quarries already in service along a five mile stretch of Highway 115.

Water Supply. All residents along the Highway 115 corridor depend on ground water for their domestic water supply and the proposed quarry operations are likely to impact the water table in such a way as to create risks to these wells on which we depend.

Wildlife. It is not acceptable to take the word of the applicant on their assessment of the wildlife impact caused by quarry operations. An independent and objective wildlife study needs to be completed. The proposed mining plan does not appear to provide an adequate buffer to protect the use of intermittent stream corridors by the species in the area.

Noise and Air Contamination. Quarrying requires drilling and blasting with explosives, which create vibrations, noise, and dust. Once this process is completed, rock crushing machines crush the rock, conveyor belt machines move the rock around the processing plant; trucks are loaded and unloaded. The process and heavy machinery required to mine, is intrusive and creates significant noise and air pollution; thus having a direct impact on the surrounding areas and community. Air quality is compromised and diminished by the fugitive dust associated with aggregate mining. Dust generated by mining often contains silica, a common naturally occurring crystal found in most rock beds. Prolonged exposure to silica may result in silicosis. According to the Centers for Disease Control, “silicosis is a disabling, nonreversible and sometimes fatal lung disease caused by over exposure to respirable crystalline silica. Over exposure to dust that contains microscopic particles of crystalline silica can cause scar tissue to form in the lungs, which reduces the lung’s ability to extract oxygen from the air we breathe.” In addition to silicosis, inhalation of crystalline silica particles has been associated with other diseases, such as bronchitis and tuberculosis. This is a health issue for the abutting and nearby residential home owners and their livestock.

Existing Quarries. There are currently three quarries operating within a five mile stretch along Highway 115, the nearest less than three miles from the proposed Hitch Rack Ranch Quarry site. The quarry operators report they are currently operating at roughly half their capacity. When questioned why such low production, the response is “insufficient demand”. This calls into question the need for yet another quarry on the backs of the already burdened local residents.

Proximity to Local Residents. There are more than 140 properties within two miles of the proposed quarry site, some as close as 1200 feet and with direct line-of-sight to the quarry operations. The vast majority, if not all, of these property owners are vehemently opposed to the applicant’s quarry plans. The policies incorporated in the El Paso County Southwestern Highway 115 Comprehensive Plan (see below) state *“any resource extraction operation should be located a minimum of two miles distant from any dissenting residents”*. There are health and financial consequences to not adhering to these policies.

Comprehensive Development Plan. This application for permit is in clear violation of the current Southwestern (Highway 115) Comprehensive Plan. This is a plan commissioned and adopted by the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners for the Highway 115 area. This comprehensive plan foresaw the potential for future demands for mineral resource extraction in the area, and adopted specific policies to address it. The Hitch Rack Ranch Quarry application is in specific violation of the following policies in this plan:

1. The entire burden of proof for demonstrating the existence of extractable mineral resources should lie with the applicant. Designation of potentially extractable mineral resources in the Master Plan for the Extraction of Commercial Mineral Deposits should in no way be seen as a justification or an implied right for mining.
2. Resource extraction operations in general are not supported in the planning area. However, the presence of existing operations is recognized, and if future conditions dictate the necessity for additional supplies of aggregate, the expansion of existing operations is preferred over new quarries.
3. At no time during their operations should resource extraction affect the quantity, quality, or dependability of residents’ existing water supplies or result in the diversion of existing water supplies. The full burden of proof for assuring this will lie with the applicant.
4. Access from Highway 115 to any resource extraction operation should not affect the quality of the existing access to area residents.

5. Unless it can be demonstrated that topography will shield existing residents from visual, noise, and dust impacts, all resource extraction operations should be located a minimum of two miles distant from any dissenting residents.
6. Wildlife and wildlife protection routes should be protected through the development of a wildlife overlay zone, addressing the need for protecting critical habitat areas.
7. Development should not be allowed in riparian areas, both because the hazard of flooding and because of their exceptionally high wildlife values. Any drainage improvements undertaken in the area should be treated in the most natural way possible to minimize any impacts on riparian areas.
8. The specific area of Aiken Canyon is identified as a unique and significant biological resource of state-wide significance that should continue to be preserved. Preservation is not compatible with most public access, and management should maximize wildlife and scientific values.

No Alternatives. My family in close proximity to the proposed quarry have no other alternatives but the status quo. We have but one source of water, the community well. We have but one route of ingress and egress to our property, Little Turkey Creek Road. We have but one transportation corridor into and out of the community, Highway 115. Even routine operations of a Hitch Rack Ranch Quarry will have a significant impact on our community. For example, blasting operations, which Transit Mix proposes to conduct two or three times each week, will require closing Little Turkey Creek Road, precluding the owners and residents of 43 lots from leaving or returning to their properties. More severe occurrences run the risk of closing the only highway and/or effectively sealing off access to properties in the area.

While we understand the importance of aggregate to a growing Colorado Springs community, we feel our unique community is already sufficiently burdened with three quarries operating in our midst, not to mention the constant training activities of our Fort Carson neighbors. We accept our current state of affairs. Bringing another large-scale quarry operation to our community is completely unacceptable and in conflict with the policies that were put in place to attract us to this location. Rest assured that any consequences of moving forward with this operation will be met with an appropriate response.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,



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The Piñons of Turkey Cañon Ranch

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