

STATE OF
COLORADO

Ebert - DNR, Jared <jared.ebert@state.co.us>

Proposed Knox Pit and Gravel Operation in Laporte, CO

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To: jared.ebert@state.co.us

Dear Mr. Ebert,

I am writing you in regards to the proposed Loveland Ready Mix (LRM) gravel mining and batch plant operation in Laporte, CO, also known as the Knox Pit. I am aware that the public comment period for this decision closed yesterday, but feel compelled to contact you to add my voice to the chorus of people in this area who are vehemently against this proposal.

I am a resident of Laporte, along with my partner Erin and our 9 month-old son Cooper. We are deeply concerned about the impacts that this operation would have on our economic wellbeing, health, and the quality of life in our town. I will attempt to keep my comments brief and focused on the specific issues that trouble me most about this, but I want to emphasize that this project as a *whole* would be fundamentally damaging to my family and my town on many fronts. My comments below are just scratching the surface of this project's problems. I urge you to carefully consider the issues below, and reflect upon the many people who would be harmed by the approval of this project.

Quality of Life

I object to this project because it would disrupt and degrade the town of Laporte. Our community is one of a rapidly dwindling number on the Front Range that is not hemmed in on all sides by development, supports a diverse and vibrant mix of people of various economic statuses, and has retained its small town character. Please look carefully at the proposed project site -- it is practically in the center of our town and would transform what is currently scenic open space into a heavy industrial site. There is no feasible scenario in which this would not degrade our quality of life. The noise, dust, heavy truck traffic, lights, and exhaust pollution would be immensely disruptive. We would certainly not have purchased our current home had this operation been ongoing at the time we were searching for a house.

Home and Property Values

I urge you to seriously consider the impact of this project on area home values. The study commissioned by LRM regarding this issue concludes that gravel mining operations would not impact home values. This is a preposterous conclusion that both contradicts other studies on home values near industrial sites, and violates basic common sense. It is patently obvious that property values are sensitive to area conditions, and there is no plausible scenario in which a major industrial operation at this site will not decrease the value of our homes. No reasonable person would pay the same amount for a house next to a gravel mine as the same house next to a field. LRM's profits from this operation would be coming directly out of the pockets of thousands of people. In a very real sense they would be stealing from us.

Environmental Damages

The environmental risks of this project are significant. I am a biologist with a M.S. in Biology and Statistics and am not ignorant of these issues. Chief among my concerns are impacts to air and water quality.

Air pollution from this site would occur as both particulate dust and exhaust generated during mining and batch plant operations. Air quality on the Front Range is a growing problem. The addition of a large source of airborne pollution would only magnify this problem in the area surrounding the gravel operation. The Laporte area is dominated by elderly people and families with young children -- this is one of my favorite things about living here. The elementary and middle school (roughly 1/2 mile from the proposed mine site) is a backbone of our community. But critically, both the young the elderly are particularly vulnerable to health impacts from air pollution. The idea that keeping my son inside would be *good* for his health is outright appalling to me. Both of my next-door neighbors are elderly women. Neither have air conditioning and use outside air to cool their homes in the summer. LRM's will profit at the greatest expense of the respiratory health of people like my neighbors and my son: the old, the young, the ill, the most vulnerable members of our community. That's wrong, plain and simple.

This proposed site is within the historical floodplain of the Cache la Poudre River and would exchange large amounts of water with the river via groundwater flows. The Poudre is critically important to the environment of Laporte, Ft. Collins, and the downstream watershed, and consequently, the benefits from any development that might negatively impact the Poudre should have to be *enormous*. The benefits from this project are far from satisfying this benchmark. Further, the effects of this operation on the area's groundwater regimes, including salinization and changing water table levels, would be an additional burden, particularly for nearby well users, irrigators, and holders of water rights connected to the Little Cache la Poudre Ditch network.

Impacts to Local Businesses

Finally, the impacts to local businesses need to be appreciated. I have spent the past several weeks contacting local businesses regarding their opinions about this proposal. Their responses dramatically undermine the primary argument for approving this project: that it would bring economic benefit. Certainly, LRM would profit from this project. However, there are dozens of businesses in Laporte and the surrounding area that stand to lose revenue and customers if this is approved. Worse, several businesses are existentially threatened.

For example, Tapestry House, a historic wedding venue and restaurant which has been in this community for many years and directly overlooks the proposed mine site, could easily go out of business because of this project. The key attractant of Tapestry House is its natural, scenic setting -- which directly overlooks the proposed mine site. I would encourage you to imagine a wedding next to an active gravel mine, the wedding officiant struggling to make himself heard over the rock crusher. Another example (and there are many more) is Me Oh My coffee shop, which has long served as a central social hub of our town. Much of this shop's business is derived from visitors to Laporte who come by bicycle. The owner of this business expressed major concern that the gravel operation would dramatically reduce the appeal of Laporte, particularly as a bicycle destination, and consequently eliminate a large swath of their customers. Another example is Native Hill Farm. This organic farm has been drastically impacted by the mere proposal of this gravel operation. Native Hill was forced to abruptly cancel an expansion of their business, which required years of preparation and would have dramatically benefited our community, simply due to the *possibility* of the gravel operation beginning near their property. The costs to this popular, important local business have already been enormous.

The above are just three examples of businesses that would be directly harmed by the degradation of the local environment resulting from this proposal. From speaking to the owners and managers of many businesses in Laporte, I know the the examples I've given are just a few among many that oppose this gravel operation. Many businesses are already contingency planning for anticipated losses caused by the gravel operation. Considering this, I believe it is fundamentally incorrect to argue that this project would bring economic benefit to Laporte.

I appreciate your time and consideration of my viewpoint. Please know that the opinions I've voiced are shared by many people in this community. This proposal is deeply flawed and the permit for this gravel mining operation should not be granted.

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