



Southwestern 115 Fire Protection District letter of OBJECTION to application M2017-049

1 message

Hart Wright <chief115vfd@gmail.com>
To: amy.eschberger@state.co.us

Thu, Dec 21, 2017 at 11:28 AM

Mrs. Eschberger, please file the enclosed letter as an OBJECTION to the proposed quarry at the historic hitch rack ranch application no M2017-049.

Thank you, Chief Hart Wright



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Southwestern Highway 115 Fire Protection District

15580 Cala Rojo Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80926

(719) 538-4787 Email - swhwy115vfd@gmail.com

December 18, 2017

Ms. Amy Eschberger
Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety
1313 Sherman St., Denver, CO 80203

Re: Application No. M-2017-049, Quarry on Hitch Rack Ranch, El Paso County.

Round two and from the fire districts stand point, nothing has changed. Applicant's Poor location choice forces the fire district to object to this application.

As Fire Chief for the Southwestern Highway 115 Fire Protection District, it is my sworn duty to protect the citizens of our district. In my 16 years with this fire department, I have seen many different hazards. One of my jobs is to identify and mitigate as many hazards as possible before they become a threat to life or property. This proposed project has many potential hazards forcing the district to voice our objection to this proposed permit; some must be addressed at the state level, and some will need to be addressed at the county level.

The Safety of our residents is our primary concern. The fire district must have access to the 36 properties which are located above the quarry. This need for access is not optional; we must be able to access these properties without delay 24/7. Even with the new downsizing of this second application, the proposed operation will shut down the only road access to these properties, In Transit Mix's own words, "without notice, whenever they see a need, at any time of the day, for a minimum of 1 hour up to 24 hours" for blasting. To make matters worse, Transit Mix has **Zero** say when the road will be reopened, that decision is solely at the discretion of the Master Blaster on site. This is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. If this application were to be permitted you would be denying the existing residents access to basic fire and emergency services. In a medical emergency, time is of the essence. There are approximately 8-10 full-time residents living above the proposed quarry site, of those approximately 90% are above the age of 50. This puts them in the highest risk category for suffering a potentially life threatening medical emergency. "The Golden Hour" is not just a buzz word, time saves lives. The number of residents in the area increases dramatically in the summer months. There are no good alternatives for fire and emergency services access, due to the fact this entire area is in a canyon with only one way in. Typically we can mitigate time issues through the use of a medical helicopter; however, this may not be possible due to the quarry operation.

In a fire scenario, time is no less crucial. This entire area of the Front Range has been determined to be in the "extreme fire danger" category by the Colorado State Forest Service. This proposed site sits in the mouth of a very steep canyon making access difficult and the potential for fire spread significant. There are no good water sources for initial fire attack. Any fire in the area would become unmanageable by ground forces in a very short time. The Waldo Canyon Fire is a prime example of the type of fire potential in this entire area, the terrain and fuels here are worse.



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Another glaring hazard to anyone traveling this stretch of Highway 115 would be the impact on traffic. The quarry plans to install their road entrance on a blind curve which is considered one of the most dangerous curves located in our district. This entrance would cause the quarry to have hundreds of trucks a day turning left onto a two-lane highway with traffic traveling 60+MPH. These trucks weigh on average 40-50 tons when loaded to capacity, due to this they are unable to accelerate quickly or stop quickly. This will cause these trucks to impede the flow of traffic around this historically deadly corner. If we allow this traffic pattern to occur, we are certainly creating a recipe for disaster.

Due to the size and limited budget of the Southwestern Highway 115 Fire Protection District, the construction and operation of the proposed quarry could place a significant strain on our ability to adequately provide fire and emergency services to the residents and visitors of our fire district. Although we are structured as a combination fire department we are predominately staffed by volunteers.

In closing, we ask that you please seriously consider our concerns as we are the authority having jurisdiction over fire and emergency services in this area. Without a doubt we must be able to access all areas of our fire district in order to provide professional and reliable emergency services. The fire danger in this particular area makes this operation potentially dangerous to the quarry and the surrounding properties.

I appreciate you taking the time to hear our concerns for this proposed project.

Professionally,

Hartmut Wright
Fire Chief
SW HWY 115 FPD
Cell: (719) 238-5236
Office: (719) 538-4787
chief115vfd@gmail.com