

Peter Hayes  
Department of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety  
1313 Sherman Street Room 215  
Denver, CO 80203

Subject: Permit #M2018016, Douglas Mountain Mine Project

July 2, 2018

Dear Mr. Hays,

I am a concerned citizen in opposition to the development of a strip mine operation in Clear Creek County. The proposed gravel pit is to be located next door to the tranquil and historic town of Empire - the gem of Clear Creek County. Here are some major points to consider:

### **1. Water**

- Only .01 per cent of all Earth's limited freshwater is found in rivers and other surface water bodies around the globe.
- Aggregate mining extracts everything required to sustain a healthy aquatic ecosystem necessary for good quality water. Trees, shrubs, all vegetation, the topsoil, substrate and all the small life forms that inhabit those areas are completely removed from the landscape.
- The water table on the plateau to be mined feeds a natural spring and wetlands on its eastern escarpment that will likely dry up as a result of the proposed mining operation.

### **2. Wildlife**

- Empire is home to the famous Georgetown herd of Bighorn Sheep. This herd is one of the largest Bighorn Sheep populations in the state and requires a large habitat with a range of elevations to avoid disease.
- The proposed mining development would destroy the only remaining natural plateau in Clear Creek County. This plateau is a natural habitat and migration corridor for elk, deer, moose, bear, and mountain lions - in addition to the famous Bighorn Sheep.
- Aggregate mining causes higher than average concentrations of Pb, As, Cu, Ni, Cd, Hg, Ag and Zr. These higher concentrations may have very negative effects on plants and animals in the area and cause diseases such as brain and kidney damage, lung irritation, cardiac abnormality and eventual death to plants and animals.
- Land erosion and silt from the proposed mine would potentially contaminate Clear Creek, disturbing fish habitat that has greatly improved in recent years.

### **3. Air Quality and Health**

- The Empire Valley is noted for high winds descending from the Continental Divide. A gravel mining operation will inevitably create massive, uncontrollable clouds of dust and unknown contaminants, risking respiratory issues for residents. Numerous studies have linked elevated particle levels in the air to increased hospital admissions, emergency room visits and premature deaths. Quotes from residents living near a gravel pit:

- ~ *"My daughter, who was a toddler at the time, would wake me up almost every night covered in blood from nosebleeds, which I believe were caused by the excessive dust coming from the pit."*
- ~ *"My children would wake up in the night crying "mommy, water, mommy, I can't breathe."*

- The **Easter Seals Rocky Mountain Village (est. 1951)** is directly east of the proposed mine and would be downwind on most days. The air pollutants will negatively affect the 1200 special needs campers who attend this camp every year. They have come here to enjoy the Rocky Mountains and the clean fresh air for nearly 70 years. Many have respiratory issues, and would no longer be able to attend the camp.

#### **4. Safety**

- With over 300 trucks operating in the mine, the resulting increased traffic along the I-70 and Hwy 6 corridors would greatly impact those already congested roadways.
- Significant increases in traffic not only causes more accidents, it also causes elevated stress levels and a significant decrease in the quality of life for those living in the congested area.

#### **A Possible Alternative**

The county has expressed interest in a fair purchase of the land for open space development. This would be a much preferable use of this land and beneficial to all the residents and wildlife of Clear Creek County.

**In conclusion**, I am among the majority of Clear Creek County residents who are adamantly opposed to this development. Aside from destroying the character of historic Empire, this proposed gravel pit would alter the quality of the ground water, destroy the nearby wetlands, devastate local wildlife, create massive clouds of unknown contaminants, and cause even more traffic problems along the most congested portion of I-70 on the gateway corridor to the Rocky Mountains.

We are hopeful that our government will listen to our concerns and weigh our community's needs and values, not just the special interests of a few people who want to exploit the environment and the community to line their pockets. There are alternatives (e.g., open space) that could meet the needs of all concerned. Thank you for your time.

Best regards,

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