



January 25, 2026

Lucas West
Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety
1313 Sherman Street, Suite 215
Denver, CO 80203
RE: Leadville Mill Permit Application
CJK Milling Company, LLC
M1990057

Dear Mr. West:

It is with a sense of disappointment and heightened frustration that I MUST once again address you and your colleagues at the DRMS in regard to strongly objecting to the most recent permit application filed by CJK Milling Company, LLC.

The bottom line still remains that despite CJK moving on from a process involving cyanide (for now anyway) to flotation extraction, the issues and concerns previously mentioned are still applicable and very much in play. Albeit, one could argue that certain issues may now leapfrog other issues in terms of importance. Thus, my objection will contain much of what I had wrote just under two years ago. However, we also now face an entity that after multiple attempts has apparently learned how to correctly fill out an application, along with said application limiting the time those who oppose it plans to object, and is clearly that much wiser in regard to obfuscating the truth.

As a resident, business owner, and one of the largest land owners in Lake County, I want to relay my deep concerns in regard to the CJK Milling Company application to reopen the Leadville Mill to process existing slag piles from around Lake County.

Candidly, I cannot believe that in 2026, when faced with the daunting challenges of the effects of climate change in general, along with the combined daily reminders of Lake County's continued health and natural resource challenges directly related to Leadville's mining history and activities of 140 years ago, that even the notion of the CJK plan is once again just simply an absolute "non-starter." The CJK plan is NOT environmental clean-up, it is a money grab, with virtually ZERO economic value for the local community, that takes advantage of the price of gold being approximately \$5,000.00 ounce that involves moving millions of tons of toxic mining waste from one part of town to another part of town to be processed and thereby creating a new source of waste. The simple reality is that after a half a century of planning, along with the efforts of the some of the most brilliant scientific and engineering minds in the world, and of course tens of millions of dollars, the sequelae of the past has already been cleaned-up. Approving the CJK application would simply be taking two

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steps back after taking one step forward from all the progress that has been made to date.

Are we really going to turn a blind eye to the damage of the past, directly related to mining activities, that has affected local health in the form of air pollution, toxic soil leaching along with ground water and watershed toxicity? How much money, time and other resources have already been spent to remediate these issues to then finally see the light at the end of the tunnel resulting in millions of dollars in annual tourism revenue spent by visitors enjoying blue skies, clean air and rivers that just 20 years ago could not sustain life, but now boast some of the best fishing in all of Colorado? How can the CJK plan, once again falsely obfuscated as hazardous waste removal, when it is clearly a money grab to benefit few yet spread the risk among many, even make sense in the world any longer?

Mr. West, in my career as a litigation consultant, I worked on the largest environmental toxic tort cases in the entire world. We are talking about cases involving multi-national corporations with market capitalizations in the Hundreds of Billions. In those experiences, I was privileged to be able to work with the leading experts in world in disciplines such as chemistry, ground water, air pollution, acid mine drainage, pollution remediation, storage, processing, etc., etc., etc. And please keep in mind, the corporations in these cases had and still have the means to hire the best minds in the world to design processes, operations and storage solutions second to none. But here's what I learned from my experiences working on those cases with these people.

1- Bought and paid for "subject experts" will say and do anything for money. And we're talking about people with degrees from the world's most respected and admired intellectual institutions.

2- Processing facilities NEVER work as designed or promised.

3- NO MATTER HOW WELL INTENDED OR BUILT OR FUNDED, **STORAGE FACILITIES ALWAYS FAIL**. They may not fail in our lifetimes, but they eventually WILL FAIL nonetheless. Thereby leaving your children or grand children to deal with an issue that could/should have been avoided to begin with.

I mention this, because with all due respect, you are considering an application from an entity that has been denied multiple times and might still be described by some as a "mom and pop operation". In my experience, even the largest, most experienced, most profitable, most powerful and most capitalized operations in the world can not guarantee what they promise when it comes to public health, safety, and the preservation of our natural resources.

Mr. West, due to confidentiality and legal issues, I cannot name names, but I once worked on a case where a \$100 Billion company built an "impenetrable" storage facility to only find out 55 years later, that Nine (9) Exxon Valdez tankers worth of

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toxic substances penetrated into the earth and ground water despite the "impenetrable" promise.

Oh and by the way, in all of the cases that I was involved in, "they" paid a lot of money to clean things up after the fact. But here's the sad truth Mr. West, and I'm guessing that you already know this, but you can never, ever truly clean any of it up 100%. The "stuff" or at least a portion of "the stuff" stays forever.

I will conclude my comments regarding the "science" and my experience in mining, biofuels, hydrocarbons, man-made synthetic chemicals by asking whether CJK has provided, submitted or even designed any type of potential remediation/waste management plan, or if the DRMS considers it OK for them to just up and leave when either their processing/storage plan fails or most likely when the price of precious metals drop to a point where their operations are no longer financially viable and they just "up and leave"? I suppose then that the community, keeping in mind that Lake County does not have the coffers of the likes of Eagle County, will be left holding the bag? God forbid whatever that "bag" may actually contain.

I bought the 223 acres with over 2 miles of pristine watershed, that now goes by the name of The Rolling J Ranch, in December of 2016. In addition, I just recently bought an additional adjacent 16 acres with almost another 300 yards of the Arkansas River that also underwent a river restoration effort costing me in excess of \$100,000.00. I mention this because I firmly believe in putting my money where my heart lies. I continue to strive to be part of the solution and not the problem.

(See <https://www.therollingj.com/>)

For what it's worth, my clients are of a demographic that adds value to the community by both sharing their experiences derived from the natural resources that fuel their fishing addictions, which in turns leads to a substantial amount of money spent locally on lodging, food, entertainment, gift shopping, etc. Of which they do because their life long memories from a day on the ranch is directly related to the quality of the natural resources that took us much too long to get right. Any future adulteration of our natural resources will end this windfall. Frankly, these now highly pristine natural resources bring more value and greater good to the community than this mining proposal ever will.

Allow me to direct you to a synopsis in the book, written by Gillian Klucas, "Leadville, The Struggle to Save An American Town." Here is a link for easy reference: <https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-55963-385-7>

Note, "A Place Where The River Ran Red..."

I think the how and why "the river ran red" is by now pretty self-explanatory. A failure in the CJK plan, despite its processing change, creates similar risks that cannot be glossed over.

I am certain that you (the DRMS) will soon receive other communications and objections related to this as well as other issues that involve the proposed CJK

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mining and milling plan/application. I expect such topics to include concerns regarding air pollution, traffic congestion, noise, quality of life, actual/measurable real (financial and/or intrinsic) value to the community, soil contamination, health hazards, tourism impacts, etc. Thus, I will not touch on these other subjects and their impacts, but will simply alert you to the realities of the concerns of the many, versus the greed of the few.

Mr. West, I think you may find yourself as well as your colleagues, faced with a decision on a precipice of potentially enormous consequences. Candidly, I admit that mining is not in and of itself illegal per se, but have we not learned anything from the failures of the past? The removal and transportation of old tailings exposing the core of their remnants to air and precipitation are potentially in and of themselves a certain environmental hazard, that conveniently CJK seems to not ever mention. Knowing what we know now, after a century of study and remediation, in regard to mining and the negative sequelae that follows, can we finally agree that this new plan should and must be an absolute "no go"? Can we agree that for the sake of Leadville, for the sake of Lake County and for the sake of the world, that this application be denied without any future consideration?

In conclusion, I'm asking you and your colleagues to be heroes for the future. To be champions for our community, your children, your grand children and the generation that follows. We have come too far to suddenly go backwards.

I understand that you continue to find yourself in a tough position. I trust that you and your team will do what is right and will make a decision that benefits the greater good.

With respect,

Brice W. Karsh
Owner, The Rolling J Ranch
Leadville, CO

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