

March 30, 2013

Mr. Wally Erickson
Division of Reclamation, Mining & Safety
691 County Road 233, Suite A-2
Durango, CO 81301

Re: Uncompahgre Pit
Permit File No. M-2013-007

RECEIVED
APR 01 2013
Durango Field Office
Division of Reclamation,
Mining and Safety

Dear Mr. Erickson:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the permit request for another large gravel pit along Hwy 550, south of Montrose. Rocky Mountain Aggregate and Construction, LLC is seeking to operate a 248-acre gravel-mining site, as well as producing asphalt and concrete. Entry to the gravel and asphalt operation will be via T Road, directly across Hwy 550 from the entrance to Rivers Edge at Southmont subdivision and near many other small subdivisions, individual homes and small businesses. While our concerns are many, the major ones are addressed below.

Highway 550 - Traffic:

Rocky Mountain Aggregate has told us there could be as many as 100 gravel trucks pulling out of T Road onto **2-lane** Hwy 550 on a daily basis. This number was for gravel trucks only and did not include asphalt trucks, concrete trucks, water trucks, diesel trucks, equipment trucks and/or employee and customer traffic.

- During an average off-season workday, Hwy 550 has a constant stream of traffic, both north and south. That traffic becomes heavy during the morning and evening commutes of people working in Telluride and other points south. Shuttles from Montrose to Telluride run several times each day. There are school bus stops and turnoffs along Hwy 550.
- Once tourist season begins, daytime traffic on Hwy 550 never stops. Added to normal traffic are campers, motor homes, motorcycles and other recreational equipment. Tourist season would coincide with the peak production cycle of the Uncompahgre Pit. The combination of heavy truck traffic and frustrated drivers would be a disaster waiting to happen.

Highway 550 – Our Scenic Byway:

Two emphases adopted by Montrose County for economic development are (1)to promote tourism and attract new residents and (2)to improve public infrastructure.

- Hwy 550 is the main tourist corridor between Montrose, the mountains, and resort areas to our south. So far, that corridor includes two active gravel pits, car-repair shops, used vehicle sales, storage units, and a tire dump. Another gravel pit will neither impress visitors nor encourage people to stay.
- The city of Montrose is growing and the southern part of Montrose County is a prime location for people to live, play and shop. A huge, long-term gravel operation would be detrimental to this potential development opportunity.

Property Values and Quality of Life:

- According to a 2006 study by Diane Hite of Auburn University, all houses within a 3-mile radius of a gravel pit will lose from 4.9% to 30% of its value.* Most property in Montrose County has already lost value due to the recession. Those of us who would be living next door to the Uncompahgre Pit would never regain full value of our homes.
** Diane Hite's study methods have been used in many places and for all kinds of quarries, and the results are always the same – i.e., the closer the pit, the more value is lost.*
- Unlike the existing gravel pits nearby, the Uncompahgre Pit would be above and to the west of the Rivers Edge subdivision, as well as many smaller subdivisions and individual homes. With our typical westerly winds, the rock-crusher noise, truck noise, dust from digging, dust from trucks on a dirt road, stink of asphalt production and diesel smells of trucks and heavy equipment will drop on the entire area. *Dust-borne pollutants will invade our air, our homes, our irrigation ditches and our river.*
- Our neighbors in Rivers Edge range from young families with children to retirees. A Mormon church and a bed-and-breakfast border our subdivision at the corner of Hwy 550 and Uncompahgre Road. We enjoy a quiet existence along with deer, rabbits, marmots, foxes, geese, hawks, eagles, a myriad of small birds, and an occasional bear. Like ourselves, many of the retirees left other states to fulfill long-term dreams of living in the Montrose area. Our life savings are in our homes. A noisy, smelly, contaminated gravel/asphalt/concrete business in our backyard would totally destroy everything we have invested.
- The site of the proposed Uncompahgre Pit includes potential habitat for the Gunnison sage grouse. Is not this potential habitat to be preserved? The Uncompahgre Pit permit will span decades. Just because the sage grouse is not currently in the area, can you positively state that it would not make use of the potential habitat in the future?

The Montrose County Mission says the Commission will “..provide services that facilitate public health, welfare, safety and infrastructure to Montrose County citizens..” and the County Vision states the Commission will “..serve as a responsive body to citizen needs, quality of life and individual liberties”.

With the Mission and Vision in mind, please weigh the quality of life and safety of the many against the profit potential of a few - and help us reject the Uncompahgre Pit (M-2013-007) proposal.

Respectfully,



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