

April 20, 2013

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Durango Field Office
Division of Reclamation,
Mining and Safety

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

Re: Opposition to the Proposed Uncompahgre Pit (Permit File No. M-2013-007)

Dear Mr. Erikson:

The city of Montrose and Montrose County are largely supported by the tourist industry. The Uncompahgre Valley stretching south out of Montrose is by far the most scenic route in or out of our town. Highway 550 south, which connects the town of Montrose to the tourism reliant communities of Ridgway, Ouray, Silverton, Durango and Telluride, runs directly between the proposed Uncompahgre Pit (File No. M-2013-007) and the Uncompahgre River. This is one reason why our county's master plan does not designate this area for gravel extraction.

The valley south of Montrose is currently occupied by farms, both large and small, and residential acreages of varying sizes. The property between the proposed pit and the Uncompahgre River on both sides of Hwy 550 is filled with private residences. The mesa area north of the proposed pit, accessed by Solar Road, is subdivided and occupied as well as the area immediately to the south, which is accessed by Government Springs Road.

A massive industrial pursuit of this size seems wholly incompatible with the current land use in the valley as well as being contrary to the county's master plan. The proposed pit would virtually gut one of the small mesas which lie just above the valley floor between south end of the Uncompahgre Plateau, the Uncompahgre River, and the undeveloped areas just north of the Cimarron Ridge to the east. The gash it would cut, through this irreplaceable terrain and well-established migration corridor, would be over a mile long north to south and nearly a mile wide.

Anyone who lives south of town can attest to the amount of wildlife in the area. A simple count of the deer on the highway any given evening is a testament to the fact that the entire valley south of town is a very active wildlife corridor. Recently this particular section of the highway, which parallels the proposed pit, has imposed a lowered speed limit from 5pm to 7am from October 1st to June 1st for this very reason.

If you climb the dobie hills on the east side of the highway and look back west toward the property in question, it is impossible to deny what a travesty a pit of this magnitude would be for all the local inhabitants. It is simply not feasible to mitigate the grossly negative impacts this type of industrial land use will have on the surrounding area.

The devastation a pit of this size would wreak on this environmentally sensitive and wildlife rich area is irreclaimable. The proposed 105 year permit would allow Rocky Mountain Aggregate and Construction, LLC to inflict a wholly incompatible industry on a peaceful and beautiful valley where the current residents, both human and wild, live in relative harmony.

And in answer to a question a supporter of this proposed pit asked me lately:

Would I rather have a gravel pit for a neighbor or another subdivision?

Hands down .. I would much rather have another neighbor for a neighbor.

Thank you for taking the time and making the effort to consider all our comments.

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