

Follow the rules in dealing with mining application

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Bradford County Telegraph

The following opinion piece is by Kate Ellison and appeared in the [Bradford County Telegraph](#) on Thursday, July 19, 2018. Kate has been a consistent and faithful hard worker in opposing the Bradford and Union mine proposal and we commend her for her continued efforts.

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

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Kate Ellison

Dear Editor, It is a great idea to take a close look at the regulations we already have for mining in our Comprehensive Plan. It makes you realize HPS II is pushing a non-existent Preliminary category for its application to mine phosphate.

We do not have a two-step process for approving a mine permit. Instead, we consider permits after they have been scrutinized and approved by the relevant state and regional boards such as Fish and Wildlife, DEP, and our water district. Everyone expects these agencies to eventually rubber stamp the project.

Still, we MUST follow our own rules, and not let these would-be miners bully us. Their permit application is premature, and that is why it has been so challenging to develop a response. The terminology used in the mining process is revealing, namely "removing the overburden" in order to reach the ore they seek.

Everything life-sustaining gets labeled "overburden" and tossed aside. That is, the rich soil that water percolates through, the wildlife habitats, the wildlife itself, the unique vegetation. Calling topsoil, trees, and turtles by the sanitized term "overburden" allows greedy men all over the world to disregard the value there. And it provides decision makers cover from part of the destruction they are really causing when approving a mine.

The study done by Dennis Price for the non-profit, Our Santa Fe River, shows that behind the offensive terminology is clear evidence that the substance HPS II plans to return to the stripped-out land will be nothing like what was there before, especially in terms of water movement.

The existing land varies in how much water flows through it, about 1-40 feet of water per day. The processed sand and clay HPS II plans to produce will uniformly seep water at only one foot per day, according to the permit application. It is not

comparable to the existing soil they will be replacing.

It is only natural that County Commissioners would not know enough to evaluate this complex permit application. The county Comp Plan expects them to allow the state's scientists and technocrats to evaluate it first, and then decide what is best for us, based on the analysis they will have developed.

The proper course of action is to reject the current permit, and let all the state agencies complete their reviews of this proposed mine. Then, if approved, a permit application could be filed, already vetted and containing the scientific part of the information Commissioners need to evaluate it for Bradford County.

Don't let the bullies push us into a corner!

Kate Ellison

Melrose