

Manatee County Planning Commission Voted 5-1 to Recommend for Approval Mosaic Expansion

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The [Bradenton Herald](#) reported today Aug. 18 2016 that Mosaic mine gained initial approval from the county for expansion of their mining operation. 649 acres of wetlands would be destroyed. Additional approval is required from the county commissioners, who will vote on Sept. 15. Some say the county fears a lawsuit if permits are denied.

Mosaic Fertilizer, the world's largest phosphate mining company, recently agreed to pay nearly \$2 billion to settle a federal lawsuit over hazardous waste and to clean up operations at six

Florida sites and two in Louisiana.

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

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

Mosaic mine expansion proposal receives initial support

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Manatee

A proposal to begin mining the nearly 3,600-acre Mosaic Wingate East mine moved a step forward Thursday.

After presentations from officials and public comments, the Manatee County Planning Commission voted 5-1 to recommend for approval Mosaic Fertilizer LLC's rezoning request and Mining Master Plan. These recommendations of approval will go to the county commission for a final vote at 1:30 p.m. Sept. 15.

The day-long meeting Thursday dredged up contentious questions, ranging from the viability of rebuilt wetlands to why there was a need for a barrier in the clay-settling area near the Lake Manatee watershed.

"I think a lot more in-depth analysis needs to go into how to make this potentially work for everyone," said planning commission member Matt Bower, who cast the sole dissenting vote. "I still have reservations how this potentially impacts the

environment.”

Mosaic requested to rezone 3,595.99 acres of its property from agriculture to extraction, which when paired with the approval of its Master Mining Plan, would then allow for phosphorus mining. Bart Arrington, Mosaic’s mine permitting manager, said the company currently mines about 72,600 acres in Manatee County.

The company already mines on a portion of the land they want to rezone. This approval would allow Mosaic to mine and disturb 3,841 acres through Sept. 15, 2034, and reclaim that land, or restore it to a natural state, through 2042.

There are 1,041 acres of wetlands on the property, but according to Parks and Natural Resources only 649 acres of jurisdictional wetlands would be impacted. The county Comprehensive Plan only prohibits wetland impacts unless there is no practical alternative or when there is an overriding public interest. Joel Christian with Parks and Natural Resources said that if Mosaic chose not to disturb any wetlands, they would be losing 1,535 acres of mineable upland, which he said is not reasonable.

To offset the impacts, the fertilizer company said it will have two public benefit projects.

The first is a plan to donate \$2.5 million to Manatee Community Foundation to put it toward a wetland project in a certain area of the Myakka River watershed, which could include constructing their own wetlands or enhancing existing wetlands.

The second, through the Myakka River Headwaters Restoration Project, would restore and enhance 193 acres in the Myakka River watershed and is expected to result in a gain of 22.5 wetland UMAM credits, or how wetland functionality is quantified. In their presentation, Mosaic officials also proposed to construct

790 acres of wetlands with a targeted minimum UMAM score of 0.65, where 0.4 is low functionality and 0.8 is high functionality.

About 20 people were introduced in Mosaic's corner, from contracted environmental consultants to executives representing the fertilizer company, . Additional employees in gray Mosaic-emblem polos boosted their numbers.

In the other corner were citizens and representatives from the likes of Sierra Club and Center for Biological Diversity, clutching typed speeches with handwritten notes added as the meeting progressed.

In all, 14 citizens and stakeholders expressed their disdain for the mine, saying that biodiversity would be lost and that mining would pollute the land and poison citizens.

Debbie Mafera lives right across the street from Mosaic land, having built her dream home with her husband Ricky in 1992. She listed 32 effects of phosphate mining, ranging from stripping topsoil of nutrients to reducing property value, which she fears will happen to them.

"It's going to destroy the way of life for all the animals and our way of life and our investment ... for a few people to get their pockets lined," Ricky Mafera said.

County reporter Claire Aronson contributed to this report.

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