

Mosaic seeks revisions to approved phosphate mining plans

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Mosaic and the Manatee Board of County Commissioners are in the news once more. Read the original article in the [Sarasota Herald Tribune](#).

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

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

Mosaic seeks revisions to approved phosphate mining plans

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County Commission to vote on May 24 to determine whether requests are approved.

MANATEE COUNTY – Mosaic Fertilizer wants to amend plans for two phosphate mines in the Myakka-Duette area. The changes involve extending deadlines for the 3,028-acre Wingate Creek Mine and the continued use of clay settling areas at the 2,508-acre Southeast Tract.

In a series of 5-0 votes Monday, Manatee County's Planning Commission recommended the revisions to both master mining plans.

The company, which converts phosphate into an ingredient for fertilizer, will seek the County Commission's approval on May 24.

The changes partly involve transferring requirements in previous "developments of regional impact" approvals into Mosaic's master mine plans for the properties. In 2015, the state dismantled the DRI process of getting regional approvals of major developments that could have impacts across county lines.

“The DRI process is no longer in place,” Hugh McGuire, an attorney for Mosaic, told the planning board. He said Mosaic wants to move its “vested rights” from what has become an obsolete document under state law to its county-approved mining plan.

While doing so, the company also wants to make some revisions in those mining plans.

For the Wingate Creek Mine, Mosaic wants to extend the “termination date” for mining and trucking phosphate ore by 14 years to 2037 and have environmental restoration of the land done by 2042.

The Wingate Creek Mine dates back to 1975, when it was started by the former Beker Phosphate Corp.

For the Southeast Tract, where mining is completed, the company wants to use existing settling ponds for clay that is separated from the phosphate ore it extracts from its nearby Wingate East property.

In March 2017, the County Commission voted 5-2 to approve mining at the nearly 3,596-acre Wingate East tract flanking Duette Road. Commissioners Robin DiSabatino and Charles Smith dissented.

Michelle Tickles, Mosaic’s Wingate East project manager and senior mine permitting specialist, described the existing clay settling areas on the Southeast Tract as a “logical use of infrastructure already in place.”

Assistant County Attorney Bill Clague described the amendments to Mosaic’s mining plans as “housekeeping changes.”

“This is not a debate about whether we have the right to mine phosphate,” McGuire said.

During public comment, however, critics of the phosphate mining process expressed objections.

David Woodhouse, a hydrogeologist, told planning commissioners that phosphate mining by Mosaic could potentially pollute the watersheds of the Manatee River, Little Manatee River and Myakka River.

Garrett Ramy, a plaintiff in a lawsuit against Mosaic and the county over approval of Wingate East, expressed health concerns for himself and others who reside near that mine because of "exposure to radiation levels" that occur when radium is unearthed with phosphate ore.

"Phosphate mining has no benefit for our county," Ramy said. "... This is going to come home to roost with us someday."

The environmental group ManaSota-88 did not have a representative speak at the public hearing but submitted a letter expressing its objections to extensions of the mining, trucking and reclamation deadlines for the Wingate Creek mine.

The extensions come with "no environmental or public benefit," the organization stated.