

Public Comment at Public Hearing for PurFrac Non-Metallic Mining Ordinance
March 30, 2017

At the public hearing on the PurFrac non-metallic mining before the plan commission, I submitted a comment. I would like to resubmit that comment to the town board.

In addition, a comment from the prior public hearing was that high school graduates aspire to working in sand mine upon graduation. I have serious doubts about that statement as the probability of a long-term job has been demonstrated by the layoffs of the sand mines now in operation. Knowingly going into that type of job with an unpredictable future is not a goal of a high school graduate.

Silica sand mining is the beginning of a devastating industry for the citizens and environment. The fracking industry causes serious air pollution where one out of five people living within a mile of a frack mine has asthma. Children in Colorado living within a mile of a frack mine have a rare form of leukemia four times greater than any other population. Fracking destroys ground water with leaks of carcinogenic chemicals. Disposal of toxic fracking water has caused earthquakes in Oklahoma.

But this is where the damage starts-with silica sand mining. Our air contains silica sand that is above the average recorded in Eau Claire. Why do we have to live with silica sand in our air and why should we have more being added to the amount that is already there? All the assurances of a different way of mining will not lessen the increase of silica sand into the air. It is a given that the wind blows and silica sand as fine particles go into the air and are inhaled by humans and animals.

We are using ground water at an increasing rate and polluting the water that is left. No one can prove that polyacrylymide does not contaminate our water in the long term as we do not have an accurate account of the percentage that is being absorbed into the soil and leeching down to the ground water.

Additional truck traffic will disperse diesel fumes and silica sand along the truck route and affect the people living on that truck route.

We have a non-metallic mining ordinance in the Town of Cooks Valley. The ordinance is to regulate aspects of sand mining, but the ordinance does not protect the people from the effects of sand mining. There has to be a limit to what the other residents have to endure for the sake of profit.

The town board should consider the cumulative effects of an additional sand mine on the residents of the Town of Cooks Valley and recommend "no more sand mines".

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What do we know for sure is going to happen with another sand mine operation in the Town of Cooks Valley?

There is going to be a change in the landscape.

There will be the removal of trees that provide filtration of water, supply oxygen in the air, control erosion, aid in the recharge of groundwater, and shelter wildlife.

There will be piles of sand that release silica particles in the air.

There will be truck traffic spewing diesel fumes in the air and spreading silica particles along the truck route.

There will be light and noise pollution from the operation of the mine.

There will be another high capacity well drawing down precious ground water.

There will be blasting causing homes to shake and rock formations to split allowing sand, iron, and other materials to flow into residential wells.

There will be property devaluation.

These facts are known to result from sand mining and are known by the developers before they ask for a non-metallic mining permit.

Residents of the Town of Cooks Valley did not choose this type of environment to live in. They chose to live in a quiet rural area.

There are laws on the Wisconsin and National books dealing with anticipatory harm-private nuisance. There is a chapter dealing with unreasonable interference—where people have a right to be free of unreasonable interference to them and their property.

There needs to be a balance test where the rights of the people vs. the need for a sand mine.

There are more than 100 sand mines in Wisconsin with stockpiles to supply the need for sand. This is a boom/ bust industry that does not provide sustainable job opportunities.

The argument of “I can do what I want on my land” is only good if you are keeping what you do on your land. The products and by-products of a sand mine are not contained on the mine site but ripple throughout the community with damaging effects to health and environment.

We have a non-metallic mining ordinance in the Town of Cooks Valley. The ordinance is to regulate aspects of sand mining, but the ordinance does not protect the people from the effects of sand mining. There has to be a limit to what the other residents have to endure for the sake of profit. The price of one’s health, safety and welfare should not be determined by the market.

The plan commission should consider the cumulative effects of another sand mine on the residents of the Town of Cooks Valley and recommend “no more sand mines”.

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