

Jan. 25, 2017

Kyle Wendtland, Administrator
Department of Environmental Quality
Land Quality Division
200 West 17th Street
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Dear Mr. Wendtland,

I am writing to oppose the issuance of a permit for the RAMACO Brook Mine, proposed in the Tongue River valley, for a number of reasons. First and foremost, with a long history of underground mining, the area is pockmarked with old mine shafts and sink holes that make it geologically unstable, with active subsidence an everyday reality, along with sub-surface coal fires that have burned intermittently for years. Further disturbance of this ground would only exacerbate what is already a dangerous situation, threatening neighboring landowners' health and safety, livelihood and property rights. In addition, one of the landowners has opened up his land as a Game and Fish walk-in area for hunters and recreationists, meaning the public would also be at risk when using the area—if in fact they would still have or even want the public access with a coal mine next door.

As an outdoor recreationist, I use the Tongue River corridor for boating, birding, and hiking or skiing year-round, and the proposed mine would virtually put an end to these forms of recreation. Further, as an active member of the Sheridan Community Land Trust, I am aware that a tremendous amount of public and private funds and on-the-ground volunteer work went into cleaning up the banks of the Tongue to make it safer and more visually appealing to floaters from the Sheridan community and beyond. The proposed mine not only represents a completely incompatible use for this pristine area from the human standpoint, but it threatens a large number of nesting and migrating birds, including raptors and water fowl, and many other species of wildlife that occupy the Tongue River corridor.

I also use the Kleenburn recreation area east of Acme for hiking, especially during the off-season when the hills are accessible and snow-free. Again, coal mines are incompatible with outdoor pursuits, particularly with the presence of blasting and the constant tumult from heavy equipment, transport and haul trucks and other activities associated with industrial-scale mining. I would be surprised if outdoor recreation opportunities weren't stopped altogether because of the dangers of toxic exposure from blasting, coal dust "storms" and the like.

The Black Diamond Historic Mine Trail, designated in 2012 by the Sheridan Community Land Trust and Wyoming Historic Preservation Work Group, in conjunction with the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office and Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources, would be directly affected if not obliterated by the mine because of its location along State Hwy 345 between Acme and Ranchester.

As a social scientist with a background in social impact assessment, the proposed mine, for area landowners and neighbors, would result in a substantial loss of quality of life, both in terms of

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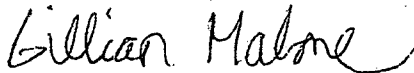
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everyday disturbances and in the long-term. In fact, some landowners have already begun experiencing social impacts, both in terms of the stresses and fears the proposal creates—from worries over water well drawdown and the effects of blasting and other mining activities on their health and safety and the structural integrity of their property—to the everyday reality of dealing with RAMACO. The company and its employees have proven themselves to be unresponsive in an emergency coal seam fire that threatened a house, have trespassed on private property when they could have easily obtained permission, and have failed to provide any assurance to neighboring landowners that lost water resources will be replaced or property damages repaired. The permit could and should be denied on these grounds alone.

Finally, the bond of less than \$400,000 is seriously inadequate to reclaim the mining operation should the operator fail or walk away, as is often the case in proposals such as the Brook Mine, which has a distinctly “boondoggle” feel about it. With two local—and so-far-solvent—companies already engaging in coal sales of the type RAMACO proposes (and another that tried to get into the market and ceased operations for lack of profitability), one has to wonder about the real motives underlying RAMACO’s proposal. *The bond must be sufficient for full reclamation and compensation for neighboring landowners.*

I am adamantly opposed to the issuance of a permit for the proposed Brook Mine, and request an informal hearing and to further elucidate my reasons. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Gillian Malone

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