

31 March 2021

Dear Plumas County Board of Supervisors:

Eastern Plumas Health Care’s Board of Directors are writing to voice our strong and unanimous opposition to the proposed Hat Creek Construction asphalt plant and mine site. Also, we oppose a scaled down version of the project, because a mine of any size this close to a residential area is unacceptable. And, it opens the door to the possibility that Hat Creek Construction may try to increase the scope of the project at a later date.

As outlined in our Mission Statement, we aim to “restore, preserve, and promote the health and well being of those we care for,” and we do this “in cooperation with our community.” At this time, the physical, mental, and emotional health of our patients, our staff, and our community is under threat by the proposed Hat Creek Project.

The significant risks to the health and well-being of the community we serve include air pollution, water pollution, noise, traffic congestion, mental health risks, financial risks, and more.

Air pollution:

The greater Portola area (including Portola, Iron Horse, Delleker, C-Road, Mohawk Vista, Plumas Eureka, Blairsden-Graeagle, Gold Mountain, Whitehawk, Clio, Johnsville, and portions of Lake Davis) has been unable to meet EPA air pollution standards for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) since 2016. The California Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District’s (NSAQMD) report on the mine’s impact concludes that the mine’s increased emissions will “make it impossible to demonstrate Attainment and negate years of work at great monetary expense that have been invested in cleaning up the air in and around Portola.”

Inhalation of small particles of silica that are produced by mining and grinding of rock cause the risk of a disease called silicosis. This causes permanent lung damage, and there is no cure for it. In addition, lime from the lime kiln causes skin and eye irritation, as well as gastrointestinal issues.

Also, the mine will at times be running 24/7, resulting in non-stop noise, which is extremely stressful on our community residents, especially those in close proximity to the mine. And, the dust, exhaust fumes, and traffic from the proposed 700 heavy truck trips that will be occurring at the mine on a daily basis will add to pollution and congestion in the area.

There are many homes, an elementary school, and our hospital (1.5 miles away), all of which are in close proximity to this mine, and it puts all of us at risk. Most at risk at EPHC are our elderly skilled nursing facility patients. We are usually their last home, and we take our job of protecting our vulnerable residents very seriously.



Water pollution:

Twenty residential properties border the mine, and most if not all get their water from wells. There is great likelihood that the 50,000 gallons per day the mine will require will lower the water table and will pollute the water. In addition, contaminated run off will flow into the Middle Fork of the Feather River, which is a federally designated Wild and Scenic River. Only 1% of the states waterways receive this designation, which is determined by their “free-flowing” nature, and that they “are unpolluted.” These rivers “possess extraordinary scenic, recreational, fishery, or wildlife values [and] shall be preserved in their free-flowing state, together with their immediate environments, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the state.” This mining project is likely to pollute the river through mine runoff and the leakage of hydrocarbons into the groundwater from mining.

Financial risks:

Studies of similar mining projects have shown marked health problems in residents as well as significant property devaluation [cf. Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League study]. In fact, local realtor Juli Thompson gave three recent examples of buyers who changed their minds when they heard of the nearby Hat Creek project. Property devaluation will have a direct effect on our hospital and our ability to offer the services our community needs. Special districts like ours are funded, in part, by property tax money. A significant decrease in property taxes could threaten the viability of our hospital.

The dangers to our hospital’s financial viability, the likely increase in complex health issues in our patients, the stress and anxiety caused by 24/7 noise and traffic congestion from the mine, and the risks to our groundwater and rivers all are essential reasons you, our Board of Supervisors, should oppose this project. Finally, at EPHC, we practice empathy. Ask yourselves this: if this mining project was next door to your home or your child’s or grandchild’s school, or near where your mother and father were living in a skilled nursing facility, would you support this mine? If your answer is no, please join us in opposing the Hat Creek mining project.

Sincerely,

Gail McGrath, Chairperson
Eastern Plumas Health Care’s Board of Directors