

Proposed mine for natural resource rich Norvell Township represents a significant threat to creating a viable future for our area

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Proposed for sections of Norvell Township that are near Watkins Lake State Park, Walter J. Hayes State Park, Wampler's, Mud, Round Lakes and the heart of the Irish Hills, the large-scale sand, gravel, and crushed stone (aggregate) mining operation that local government officials have been asked to approve represents a 'clear and present' threat to the environment and to the quality of life for those living in this freshwater resource inundated area.

The existence of hundreds of aggregate mines in Michigan have taught us that you cannot utilize heavy equipment to carve away the upper most layers of hundreds of acres of the earth's surface in order to access the aggregate that lies below without creating a multitude of problems whose harmful influences are likely to extend well beyond the physical confines of the mine. It does not take an in-depth analysis by a Ph. D level scientist or economist to soon realize that the disadvantages wrought by proceeding with such a disruptive project in this natural resource rich township far outweigh the advantages.

It is our hope that the local government officials responsible for deciding the status of this controversial project will consider the following questions:

Are local government officials and members of the surrounding community ready to accept the fact that by allowing the aggregate mine to move

forward we are promoting the permanent loss of the vibrant rural charm that makes this area so attractive to tens of thousands of visitors each year?

Are we ready to accept the fact that the noise, dirt, and very presence of the mine located near the southern border of Watkins Lake State Park and whose negative influences will extend to beyond Walter J.. Hayes State Park and to the surrounding area will likely result in the loss of the economic benefits that nearby businesses derive from visitors to these unique state parks each year?

Are we ready to accept the considerable noise and toxic diesel fumes caused by a day-after-day steady stream of large trucks that will be using narrow county roads in the area to transport aggregate to construction projects occurring throughout southern Michigan?

Does the surrounding community accept the fact that aggregate mining has been associated with significant increases in the amount of silica present in the air we breathe? Breathing air contaminated with silica has been associated with incurable diseases including lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and kidney disease.

Are we ready to accept the fact that aggregate mining has been associated with the degradation of the water quality of nearby lakes, streams, and wetlands by increasing the amount of phosphorus laden windblown dust that is present in the air?

Are we ready to accept the fact that aggregate mines of

the type and size proposed for Norvell Township have been associated with depleting and/or interfering with the vital flow of groundwater aquifers that serve as the sole source of freshwater for the homes and farms that exist in the area?

Are we ready to accept the fact that inland lakes situated close to aggregate mines in Michigan often undergo substantial water level declines due to the extraordinary volumes of groundwater utilized to extract and process sand, stone, and gravel?

Are we ready to accept the fact that the market value of homes and property in the area will decline by as much as 40% due to the quality-of-life degrading presence of the aggregate mine?

Will Norvell Township officials be willing to grant property tax reductions to residents whose homes and property are likely to experience significant devaluations due to the mine?

Are Norvell Township officials and/or the owner/operators of the mine ready to reimburse home and property owners in the area for the financial losses they will accrue due to the presence of the mine?

Have local government officials responsible for deciding whether the aggregate mine project will move forward thought about the fact that the wealth generated by the mine will benefit so few while the long-list of quality-of-life degrading disadvantages will be experienced by so many?

Do Norvell Township officials understand just how much our unique state parks and fresh-

water resources contribute to the local economy?

Our high-quality inland lakes and state parks represent powerful economic engines that will help sustain local communities well into the future! Have we considered just how lucky we are to reside in or near an area whose vibrant natural beauty continues to be defined by the existence of so many quality of life enhancing inland lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, woodlands, increasingly rare prairies, and groundwater aquifers as well the opportunity to observe a diverse array of wildlife in their natural habitat including bald eagles?

Let us all hope that those endowed with the authority to approve or decline the proposed aggregate mine will come to a decision that will help to preserve the peace, tranquility, and economic value of one of Michigan's prettiest areas!

