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Grant Pfeifer

Washington State Department of Ecology

PacWest published that they would be in the smelter construction phase by now. What were they told about the process by our governor and local elected officials? Why did they assume the process would be quick. Did they truly not understand the polluting nature of their proposed smelter? Whatever the answer is, I am concerned.

Pollution for the smelter could become part of our forest and human communities for years to come. In most cases we lack baseline studies documenting the current health of our people, air and water. Without these studies, how will the impact of the smelter be assessed five years, ten years, 25 years from now? Scientists will be interested to know the smelter's impact so they can provide advice for expansion of this smelter and for the construction of similar projects in the future. Our legal system will be interested in these pre-smelter studies when it is time to assess our governmental agencies' liabilities for allowing this polluting project to proceed. In addition, the peoples of Pend Oreille and Bonner counties take pride in our forests and communities. Understanding the current conditions of our area will enable us to provide accurate input to our elected officials when they are making decisions about the rezoning of the property proposed to be the site of the smelter.

The Health of Our People

Please compile and make public the appropriate health data of the people of Washington and Idaho who will be potentially impacted by the air and water pollution from the smelter. I understand that Health Impact studies are underway. I am asking for more than that. What is the current health of our people so that liabilities of deterioration can be determined? Washington state does have a responsibility to the people of Idaho in this regard.

The Health of Our Air

Please conduct the appropriate yearlong air quality studies requested by the Kalispel Tribe and others. I live in the city of Newport. From the wildfires of mid August through September, to the October, November, December pollution caused by forest slash burning, forest controlled burning, and home heating with wood, our late summer and fall pollution is exacerbated by the stagnant air which often settles here. Building a taller stack as suggested by PacWest will not remove their pollution from our community. I walked outside my door this beautiful fall day only to be greeted by the smell of the wood smoke of my neighbors. Some community members have stated that our air is clean, and they don't want it to be polluted. However, my experience has been that during some years our air is already polluted for 5 months of the year. Please conduct the air studies based on the Newport smelter site, not on modeling based on distant locations.

The Health of Our Water

Please include the baseline studies of our streams and lakes already available through the Department of Ecology, the Kalispel Tribe and the appropriate Idaho agencies. Conduct additional studies when data is missing. PacWest has indicated their pollution will not impact surface waters. Since that is impossible for me to believe. I would sure like to see the current data so that the impact of the smelter can be determined. As with air and health, the decisions made by Washington will be affecting Idaho. Our state would be quite negligent not considering the possible damage to Idaho waters.

I very much appreciate the process our Department of Ecology is conducting to gather public input.

Jan Wood
550 Quail Loop
Newport, Washington 99156
jwoodnewport@gmail.com
509-630-3962