

Milena Stoszek

When PacWest Silicon, LLC company asked WA DOE to evaluate their proposed silicon smelter, they identified themselves as a major polluter, proposing to emit in the air excessively large amounts of hazardous and toxic waste, and they are seeking permission from the WA DOE to do so. As the potential PacWest's neighbor, I feel threatened by the WA DOE action that seems to seriously consider a non-specific PacWest's proposal to permit creation of a hazardous and toxic waste dump in my family's yard and home, in the yards of all my neighbors, and on our public lands and sources of our drinking water. I'll state the problem with the permitting process for the PacWest's disposal of excessively large amounts, possibly up 377,000 tons/year (450,000 tons/year of raw materials minus 73,000 tons/year of sellable end product silicon) as follows:

If the PacWest produced in their plant thousands of tons of toxic waste solids, they could load their toxic waste up on a truck, drive it to the edge of my land, and dump it in my yard. I would then immediately call the sheriff, and after proper investigation PacWest leaders would go to prison. They would pay for immediate safe removal of their toxic waste heap from my yard, and they would pay for the dangerous spill cleanup to get my land detoxified. They would also pay for all damages I had, plus possibly punitive damages for endangering my family's health. Most likely they would also stay in jail for a period of time, and then after their release I would have a restraining order to keep them away from my property for good. That's how the law seems to work in our land. Or it should work like that. I make decisions about the use of my property, as long as I do no harm to my neighbors the public. I make those decisions, not the government.

Now consider the same PacWest company, producing the same tons of toxic waste, only this time their waste is cooked at very high temperature to get the pure sellable product out of the brew, and as a result that same toxic waste gets so hot that much of it melts and then evaporates and it becomes toxic gases, plus the part that didn't melt becomes a very fine dust particles PM10 and PM2.5 or less, that float dispersed in the gases. Dust so fine that it cannot be captured by any proposed filters. Instead of cooling it within the plant, and removing it to a safe toxic waste disposal place where it would do no harm to anyone, PacWest prefers to not worry about their toxic garbage. After all it's expensive to deal with the toxic garbage disposal, they know that, their own homeland told them not to try it there. So they just want to try it here, let their toxic garbage go away, puff and it disappears from their plant, have the wind take it wherever it happens to blow, and not to have to worry about that pesky problem of expensive toxic waste disposal.

As the wind blows, the PacWest's toxic waste, by now cooled and solidified again in liquid droplets and tiny dust, lands in my yard. Just like before, I call the sheriff. But this time I am told 'Tough luck lady, your yard now officially became a toxic waste dump, by the permission of our own WA DOE'. Department of Ecology. Environmental Protection, yes Protection of our Environment, my environment and yours. And so PacWest now can dump their toxic garbage in my yard all they want, I am told, for decades to come. And not only in my yard. All my neighbors' yards are now officially toxic waste dumps, as far as I can see and beyond. All my neighbors, more than one million of them within the nearest 50 mile radius from the smelter, they all have their yards turned into toxic waste dumps. And even my neighbors 100 miles away are not safe, not when the wind blows their way, it's going to bring toxic waste and dump it right in their yards too. Just remember that the dust from Sahara desert darkens the skies in Germany and in London 2,000 miles away, so what is just 100 or 200 miles for the PacWest's toxic wastes.

I hope I'll wake up from this bad dream. A nightmare really. How could one legal entity, one LLC legal person, usurp my rights, the rights of another person, and the rights of millions of other residents? Rights to the quiet and safe enjoyment of their own property, the right to pursue happiness in their own home, as clean and safe as when they purchased it? Who has a right to spoil that? Who has a right to give permission to sprinkle poison on other people's land, in people's water, on their food, even inside their homes? There is no moral right to permit such invasion. I doubt there is any legal right to permit such an assault either. No one has such right, not even our government. Our Government is, or should be, working for us the public. Our DOE, Ecology, was created by us the people, is being paid by us the people, to protect our environment from any and all harmful effects, to protect us the people, and it must work for the benefit of us the people. That is why we have trained experts in DOE, to make professional decisions to protect us and to protect our environment from harm, long term, for many centuries and for many generations to come. If they cannot or will not do that, they need to be replaced.

So here is my question, my request to the WA DOE:

Mr. Pfeifer, Why are you allowing this whole process to proceed? You can stop this agony right now. You can deny this permit. Why don't you do that? Mr. Pfeifer, deny this permit now!

Silicon smelter would never be allowed in Olympia or in Bellevue, not from the day one. And that permit would be denied for the very same reasons that we don't want to have that smelter here. We all have the same protection under the law. You have no tangible data from the company on toxic emissions to work with, none. How can you do environmental impact of unknown toxins? The only fact we both know is that a number of the silicon smelter pollutants are toxic in just parts per trillion. The only safe level is zero, and any amount emitted would be too much.

To target for this project a remote county with vulnerable population, with the lowest per family income in the state, with the population without technical education to fully grasp the enormity of impacts these toxins would have on the residents' health, but the people whose greatest majority fully understands that this project would ruin their lives and that they do not want this smelter in their midst, to target this region as the area of the least resistance for this pet political project is criminal. And to drag this process on for another year creates cruel and unusual punishment for thousands of local residents who oppose this project, who live perpetually in mental anguish, with sleepless nights and horrors of financial ruin and early toxic death for their families. Mr. Pfeifer, you heard them at the public scoping meetings, local residents, hundreds of them packed into the meeting halls, telling you to deny this permit, to stop this project. We do not need Olympia telling us how great this polluter would be for us; we are just fine the way we are now, and we want to give to our future great grandchildren our land and our lakes as clean and safe as they are now. We the people of this region do not want this smelter in our region. Mr. Pfeifer, do your job, deny this permit now.

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