

Nancy Foster Renk

I am writing to express my concerns about the proposal by the Canadian company, PacWest/HiTest Sands, Inc., to build a silicon smelter in Newport, Washington. Although the smelter would be located in Washington, most of the impacts would be felt downwind in Bonner County, Idaho. Therefore, I request that the Washington Department of Ecology include all of Bonner County in the scoping/EIS process. In addition, I ask that the State seek input from Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, the Idaho Transportation Department, the Bonner County Commissioners, and city officials from towns in the county during the entire scoping/EIS process.

Because neither the silica ore nor the coal fuel are found in the local area, all of these materials will have to be transported to the smelter site, either by railroad, trucks, or both. Bonner County and my home town of Sandpoint are already impacted by many open top coal trains coming through our communities. How many more trains can we expect? Which tracks will they use? What will be the impacts on our traffic (blocked railroad crossings) and health from coal dust? Who will pay for mitigation and/or spills?

If ore is to be trucked to the smelter, what route will be used? If trucks come south on US95 and use Highway 2 to get to Newport, they will pass right through the heart of Sandpoint on Fifth Avenue. What will be the impacts to our roads and bridges? How will this influx of large trucks affect the traffic situation in communities along the route? Who will pay for the increased wear and tear on our infrastructure?

If/when the smelter starts operations, I am greatly concerned about the impacts to our air quality. I have lived in Bonner County for nearly 50 years. We had to put up with suffocating smoke from grass field burning for many years, smoke that got so bad that a local woman died. While we no longer have to deal with field burning, we've seen smoke from wildfires increase during the summer months. The Sandpoint area gets inundated with smoke from surrounding states as well as Canadian provinces, so much smoke that the mountains disappear for weeks at a time. We are frequently advised to stay indoors, not popular advice during the beautiful summer. In addition, the smoke discourages tourists and the loss of their visits affects the local economy. How will additional pollution—year-round—affect our air quality? How will it impact our economy? How will this affect our health? Local doctors are concerned (see Bonner County Daily Bee, 23 October 2018).

Jayson Tymko, president of HiTest Sands' US operations, disputes the doctors' concerns and made the ridiculous statement that most of the smelter's emissions are carbon dioxide (a mere 320,000 tons/year of greenhouse gas!) and the rest would be no more than "what six boats on Priest Lake emit in an afternoon" (see above article in Daily Bee). In addition, he claimed that despite using coal for fuel, the plant will produce "zero coal ash." How stupid does he think we are? What other lies is the company telling? What other gases will be emitted that will cause acid rain? I remember well the devastation caused by the smelter in the Silver Valley, with vegetation wiped out for miles downwind of the smelter (between Kellogg and Wallace). As a forest owner who derives retirement income from logging, I am greatly concerned about the possibility of acid rain.

I strongly oppose the proposed PacWest/HiTest Sands smelter. I would like my comments made part of the hearing record.

Thank you.

Nancy Foster Renk