

Oct 26, 2018

Washington Department of Ecology  
PacWest Silicon Smelter EIS Scoping Comments

I was born in Newport 67 years ago, my parents having moved to Priest River in 1945. Our family still owns the home my parents purchased in town just six months after my birth.

My first solo trip driving our family car with my brand-new driver's license was from Priest River to Newport, and back again at 14 years old. The old bridge across the river was a little scary to some, but I loved it.

Bonner County and Pend Oreille County residents are practically related. The concerns of one community are the concerns of the other. The air in Newport is as much a part of the livelihood and health of Priest River as it is of Newport.

My family has been dramatically affected by pollution via the radioactive fallout from nuclear testing at Hanford and Nevada. Three of the four daughters in our family have been stricken with thyroid cancer. We are "downwinders".

Our cousins, who spent half of their childhood in Priest River and the remainder in Kellogg have known the misery of living in a community with a smelter. Recently, my mother's 84 year-old cousin told me that she wouldn't want anyone to have to live in an area with a smelter.

Like all of those who live in these communities, we love the Priest River and Newport area. It is home, and it is a refuge in this world of pollution and unrest. I've read that the Comprehensive Plans for each community describe the need to protect the rural nature of the area and the natural resources. Heavy, heavy industry such as a smelter is simply incompatible with such an area.

The greatest assets of the community are the beauty of the mountains, the growth of plentiful stand of timber, the clear lakes and streams, the clean air, and the people who love the countryside. It is the kind of home that people dream of returning for retirement, where others from the cities or heavy industrial areas dream of moving.

As others are more qualified to talk about the air and water pollution, I will name my other concerns.

I'm concerned with not only the impact of the emissions, but also the impact of truck traffic through the middle of our small communities clogging our roads with huge trucks filled with lung-damaging dust; coal trains traveling through our quiet rural area loaded and the (contentious) coal dust they perhaps leave in their wake, the

noise of constant loud rumbling coal dumped from rail cars and perhaps reloaded onto trucks which I've heard is just unbearable for those living nearby.

Although I've tried to find out what areas would be impacted by transportation, unloading, loading, numbers of trucks or railroads, the information has been ever changing and difficult to parse.

I am also concerned about the outcome of unplanned events should the smelter be built.

What if the smelter does not operate as according to plan? Will there be provisions for shutting down the plant for operating errors and illegal emissions?

What would happen in the event that the plant closes? Will the owners be responsible for tear down and restoration of the site? Will they be required to post a bond to cover the expense of demolition and reclamation in the even that they fail or walk away (bankruptcy).

What provisions will be made for abandonment brought about by the market or changing political trends such as these examples of recent news:

- Coal-fired power plants closing due to the carbon footprint.
- Steel mills like Geneva Steel in Utah closing due to competition.
- Possible drop in demand for silicon due to newer technology for solar panels.
- Reduced profit brought about by competition or other factors.
- Catastrophic accidents or errors that could render the smelter useless.
- Personal injury to workers beyond what the community will accept.

And finally, I am concerned about the heavy price the communities will be pay for a few jobs. I'm stunned that an Amazon fulfillment center is opening within 50 miles of Newport with a purported 1500 jobs, and the community is being saddled with a huge plant, congestion, air pollution, damage, etc. for the sake of a few jobs in a dangerous environment as a smelter. 50 miles is within commuting distance.

I would suggest, as others have, that the best place for this smelter is in Canada near the source of the silica rock. I believe the reasons for bringing the smelter to Newport, Washington, is simply to make more profit for the investors. If there is a real market for the silicon, they can surely smelter it in Canada as easily as Newport. Newport is not critical to their success- just a nice little cherry on top for bigger profits. Why should the beloved NE Washington community bear the brunt of damage to the environment and prized way of living for the increased profits of the wealthy. The gains for the owners far outstrips the meager possible benefits to the community.

Thank you for the opportunity for public input.

Sincerely,

Lee Ann Nelson  
Bonner County Property Owner  
Boise, Idaho