

# TONYA SHERMAN

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## An open letter opposing Newport Smelter Project

PacWest Silicon plans to build a silica smelter new the city of Newport in Pend Oreille County. The Washington State Department of Ecology is seeking input from the public on what to include in the Environmental Impact Statement Study

<https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Permits-certifications/Industrial-facilities-permits/PacWest-Silicon-project>  
PackWest has provided little or no consistent information to the public in regards to the project.

However, we have access to large amounts of information. You can read online full Environmental Impact Assessments for Silicon smelting ventures around the world and the United States which take into consideration the biophysical, socio-economic and cultural environments associated with the specifics aspects of the project. • Geology; • Topography; • Soils, Land Use and Land Capability; • Biodiversity; • Surface Water; • Groundwater; • Air • Wildlife and threatened species • Trees/plants/vegetation/fauna • Energy and natural resources; and in many cases a public review was held. We can see how they measured "acceptable risk" and how that risk was justified for "Progress". The Department of Ecology does not have to start from scratch on what areas to review. In this case, in a pristine environment, it is pretty easy... everything. The whole environment it at risk. We haven't harmed this area, yet.

We can read the complaints from the residents of Reykjansebaer in Southwest Iceland against the United Silicon metal smelter and where the company officials admitted that a mistake was made and that insufficient information was provided to the residents. What was the information NOT provided? What did this company promise the local officials and community members? Most likely, the same things we are hearing here. We can research other properties owned by this company, HiTest Silicon (now renamed PacWest) – the Mississippi Silicon and Silicon Metal Plant in Bosnia and find what their employees and communities have to say. The communities were told that good jobs would come and that the air and water quality would be monitored and tested. They were promised that their local economy would prosper. In looking into these claims, we listen to the locals, the people that live there breathing the polluted air, and we hear they were told the same lies. Property taxes, electricity taxes, and costs of goods increased, less jobs were created for the locals than promised with poor reviews on working conditions. Specific examples from Indeed.com from the Mississippi Smelter: I worked in 140 degrees every day, it was a massive mistake, Employees were quitting every week and everyone was looking for work elsewhere, happy to be out, poor environment, over 120 at night. I would not recommend anyone work at this place. The environment is horrible. Management and safety are severely lacking at the facility. Employees are hired in, quickly untrained and then sent into the front lines to perform work. Not a safe environment, Poorly managed, the company had a horrible reputation in the area within less than 6 months of opening. They could not keep employees.

Let's discuss a few of the local smelters that are no longer in existence that were created for "necessary technology of the time" and left their hazards remaining: Alcoa, Reynolds Metals Co, Kaiser in Mead, Spokane and Tacoma, and Harvey Aluminum. In an environmental court case against Harvey Aluminum, Judge Burns cited a 1960 letter from owner Lawrence Harvey to the Wasco County Fruit and Produce League as evidence of the company's awareness of its societal obligations. "In closing I would like to reemphasize our desire to foster the prosperity of the entire community," Harvey told the League. "We are doing, and will continue to do so, the best scientific job of control that is possible under the circumstances. These are obligations which we consider part of our community responsibility." Judge Burns noted that when a company encounters additional costs, it can shift the costs of production onto others. "In the case of an industrial plant emitting pollution, those harmed by the emissions are, in effect, involuntarily bearing some of the firm's production costs... Our society has not demanded that such externalized costs of production be completely eliminated. Instead, we tolerate externalities such as pollution as long as the enterprise remains productive: that is, producing greater value than the total of its internalized and externalized costs of production. A business that does not achieve net productivity is harmful to society, detracting from the standard of living it is designed to enhance."

We can look at similar examples of communities that needed jobs and sacrificed their natural resources to end up indentured servants to large corporations, sick and poor as individuals – other companies do not want to be there and no new industries are arriving. Picture the coal mines in Appalachia, the silver mines in Wallace, Idaho, and Libby Montana where in 1919, W. R. Grace and Company bought a local mine. Nearly 10% of the population died from

asbestos contamination, and the federal government later charged company officials for complicity. Fred Festa, chairman, president and CEO said in a statement, "the company worked hard to keep the operations in compliance with the laws and standards of the day. How many times do we need to learn the lesson?"

And TODAY:

Silicon plants are built where electricity and land are cheap. The elected Newport officials sold HiTest the land for the same amount of money that Governor Inslee gave the company in a grant. It can't get cheaper than that. "As a leading innovator in their industry, HiTest shares our commitment to enabling the great promise of the clean energy economy," said Gov. Jay Inslee. "I look forward to watching the resurgence of hard-working Washington communities spurred by this exciting new development in our northeast region."

And herein lies the challenge. Are we on a large scale helping our environmental impact? Is this the legacy the Governor is leaving or are we creating a superfund site for generations to pay for and clean up? Yes, we are again risking our ground water, our air and our health for a "greener energy" under the standards of today. I ask Governor Inslee and local representatives – Does stopping a polluting Smelter impede progress? Or is progress really made when we protect the last remaining areas of nature in our State? I ask you to please reconsider your support for this project and help us keep Washington (and Idaho) uncontaminated for this and the next generation. And to my neighbors and community - stop gambling with this foreign company. We live here. What we have is worth protecting and fighting for. Stand together against the Newport Smelter.

Regards,

Tonya Sherman  
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