

Robin Campbell

As a business owner and resident of the Sandpoint, ID area, I am concerned about the environmental, economic, and health affects of the PacWest (HiTest) silicon smelter proposed for the community of Newport, WA on the Washington/Idaho border.

Sandpoint, ID is about 30 miles northeast of Newport and in the direct path of prevailing weather patterns. Sandpoint is transitioning from a resource based economy to a tourist and light industrial economy. Its growth is heavily dependent on the quality of the environment. Our clean, sparkling water, clear air, healthy forests and natural beauty create a quality of life that is highly attractive to non-polluting industries, including tourism.

Because raw materials traveling to the smelter and finished products traveling from the smelter are likely to go through Bonner County, and Sandpoint, ID, and because air pollution from the smelter will drift Northeast across Bonner County, it seems critical that all of Bonner County and North Idaho be included in your study.

I ask you to extensively study the following:

Traffic impacts: Two major state highways come through Sandpoint. What will be the affect of the additional truck traffic on our local roads? Who will pay for the additional maintenance? In the summer, our roads are crowded with tourists. What effect will the additional PacWest traffic have on the quality of a vacation in North Idaho?

Rail impacts: My home is near the BNSF rail line through Sandpoint. I have lived here for 17 years. During that time, rail traffic has more than doubled. There is no route from my home to Sandpoint proper that doesn't cross at least one set of tracks. How will the additional rail traffic affect travel around Sandpoint? What affect will it have on first responders? We now have 50-60 trains a day passing through our city. A few trains a day are nostalgic and pleasant, but it is becoming annoying. More train traffic will greatly degrade the quality of life in Sandpoint.

One of the raw materials to be brought to the smelter by rail is coal. Coal is toxic and has the potential to pollute. What is being proposed to prevent train derailments and coal spills? What is being done to ensure that spills are quickly and adequately cleaned up?

Pollution: How will PacWest prevent pollutants that cause acid rain from being released into the air? Our lake and our forests are delicate ecosystems that can be destroyed by acid rain over time. In that event, Sandpoint will lose its appeal as a tourist and a retirement destination.

Health: Is it possible for PacWest to ensure that no silica dust is released into the air or water? Silica dust is a carcinogen. Placing this plant so close to a population center requires absolute proof of safety, not models and projections. Review the history of the W R Grace vermiculite plant in Libby, MT.

Degraded air quality also affects those with respiratory issues, the young and the elderly. Our mountainous terrain creates uneven air flows and causes frequent localized air inversions. How will monitoring be accomplished to make sure that air quality throughout the area remains good? What will happen when wildfires or air inversions make air unhealthy? Will the plant be required to shut down? Who determines when the air is unhealthy - Washington or Idaho? How many people have to be adversely affected before action can be taken?

What will DOE do to verify that the information provided by PacWest and others with a vested interest in this project is accurate and true? It seems that already things like the amount of water needed for operations, to site one example, has been difficult to pin down.

Please do at least a year of baseline air quality measurements at many stations throughout the area so that you have real data, not models, on which to base conclusions.

What's in it for Washington and Idaho? How many permanent jobs will really be created? This is a Canadian company. The profits will go to Canada and we will be left with the liabilities, the pollution, and the infrastructure headaches. I can't help but wonder why they are not putting this plant in Canada.

Thank you for your consideration.

Robin Campbell, MA