

Lynne Burnett

I oppose this concrete batch plant to be built on Scenic Highway 220, Alto, NM

TO: New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board

Attn: Pamela Jones

I am writing to document my opposition to Ryan Roper's proposed concrete batch plant on Scenic Byway 220 in Alto, NM. This site which is in a primarily residential area is inappropriate at best, and at worst threatens the lives and well-being of residents, livestock and wildlife living in this community. We are dismayed and horrified by the very thought of allowing this heavy industry in the midst of people and animals who have been living in this community for years. And yes, this is a matter of life or death!

The very air we breathe is at risk.

One would assume that the New Mexico Environment Department and the NM Environmental Improvement Board would review all aspects of harm to the environment that this industrial plant would cause, not just air pollution but also noise pollution, road congestion, light pollution and water pollution. The very word "environment" is defined as "the surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal or plant lives or operates". This does not seem to be the case.

Roper's response to the admitted air pollution by crystalline silica (a known carcinogen that can cause irreparable lung damage) as well as sulfur oxide and nitrogen oxide is to mitigate this pollution through water sprayers.

WATER sprayers! Water, which is the lifeblood of any community, and especially here in New Mexico. The sources of water for sustenance for most residents are private wells, though there are individuals in Alto who already have to have water delivered to survive as some wells have already failed. And the mitigation proposed is for this proposed concrete batch plant to waste more water to offset the air pollution it will create. This water is in addition to the tens of thousands of gallons of water (72,000 per day) that the plant owner says will be needed to operate. Roper doesn't have this water! Transferring water rights doesn't produce water. If he is permitted to drill wells, the private wells that residents and livestock living downstream rely upon could be impacted. Roper then said he will truck in the water. Again, more air pollution caused by potentially hundreds of diesel trucks, creating carbon dioxide.

And then there is the risk of polluting the aquifer which is the source of water for the private wells through runoff, spillage and industrial accidents. Heavy metals such as arsenic, cadmium, copper, lead, selenium, antimony and chromium can leach into drinking water from cement plants. Then there is the possibility of polluting the nearby Little Creek and Rio Bonito which feed the Fort Stanton Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area.

What about the Federal Water Pollution Control Act?

Allowing a polluting industrial plant in a primarily residential area will more adversely affect older residents. Lack of water and carcinogens in the air will cause residents to have to abandon their residences and move to survive. Unfortunately, no one will want to purchase properties under these conditions and property sales have already been impacted.

I could talk at length about the potential noise and light pollution, and the adverse impact on a small two-lane scenic highway from hundreds of heavy industrial trucks. And the fact that this site is less than 2 miles from the White Mountain Wilderness Area, a federally designated environmentally protected area used by thousands for recreation.

But, how much is enough?

And WHY? WHY all this pollution and harm to the community? So one individual can make money at the cost of the health and welfare of an entire community? There are hundreds of us who oppose the location of this concrete batch plant, and will be harmed by it. There is a petition with more than 1000 signatures of local residents. A recent survey showed 92% of local respondents opposed to this concrete batch plant on Billy the Kid Scenic Hwy 220.

With all due respect, who's minding our state and looking after the environment? And does anyone care about the health of New Mexico residents and the air we breathe?

And a few final notes regarding Mr. Roper's integrity and behavior in this matter. His inaccurate, untruthful and incomplete air quality application has been revised and updated countless times. And before going down the path of "poor Mr. Roper is only trying to feed his family", a ploy used by a Lincoln County Commissioner before more rational minds prevailed and the Commissioners deemed the proposed concrete batch plant a "public nuisance" on Hwy 220. Additionally, prior to purchasing this property on Scenic Hwy 220, Roper was advised of deed restrictions prohibiting a concrete batch plant on this property. He was afforded the opportunity to not continue with the purchase and receive a refund. His response was to try to persuade the closing agent to have the restriction illegally "removed." He went into this purchase with full knowledge that a concrete batch plant was not permitted on this property. This was his choice, why should the community suffer? And Mr. Roper can continue to use his existing concrete batch plant 27 miles away in Carrizozo to produce and sell his concrete. This Carrizozo plant has caused local residents – residents who were in place before the plant was built – to move away due to the air and noise pollution and degradation of quality of life.

Residents of Alto are not opposed to business and development on Hwy 220, just heavy polluting industry. We live safely and peacefully with RV parks, a winery, storage garages, a landscaping business, wedding venues, kennels, and horse breeding & showing among others. But heavy industry is NOT appropriate here.

In addition to NMED & EIB, we are also asking Governor Lujan-Grisham, Senator Heinrich, as well as New Mexico elected officials and the United States Department of the Interior to intervene in this abomination and provide necessary oversight.

Respectfully,

Lynne Burnett
340 Santiago Circle
Alto, NM 88312

And property owner of Pheasant Court, Alto Lakes Golf & Country Club, Alto, NM, 88312