

## Joan Davenport

Public input at recent ADEQ hearings reflected strong opposition to Aluminum Dynamics, Inc. This is due to the potential risks the plant poses to air quality, water resources, and the fragile ecosystem of the San Pedro River—Arizona's last free-flowing river and a vital corridor for wildlife, migratory birds, and local communities. Residents have voiced concerns about pollution, excessive water use in a drought-prone area, and the real possibility of long-term environmental degradation.

The decision to employ the same attorney by both the Benson City Council and Aluminum Dynamics Inc. raises significant concerns regarding conflict of interest and the lack of transparent representation for community interests in the permitting process for the proposed aluminum plant in Benson. This alignment threatens the integrity of local governance, undermining public trust and the democratic process by prioritizing corporate goals over the will of the residents, who have overwhelmingly expressed opposition to this project.

ADEQ serves as the final regulatory safeguard to ensure public health, environmental protection, and accountability, especially when local leadership appears aligned with private interests. The community relies on ADEQ to rigorously scrutinize the air permit application and uphold its statutory mission, resisting undue political and corporate pressure, and rejecting the permit if environmental protections and public health cannot be assured.

In this case, ADEQ's commitment to the public interest, transparency, and sound science is critical. Benson's residents urge a full and independent review and request the permit be denied until all environmental hazards and governance concerns are addressed.