

Dear Mr. Monasky,

I am opposed to the issuance of a permit to Glenn O. Hawbaker for a number of reasons. First and foremost at stake for those of us living within close proximity to this facility is the continued degradation to the environment and ultimately to the health of our families. Because this facility would be using coal as its primary energy source, I find it to be very disturbing. Coal as a primary energy source for this proposed plant would have to be the most regressive and, as most government and scientific reports attest to the fact that a history of using coal as a fuel source, primarily in coal fired power plants, to be a major source of poisoning to our communities and wilderness. This proposed plant has submitted in their application that they will emit over 200 tons of air pollutants annually. At present, coal-fired power plants contribute almost half to the yearly load of CO₂ to the environment. As we have been made acutely aware of lately, this continued burden of green house gases will ultimately result in a catastrophic global disaster.

There is a connection between human health and environmental contaminants. The Hawbaker facility would essentially add to the already over-burdened toxic release inventory (TRI) for this part of the country. This is exacerbated in part because of their decision to use coal instead of natural gas or a less polluting energy source. Air is a transmutational medium. The alchemy of the atmosphere already contains a plethora of other contaminants. These contaminants concoct to form new chemical materials. Recent evidence suggests that some of these major carcinogens in the air are synthesized when organic chemicals released from various sources react with each other and are transformed into entirely new substances, many not yet identified. The laundry list of air emissions, TRI supposedly account for all the cancer causing agents to which we are exposed. Air is by far the largest receptacle for industrial emissions and includes about 70 different or suspected carcinogens. According to the international agency for research on cancer, "Ambient air in industrial areas typically contains 100 hundred different chemicals known to cause cancer or genetic mutations in experimental animals, more than 100 urban areas fail to meet national air quality standards, nearly 100 million americans breathe air that is officially illegal." I am most concerned that the uncertainty over details such as TRI and other compounding air pollution factors presented by this facility are not being as thoroughly scrutinized and investigated as warranted in relation to the local citizens health. I am concerned that uncertainty is too often parleyed into an excuse to do nothing until more research can be conducted after this plant is constructed, and then it will be too late to protect our health, the grandfather of all excuses for doing nothing. I implore the DEP to gather as much information and take as much time as needed to further investigate the possible deleterious health effects caused by this facility.

Because i am neither an epidemiologist nor toxicologist, I realize as a citizen that I have neither the time nor the expertise to understand nor research all the studies that have already been done in relation to hot mix asphalt plants and human health. As public servants and deemed protectors of our environment we look to you to educate us and ultimately make the right choice to protect our already fragile environment and our health. We understand that human health in many areas has been eroding at an alarming rate since the end of World War 2. Incidents of cancer have risen 49.3% since 1950-1991. 1 out of 2 people will now get cancer in their lifetime. Between 1973 and 1991 brain cancer has risen 25%. Cancer is now the 3rd leading cause of death in children. We have seen a 40% increase in asthma in just the past decade, now the number one cause of absenteeism for American school children. It is now a widely accepted truth that 80% of all cancers are environmentally caused. With this in mind, I would ask that you would further investigate and deem prudent that you consult sources that have already begun this process. Here is a good place to start, www.bredl.org, the website of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

In conclusion, I implore you in the making of your final decision concerning this project to employ the Precautionary Principle as follows and drafted several years ago by some leading human health activist and states, "The health of the people is connected to the health of the environment"

WINGSPREAD STATEMENT ON THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

The release and use of toxic substances, the exploitation of resources, and physical alterations of the environment have had substantial unintended consequences affecting human health and the environment. Some of these concerns are high rates of extinctions, along with global climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion and global worldwide contamination with toxic substances and nuclear material.

We believe existing environmental regulations and other decisions, particularly those based on risk assessment, have failed to protect adequately human health and the environment— the larger system of which humans are but a part.

We believe there is compelling evidence that damage to humans and the worldwide environment is of such magnitude and seriousness that new principles are needed for conducting human activities.

While we realize that human activities may involve hazards, people must proceed more carefully than has been the case in recent history. Corporations, government entities, organizations, communities, scientists and other individuals must adopt a precautionary approach to all human endeavors.

Therefore, it is necessary to implement the Precautionary Principle: When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically. In this context, the proponent of an activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof.

The process of applying the Precautionary Principle must be open, informed and democratic and must include potentially affected parties. It must also involve an examination of the full range of alternatives, including no action.

Sincerely yours,
Richard P. Steigerwald
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