



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Between the quiet and scenic hamlets of Tawatinaw and Rochester, among the vibrant colors of fall, the crisp fresh air and the sounds of migrating birds of all kinds, looms an ominous threat...

This beautiful part of Alberta boasts the Tawatinaw River, which quietly flows into Tawatinaw Lake and then patiently finds its way to its destination; the Athabasca river. This valley has a rich history in many ways and is cherished by all who live in and around it. Now this peaceful natural treasure is threatened by two proposed massive gravel and sand pits. These proposed pits are located across from each other high on opposite banks of the Tawatinaw valley. It's hard to imagine a worse place to propose such pits, but one landowner's and his company's greed is threatening the valley.

These pits would effectively destroy a large surrounding area for miles around. Potential threats include;

- noise and air pollution echoing through the valley with the gravel crushing taking place high on the banks of the valley, as well as roaring gravel trucks on the roads 6 days a week 12 hours a day
- apparently unassessed and unexamined devastation to local wildlife including a cherished Elk herd that roams across one of the proposed pit areas, the migrating cranes that come every fall, and the abundant local biodiversity
- most devastating would be the potential irreparable damage to the water table with unassessed impacts on the local water and the larger aquifer, and the Tawatinaw river and lake within a few hundred metres of both pits.

Like many gravel proposals in the province, this one initially tried to fly under the radar. In 2016, local residents heard rumors of a local landowner claiming they were "going to make millions" in gravel. Through a long series of phone calls and hours of research it was discovered that in fact it was true, an application had quietly been put together and submitted to Westlock County. The company name? "Sustainable Developments" Commercial Services (SDC).

Outraged, community residents banded together and put together a list of over 200 signatures against the pits. At an appeal hearing with Westlock County in 2016, neither the company nor landowner bothered to even show up, and they removed their application for the gravel pits. Now two years later, the landowner and SDC are at it again, this time putting their applications to the Alberta government first. How could it be that the region for miles around could be disrupted and threatened by one landowner who simply sees dollar signs? Sure a landowner has a right to do what they wish with their land, but what right does one landowner have to fill the surrounding area with noise and air pollution 6 days a week for miles around, potentially damage the area water resources forever, endanger lives on the roads with roaring gravel trucks non-stop? This story must be told.

It was just a few weeks ago that a large group of volunteers came together to save the Tawatinaw Valley ski hill from closure. It was amazing to see the community spirit and activism of the entire area. These pit proposals are within a mile of the ski hill, and the gravel haul route is right in front of the ski hill! Can you imagine the mayhem of gravel trucks screaming by the ski hill all day? Have we learned nothing from past tragedies?

Here are some quotes from local area residents;

“I live about 100 metres from one of the proposed gravel pits. I was never informed or consulted about it and had to find out about this proposal through community rumours over two years ago. I thought it was a bad joke as we operate a Healing centre for youth along with a school, and a sustainable farm here on 20 acres, right across the road from their proposed 40 acre pit! After over two years are they even aware of what we do? As a Psychologist I see the stress they’ve created in our community, and I’m outraged at what SDC and one landowner has done to our entire community in the name of greed, it’s just absurd.”

Tim Harrison (780) 233-7787

"Of course I'm extremely concerned with the potential of sand and gravel pits in our valley. The disruption to bird and wildlife migration and the delicate ecosystem of the streams and lake is heartbreaking; and of course the noise and environmental pollution from constant gravel extraction, with trucks in front of every neighboring farmer, not to mention the inevitable effect to the water system in the valley. We are a group of citizens who call this home, we are neighbors, and friends, and we will stand up against this, defend this valley and ensure it is protected for our future generation!"

Kathy-Sue Irving (780) 242-4309

“We moved to the Tawatinaw Valley over thirty-five years ago to raise our children in a healthy peaceful environment. We value this magnificent area for the scenic beauty as well as its unique mix of agriculture, biodiversity and recreational opportunities. The Tawatinaw Valley is also part of a major watershed and the source of the Tawatinaw Creek and several other creeks that flow north and providing source water for people living in the area. As land owners and stewards of the land we have made sure to protect and not to destroy the biodiversity of this fragile area. Concerns are related to the location and development of gravel pit operations in the Tawatinaw valley. Our concerns include water, soil and wind erosions, dust and noise nuisances, aesthetics, truck traffic and safety, hours of operation, impact on wild life and biodiversity and effect on our health and well being. The impact on raising livestock, lifestyle and health will be tremendous.”

Carola & Jurgen Pohl (780) 698-3763

“This is not a NIMBY Issue. This is not just a local issue: it is a *provincial* issue. That is, the Tawatinaw Valley has played and still plays a unique and important role in Alberta—in our province’s history, environmental health, recreation, culture, local economics, and quality of life. The Tawatinaw Valley is an area of provincial significance, an irreplaceable piece of provincial legacy, and it requires provincial attention and protection now.”

Diana Keith (587) 578.2580

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