

July 31, 2019

Sent via Electronic Mail

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Cambria District Mining Office  
District Mining Operations  
PA Department of Environmental Protection  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
286 Industrial Park Road  
Ebensburg, PA 15931

Re: Comments on NPDES Permit Renewal Application  
Permit No. PA0223239

To Whom It May Concern:

My family has owned a home and property on the Green Ridge of South Mountain since 1964. It occupies a very special place in the hearts of three generations of my family. We are located about 3 to 4 miles northeast of Toms Creek as the crow flies. Some of the headwaters of Middle Creek, an Exceptional Value sister stream to Toms Creek, are located on our land. We drink the spring water from a spring next to our house that has never run dry. Abundant clean water is the most precious resource we have on our property.

The upper Toms Creek watershed, which is where Specialty Granules Inc. (SGI) proposes to release storm water and sediment under this NPDES storm water discharge permit, is classified as a Priority Conservation watershed. This designation is reserved for stretches of streams in watersheds that are undisturbed and have a "significant conservation priority based on its water quality, biological assemblages and habitat types."

The designation of "Priority Conservation Watershed" is a category under the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program, which is a partnership between the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the

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AUG 02 2019

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Toms Creek, in the upper section of its watershed, has macro invertebrates (aquatic insects), plants and animals that are only seen in the most pristine conditions. This is an extremely sensitive and environmentally important area – for people who live downstream as well as those who live in and around upper Toms Creek. It deserves the highest level of protection from the state of Pennsylvania.

Those seeking permits to discharge storm water and sediment into Toms Creek and its tributaries must be held to the highest standards, and their justifications for discharge must be scrutinized carefully.

Times have changed since SGI first received their permit to discharge to a tributary of Toms Creek. The area occupied by the quarry has expanded exponentially and the frequency and intensity of storms has increased dramatically in recent years. We had record-setting amounts of precipitation in the past year.

In fact, during the hearing held before DEP on July 17, 2019, SGI and DEP claimed that SGI had never discharged to Toms Creek under this NPDES permit. The need for it is therefore in doubt. If the permit has never been used, and if there is a non-discharge alternative (which SGI has described in their response to comments re: the permit to mine Pine Hill), then there is no need to renew this permit.

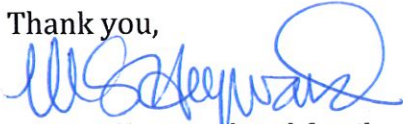
In addition to the existence of a non-discharge alternative and the fact that SGI has never used the NPDES permit to discharge to Toms Creek, I ask the Department of Environmental Protection to take into account changing weather patterns, increased population in the watershed, the large area being mined by SGI, and the well-documented environmental significance and sensitivity of the Upper Toms Creek watershed.

Hamiltonban Township and neighboring townships can no longer be viewed as remote rural backwaters from which natural resources can be extracted without consequence or objection. We are awake and aware and are objecting.

The state of Pennsylvania has recognized the value of Toms Creek as a natural resource meriting PRIORITY CONSERVATION.

DEP - please give meaning to that designation and deny SGI's permit application to discharge to Toms Creek.

Thank you,



Maggie Heyward and family

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