



REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

Date: February 8, 2024

Case: PUBLIC HEARING - HILLSBORO ENERGY, LLC, DEER
RUN MINE PERMIT RENEWALS

No. N/A

Court Reporter: Ann Marie Hollo, CSR, RDR, CRR

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CITY OF HILLSBORO
STATE OF ILLINOIS

PUBLIC HEARING
HILLSBORO ENERGY, LLC, DEER RUN MINE
PERMIT RENEWALS

FEBRUARY 8, 2024

Ann Marie Hollo, CSR, RDR, CRR

1 CITY OF HILLSBORO

2 STATE OF ILLINOIS

3 PUBLIC HEARING

4 HILLSBORO ENERGY, LLC, DEER RUN MINE

5 PERMIT RENEWALS

6
7 PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING HILLSBORO ENERGY, LLC,
8 DEER RUN MINE, PERMIT RENEWALS, on FEBRUARY 8, 2024,
9 between the hours of thirty-five minutes after five
10 o'clock in the afternoon and twenty-four minutes
11 after seven o'clock in the afternoon of that day, at
12 the Montgomery County Historic Courthouse, #1
13 Courthouse Square, Hillsboro, Illinois, before Ann
14 Marie Hollo, CSR, RDR, CRR, in a certain cause
15 pursuant to 62 Ill. Adm. Code 1773.13(c) promulgated
16 under the Surface Coal Mining Land Conservation and
17 Reclamation Act, the Department of Natural
18 Resources, Office of Mines and Minerals, Land
19 Reclamation Division hereby gives notice that a
20 public hearing for submission of comments will be
21 conducted by the Department for the submittal of
22 renewal application for the Deer Run mine permit
23 Nos. 399 and 424, which was submitted by Hillsboro
24 Energy.

A P P E A R A N C E S

For the Illinois Department of
Natural Resources:

Mr. Brian Navarrete, Hearing Officer
Ms. Amy Wolff Oakes, Legal
Counsel

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Ms. Kemi Osibamowo
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Mr. James Schafer
Permit Coordinator
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL
RESOURCES

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ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Clayton Cross, Hillsboro Energy, LLC

The Court Reporter:

Ann Marie Hollo, CSR, RDR, CRR
Paszkiewicz Litigation Services
26 Ginger Creek Parkway
Glen Carbon, Illinois 62034
(618) 307-9320

1 IT IS HEREBY STIPULATED AND AGREED that the
2 public hearing may be taken in shorthand by Ann
3 Marie Hollo, RDR/CRR, a Certified Shorthand
4 Reporter, and afterwards transcribed into
5 typewriting.

6 * * * * *

7 (Starting time of the hearing is: 5:35 p.m.)

8 MR. NAVARRETE: All right. Good
9 evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Brian
10 Navarrete. I'm an attorney with the Illinois
11 Department of Natural Resources, Office of Legal
12 Counsel. I am the appointed hearing officer for
13 this -- for the -- this public hearing administered
14 by the Office of Mines and Minerals, Land
15 Reclamation District.

16 The -- it was originally scheduled
17 for January 22, 2024, but was continued to today's
18 date because of the unforeseen weather emergency.
19 So, thank you, all, who were able to come today.

20 Seated in front of me are Kemi
21 Osibamowo, Jim Schafer, and Amy Oakes from the
22 Illinois Department of Natural Resources Land
23 Reclamation Division.

24 Before we start, I'd like to go over

1 a few logistics for conducting this public hearing.

2 First, for those who wish to provide
3 oral comments, please make sure that your name is on
4 here. So if anybody else -- anybody doesn't have
5 their name on here, now would be the time to do it.

6 All right. I think James did a
7 really good job getting the names written down.

8 For those that requested a public
9 hearing, Mr. Schraut, it was my understanding that
10 you have -- you do not wish to go -- speak first; is
11 that correct?

12 MR. SCHRAUT: No. Somebody else can,
13 or I can. I can speak first.

14 MR. NAVARRETE: Okay.

15 MR. SCHRAUT: I mean, I guess you
16 want me up front?

17 MR. NAVARRETE: In a second, in a
18 second.

19 MR. SCHRAUT: What?

20 MR. NAVARRETE: Not yet, not yet.

21 MS. DECLUE: I like that enthusiasm.

22 MR. NAVARRETE: So based on the
23 number of speakers -- I counted, I think, ten -- we
24 will have to limit the time at first and make sure

1 everybody has a chance to get heard, and then when
2 we have time left over at the end, and those who
3 wish to have -- or say more -- have more to say,
4 will be given an opportunity to speak.

5 And that is until 7:30. That is when
6 the Department has the space reserved, until
7 7:30 p.m.

8 Second, the Department has hired a
9 court reporter to record and transcribe tonight's
10 hearing. So please be sure to speak loudly and
11 clearly so the court reporter will be able to create
12 an accurate transcript.

13 There is a microphone at this podium.
14 So, please -- if you're able, please come to the
15 podium and speak into the microphone. It will make
16 it easier for the court reporter to transcribe your
17 statements.

18 Third, we'll be requesting an
19 expedited transcript, and we'll upload a copy of the
20 transcript onto the Department's website when that
21 is available.

22 First, we ask that since we do have a
23 court reporter, that no other recordings be made of
24 today's proceedings. The transcript will be

1 provided online.

2 And, last, the restrooms on this
3 floor are located outside this door immediately to
4 your right. So, you know, if you need to use the
5 restroom, please do so.

6 The Land Reclamation
7 Division -- "LRD" for short -- is but one of several
8 state and federal administrative agencies
9 responsible for administering and enforcing
10 regulations regarding the coal mining industry in
11 the State of Illinois.

12 Each has its authorizing statute and
13 set of regulations, and with that, each has its own
14 permitting and enforcement requirements regarding
15 coal mining operations in the state.

16 LRD's authorizing statute is the
17 Surface Coal Mining Land Conservation Reclamation
18 Act, found in Chapter 225 of the Illinois Compiled
19 Statutes, Act 720. Its promulgated regulations are
20 found in Title 62 of the Illinois Administrative
21 Code, Part 1700 to 1850.

22 This public hearing is being held
23 pursuant to Sections 1773.13 and 1774.15 of those
24 regulations, and it is in relation to the pending

1 application to renew Permit Numbers 399 and 424 of
2 the Hillsboro Energy, LLC, Deer Run Mine.

3 Before we start, Ms. Osibamowo would
4 like to provide a brief statement regarding the
5 permit renewal process. Thank you.

6 I don't know if this is on.

7 MS. OSIBAMOWO: Good evening,
8 everybody. It's good to see everybody here today.
9 I think we have more of a turnout than we did during
10 the informal conference, which is always good.

11 As the hearing officer introduced,
12 I'm Kemi Osibamowo. I'm the Northern District
13 Manager. Today, I'll be representing Dan Barkley.
14 He really, really wanted to be here tonight, but as
15 some of you may know, he is going through some
16 health issues. So he sends his greetings.

17 I would also like to address the
18 reason why the Department is processing the renewal
19 of Permits 399 and 424 at the same time.

20 In 2018, LRD instituted an
21 administrative process to synchronize permit renewal
22 dates for coal mine units made up of multiple
23 permits. This procedure was developed to facilitate
24 a comprehensive review of the entire mine unit at

1 fixed intervals as opposed to the individual permit
2 areas being reviewed in isolation at varying times.

3 We memorialized this policy in our
4 Operator Memorandum 2018-1-04, and that was in 2018.
5 And that's why we are processing the renewals of
6 Permit Number 399 and Permit Number 424 at the same
7 time.

8 Also, as stated by the hearing
9 officer, this public hearing is being held pursuant
10 to Sections 1773.13 and 1774.15 of the regulations.
11 I do have copies here, and we also have them
12 available on the website. For brevity, my statement
13 will generally encompass the application of these
14 regulations to the permit renewals, but please note,
15 there are also other regulations that are
16 cross-referenced and applicable as part of the
17 review process.

18 So usually the first step is a
19 renewal application is submitted to LRD, which is
20 us, and reviewed for administrative completeness
21 usually primarily by Jim Schafer.

22 Here, in this situation, the
23 application was submitted on
24 June -- sorry -- July 27, 2023. A completeness

1 review is a moderately detailed review to determine
2 if sufficient information is provided for the
3 Department to conduct its technical review of the
4 application for compliance with the regulations I
5 just mentioned. In this situation, the application
6 for renewal was deemed administratively complete
7 September 12, 2023.

8 The next step is that the applicant
9 must file a copy of the renewal application with the
10 county clerk in the county where the mine is located
11 and run a public notice for four consecutive weeks.
12 In this case, the administratively complete renewal
13 application was filed with the Montgomery County
14 Clerk September 14, 2023.

15 In addition to being available for
16 public review at the county clerk's office, the
17 permits are also available for review on our
18 website. The news ad was first published by the
19 permittee in the Hillsboro Journal-News, which is a
20 Montgomery County-wide publication, and it started
21 September 18, 2023. It also continued for the next
22 four weeks.

23 The next step is written comments or
24 objections and or requests for an informal

1 conference may then be submitted to LRD within the
2 30 days after the last publication notices. In this
3 case, the Department received requests for an
4 informal conference from Larry Schraut of Hillsboro,
5 Mary Bates of Litchfield, Karyl Dressen of Coffeen,
6 Eileen Russell of Alton, Joyce Blumenshine of
7 Peoria, and Mary Ellen DeClue of Litchfield.

8 Did anybody else request for an
9 informal conference that didn't hear their name?

10 (No response.)

11 MS. OSIBAMOWO: Okay. Thank you for
12 that.

13 So we did conduct an informal
14 conference regarding the renewal of these permit
15 application on Monday, December 4, 2023, at this
16 same courthouse.

17 We also received comments from the
18 participants listed below, and I have a compilation
19 of all the comments we received during the informal
20 conference.

21 Now, pursuant to Section 1773.14 of
22 the regulations, if the issues in question are not
23 resolved by the informal conference, any interested
24 person or county board member may request a public

1 hearing within 80 days after the first newspaper
2 notice required by Section 1773.13(a). In this
3 case, Larry Schraut of Hillsboro requested a public
4 hearing.

5 Did anybody else request a public
6 hearing and didn't hear their name?

7 (No response.)

8 MS. OSIBAMOWO: Okay. Thank you for
9 that.

10 Now, written comments and objections
11 submitted during the public comment period and at
12 informal conference is -- and public hearing such as
13 this are compiled, they're reviewed, and they're
14 considered as part of the permit review process.

15 Please note that renewal of the
16 permit is subject to standards that are very
17 different from those required for new permits or
18 significant revisions to a permit.

19 Per Section 1773.19(d) and
20 1774.15(a), a valid permit shall -- a valid permit
21 issued shall carry with it the right of successive
22 renewal within the approved boundaries of the
23 existing permit and upon expiration of the term of
24 the permit.

1 Now, Section 1774.15(c)(1)

2 specifically provides that the Department shall
3 approve a complete and accurate application for
4 permit renewal unless it finds in writing that the
5 terms and conditions of the existing permits are not
6 being satisfactorily met;

7 B, the present surface coal mining
8 and reclamation operations are not in compliance
9 with the environmental protection standards of the
10 Act and regulatory program;

11 C, the requested renewal
12 substantially jeopardizes the operator's continuing
13 ability to comply with the Act and the regulatory
14 program on existing permits areas;

15 D, the operator has not provided
16 evidence of having liability insurance or
17 self-insurance as required by the regulations in
18 1800.60;

19 E, the operator has not provided
20 evidence that any performance bond required to be in
21 effect for the operation will continue in full force
22 and effect for the proposed period of the renewal,
23 as well as any additional bond the Department might
24 require pursuant to the section -- pursuant to the

1 entire regulation;

2 F, additional revised or updated
3 information required by the Department has not been
4 provided by the applicant.

5 Now, I just basically read out the
6 regulations in this part. I have copies available
7 if anybody wants that.

8 So, in short, basically to be
9 approved, an application must meet every one of
10 these requirements. If the applicant -- if the
11 application does, then the Department shall approve
12 the renewal application. If the application fails
13 to meet any one of these criteria, then the
14 Department shall deny approval.

15 This public hearing provides a venue
16 for persons having interest, which may be adversely
17 affected by the decision on the application, to
18 provide oral or written statements and any other
19 relevant information for us to consider in our
20 review.

21 So, now, what does all -- this all
22 means basically is all your comments provided
23 through this process will be compiled. They'll be
24 reviewed and considered and addressed in relation to

1 the standards for permit renewal set by the section.

2 So as your representative tonight,
3 it's my job to compile the comments. As I
4 mentioned, I do have the ones from the informal
5 conference. Anything you provide today will be
6 added onto this list, but please note that the
7 Department's decision on the pending permit renewal
8 application is based on the criteria I just
9 mentioned in our regulation.

10 So, thank you.

11 If you have -- are you ready? Do you
12 have anything?

13 MR. NAVARRETE: Yeah.

14 MS. OSIBAMOWO: Okay. All right.

15 So . . .

16 MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you, Kemi.

17 MS. OSIBAMOWO: Thank you.

18 MR. NAVARRETE: Before we start this
19 public hearing --

20 MS. DECLUE: Can I ask --

21 MS. OSIBAMOWO: Yes.

22 MS. DECLUE: I know this is for
23 renewal of four permits.

24 MS. OSIBAMOWO: Two permits, yes.

1 MS. DECLUE: Well, also revision one
2 of Permit 39 -- 399, and revision two of Permit 399.
3 I consider that four permits, but okay.

4 MS. OSIBAMOWO: Yeah. Technically,
5 ideally, for the case of this public hearing, we're
6 only taking comments regarding the renewal of those
7 two permits.

8 Now, I guess you're talking about the
9 permitting action related to those two permits.
10 Those are the only two permits we have.

11 MS. DECLUE: Okay. I guess my
12 question is: Can -- if there is approval, is it
13 all -- all of them, or could it be just three of
14 them or two of them?

15 MS. OSIBAMOWO: So we're only dealing
16 with these two permits. Any permitting decision we
17 make would be in regards to just these two permits,
18 nothing else. Just the renewal of these permit
19 applications.

20 If they have six permitting actions
21 in the works with us, it has nothing to do with what
22 we decide here. Well, I shouldn't say it has
23 nothing to do. It's -- this is -- any decision we
24 make regarding this application is based on the

1 renewal application, if that makes sense. No?

2 Okay.

3 MS. DECLUE: Okay. I guess I was
4 under the impression, like, when -- you know, like,
5 revision one of 399 permit, that was up for renewal.
6 Revision two of Permit 399 was up for renewal. I
7 mean, that was my impression.

8 MS. OSIBAMOWO: The entire permit is
9 up for renewal.

10 MS. DECLUE: Oh, okay, okay.

11 MS. OSIBAMOWO: So each permit
12 carries the five-year term. After that five-year
13 term, it's renewed or not.

14 MS. DECLUE: Okay.

15 MS. OSIBAMOWO: So that's -- that's
16 what that means.

17 MS. DECLUE: All right. Thank you.

18 MS. OSIBAMOWO: Yeah.

19 MR. NAVARRETE: All right. Are there
20 any other questions related to this process before
21 we start?

22 (No response.)

23 MR. NAVARRETE: Okay. At the close
24 of tonight's hearing, the Department will collect

1 any written comments and statements or other
2 materials you wish to provide for this
3 administrative record.

4 I'm going to ask that we start with
5 six minutes per person and then see how much time we
6 have left at the end.

7 So, Mr. Schraut, if you would like to
8 come up.

9 MS. OAKES: And before we begin, I
10 just would like to -- I'm Amy Oakes, the attorney
11 for IDNR for the record.

12 I just wanted to remind everyone that
13 the key difference between an informal conference
14 where we respond to questions and comments to the
15 best of our ability, that is different than the
16 public hearing, which is the furtherance of that
17 informal conference where any responses to tonight's
18 questions or comments will be within the appendix of
19 permit if it is granted.

20 MR. NAVARRETE: Mr. Schraut, start us
21 off.

22 MR. SCHRAUT: My name is Larry
23 Schraut. I'm a farmer that has been adversely
24 affected and will be adversely affected by the

1 longwall mining in the future.

2 Panels four, five, and six have
3 already affected me, and panel seven, eight, and
4 nine will affect -- will adversely affect me in the
5 future.

6 None of you sitting here before me
7 know the adverse, emotional effect that it's had on
8 me, watching the sinking of my land and property
9 that includes 12 grain bins, 2 machine sheds, and a
10 garage.

11 I've spent my entire farming career
12 caring for and improving the land for the next
13 generation.

14 I think the IDNR land reclamation
15 specialist needs to be more proactive with the
16 landowners affected by this mine.

17 And it's not on my thing here, but
18 I'm very disappointed that a land reclamation
19 specialist has not showed up at either one of the
20 informal conferences or this hearing. It's kind of
21 like out there in the field, he never shows up
22 either, and he rubber-stamps every monthly report.
23 It's very disappointing to me.

24 I know my flat farmland with minimal

1 erosion could never be the same because of the 6-,
2 the 7-foot slopes, and the uneven subsidence.
3 Normal farming practices will have to be changed to
4 more time-consuming and costly ways to compensate
5 for the subsided land surface and the drainage
6 issues.

7 Contractors' cost should not be a
8 factor in the best reclamation work, and my goal,
9 which is requiring hundreds of hours of my time, is
10 to have it reclaimed to the best possible.

11 And, like I say, I'm disappointed
12 that a land reclamation specialist doesn't show up
13 and spend a little -- and he would get paid for it.
14 I'm not getting paid for it.

15 MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you,
16 Mr. Schraut.

17 Would the next person who would like
18 to speak step forward? And then please just
19 introduce yourself when you get to the podium.

20 MS. BLUMENSHINE: My name is Joyce,
21 J-O-Y-C-E; Blumenshine, B-L-U-M-E-N-S-H-I-N-E.

22 I want to thank the IDNR staff for
23 being here tonight, to the Hillsboro County for the
24 use of this courthouse, and particularly thank you

1 to IDNR for your cognizance of the unsafe driving
2 conditions. I heard from local residents they were
3 iced-in because they couldn't get up the hilly
4 driveway or that country roads were not treated, and
5 the highways might have been, but thank you for
6 rescheduling this hearing.

7 These hearings are very important,
8 and I cannot help but reflect on the original
9 heroines and heroes of Illinois, including Jane
10 Johnson, who in the 1960s and 1970s trekked to
11 Springfield and trekked to Washington, D.C., to be
12 sure that our nation and this state were protected
13 with regulations for coal mining. So I honor the
14 legacy of those who have come before us tonight.

15 I appreciate that our Northern
16 Regional IDNR Division Director is here and reviewed
17 the rules because that's what I want to speak to
18 tonight.

19 It's my opinion that these permits
20 should not be renewed, and I ask IDNR not to renew
21 the permits. Clearly, to me, the renewals do not
22 comply with 62 Illinois Administrative Code, Section
23 1774, letter (c), approval process, starting with
24 number 1 criteria for approval.

1 I don't see that the terms and
2 conditions of the existing permit are being
3 satisfactorily met because Hillsboro Energy has
4 failed and is failing to succeed to have the surface
5 land areas affected by underground longwall mining
6 activities -- and this is in quotes from the
7 regulation -- "restored in a timely manner to
8 conditions that are capable of supporting the uses
9 which they were capable of supporting before any
10 mining or to higher or better uses." Closed quote.

11 While the word "timely" is nothing I
12 could find expressly defined, IDNR has to be aware
13 that the ponded field areas due to longwall
14 subsidence at the Deer Run Mine Permit 399, have
15 remained underwater and incapable of being farmed
16 for over three years.

17 Additional problems with longwall
18 subsidence: Ponding, the lack of ability of the
19 mine to adequately drain and maintain drainage of
20 the longwall areas will clearly continue through the
21 years -- the five years of these renewals -- because
22 the mine is continually creating more drainage
23 problems as it subsides ground unevenly in the
24 longwall panels.

1 And these are not just short drops.
2 Some are 6 to 7 feet as local residents have
3 mentioned.

4 IDNR approved the mine permit to go
5 from upstream -- actually, from the headwater stream
6 down against the drainage. So it's going to
7 constantly not only be having to deal with the fact
8 that the watershed drainage is fighting against the
9 natural drainage, but also that the longwall
10 subsidence is compounding the constant impacts on
11 drainage, and concerns for mixing those soils, and
12 excavating or dredging drainages, soil compaction
13 from machinery, and other ongoing work will be
14 band-aids in an effort to return a very different
15 ground topography and drainage to pre-mining
16 conditions. The mine is failing to restore land in
17 a timely manner and will continue to do so if these
18 permits are approved.

19 Letter B. The present surface mining
20 and the reclamation, including the effects from the
21 underground mining, are not in compliance, as I see
22 it, with the environmental protection standards of
23 the Act and the regulatory program. It is very
24 difficult to understand how the ongoing ditching of

1 Bearcat -- all one word, "Bear" with C-A-T -- Creek
2 and the Hillsboro Energy reclamation are in
3 compliance with the regulatory program.

4 I refer to appendix F -- letter "F"
5 as in Frank -- to revision number 2, Permit 399,
6 that states in quotes: "The Department will review
7 the performance of Hillsboro Energy subsidence
8 control plan in the field concerning prompt and
9 effective mitigation. Quarterly reports detailing
10 the compliance with 62 Illinois Administrative Code
11 1817.121, as required in the original Permit 399,
12 shall continue for areas approved . . ."

13 And that was for revision number 2.

14 And I hear that's not the specific permit, but
15 clearly -- and this follows. In the original Permit
16 Number 399, I want to ask: What has the IDNR
17 learned from the Hillsboro Energy quarterly reports
18 which were required in the original Permit 399?

19 I want to ask: What guidance has
20 IDNR given to Hillsboro Energy to adjust their
21 mitigation planning based on what is really
22 happening on the ground and the observed erosion,
23 ponding of water, and other mine work the mine has
24 done?

1 What is IDNR's definition of timely
2 restoration for returning fields to a farmable
3 condition? If the current practices being used by
4 the mine continues for another five years, how many
5 more fields will be left ponded? How much more
6 topsoil will be washed away?

7 And the question has to be asked:
8 How is continuing the same practices accomplishing
9 the necessary reclamation in a timely manner and in
10 accordance and compliance with the full regulatory
11 program?

12 Letter C.

13 And I'm mindful of my time, and I can
14 stop after this if I need to.

15 The requested renewal substantially
16 jeopardizes the operator's continuing ability to
17 comply with the Act and the regulatory program on
18 existing permit areas.

19 And here's my thoughts on that,
20 because I don't see how they can continue in the
21 same manner.

22 Clearly, costs for reclamation work
23 will continue escalating, and more acres are going
24 to be mined for five years, and more reclamation

1 will consistently be needed. The concerns about
2 mine finances clearly -- previous humongous
3 bankruptcy -- clearly, concern has been mentioned in
4 the informal conference, lack of bonding for the
5 shadow areas have been made before.

6 And at the informal conference, I
7 presented exhibits detailing concerns about the
8 ever-increasing load of heavy metals, toxins to
9 public health and safety and to the environment for
10 ongoing mining in the coal slurry impoundments and
11 concerns that there will not be, you know, an end to
12 those. There will be more coal slurry impoundments.

13 So Foresight Energy, the parent
14 company for Hillsboro Energy, has had one documented
15 coal slurry impoundment emergency, a slope side just
16 mentioned before just months ago, and residents in
17 the area were so frightened, they left their homes
18 out of a fear of a breach of that impoundment. I
19 don't have any news reports. I've been searching.
20 There's nothing that I can find online. I did a
21 FOIA to the Illinois Emergency Management Agency,
22 which came up blocked at every line.

23 But, anyway, there's a rumor. I
24 can't say it's true. I haven't been down there.

1 But I can say there's a rumor that there was a slope
2 slide at the Sugar Camp Mine recently. That's
3 another Foresight project -- same engineers, same
4 kind of attitudes. And we know, those of us who
5 have been involved in this long enough, that there
6 were questions about the quality of the compaction
7 work at the permits under 399 and
8 3 -- I'm sorry -- 434.

9 So I raise these here tonight as my
10 submissions on reasonable issues that why these coal
11 mine permits cannot be approved.

12 And if I'm at time, I'll stop and
13 come back with one closing part.

14 MR. NAVARRETE: I mean, if it's
15 quick, go ahead.

16 MS. BLUMENSHINE: Thank you very
17 much, Hearing Officer.

18 So in summary, I have given a list of
19 reasons of why it's hard to see how this renewal can
20 comply, and considerations including what we, as the
21 public, see as repeated violations by this company,
22 in general, referring to Foresight and concerns for
23 the Deer Run Mine, and at the very, very least, I
24 want to raise that there are concerns for agency

1 actions that could be taken according to the
2 existing regulations, and I have four in closing.

3 Number one, the agency could require
4 additional bonding. 62 Illinois Administrative
5 Code, Part 1800, at Section 1800.4 at letter (b) has
6 that the Department shall determine the amount of
7 bond.

8 And it goes on with the wording in
9 quotes: "When other relevant conditions change,"
10 and then it goes, "According to the requirement of
11 Section 1800.15."

12 And then Section 1800.15 is
13 adjustment of amount. And at (a) it has -- and in
14 quotes: "The amount of the bond or deposit required
15 and the terms of acceptance of the applicant's bond
16 shall be adjusted by the Department from time to
17 time as the area requiring bond coverage is
18 increased or decreased or where the cost of future
19 reclamation changes."

20 And I just lift that up as what we
21 clearly see on the ground.

22 Number two of concerns of what the
23 agency is asked to do if, in the worst case, the
24 permits are renewed, which I really don't think they

1 should be -- so number two. Require more detailed,
2 realtime, descriptive, on-the-ground reports from
3 the mine regarding subsidence impacts and what is
4 being done via mine reclamation work with photos
5 that capture the actual on-the-ground conditions.
6 That doesn't seem too out of line. Because in
7 Permit 399, the subsidence control mitigation plan
8 was a map of the modeling on the ponding map where
9 the mine company at that time, which has been many
10 years ago, thought the ponding would occur. And it
11 would be good to have more specifics maybe to
12 document all of that and compare it to the original
13 permit approvals.

14 Number three. Why can't IDNR
15 inspection reports detail also on-the-ground issues,
16 photos, and full observations, time-relevant
17 observations what is happening with the mine to have
18 an ongoing, complete report of the seasonal changes
19 and other effects?

20 And then, lastly, number four, why
21 can't IDNR provide assistance to property owners in
22 understanding the mine's responsibilities and the
23 property owners' rights? There is, you know, what I
24 would say opportunities for the mine to consult with

1 IDNR. We know those things are as set up -- and it
2 can happen, of course. The responsiveness to the
3 public, if they have questions, is something I'm not
4 conversant with, but have a lot of concerns about
5 from other third-hand reports.

6 So thank you, sincerely, for your
7 time tonight in consideration of these comments, and
8 I have a written copy.

9 MS. OSIBAMOWO: Thank you very much.

10 MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you,
11 Ms. Blumenshine.

12 Whoever would like to speak next,
13 come to the podium.

14 MS. DECLUE: This is -- okay. Mary
15 Ellen DeClue from Litchfield, Illinois.

16 Thank you very much for rescheduling
17 this meeting. You have a challenging task ahead of
18 you, much like other regulatory agencies in the
19 United States that oversee coal mining.

20 The coal industry has dominated for
21 over two centuries, and residents and coal
22 communities have suffered. There must be
23 improvements in the transition away from coal for
24 communities.

1 Your decision regarding how renewals
2 are evaluated is critical to the future of
3 Montgomery County. This coal renewal is not
4 justified, given the history of past, irresponsible
5 violations of policy and harm to our communities.

6 I respectfully request that the
7 permit renewal application by Hillsboro Energy,
8 LLC -- HEL -- be denied. This action would improve
9 the health, safety, and economic growth of
10 Montgomery County.

11 The erosion of economic development
12 in our community must be addressed. Foresight
13 Energy, the owner of Deer Run Mine, along with
14 several other mines in Illinois, has not been a
15 responsible overlord in the host communities in
16 Illinois.

17 Neighbors of Pond Creek Mine in
18 Williamson County were scared for their safety when
19 there was a slope slide of the retention pond at
20 Pond Creek Mine in December of 2023. There was not
21 adequate communication among the mine, IDNR, and
22 vulnerable neighbors.

23 With an unsuccessful attempt to put
24 out a fire in the Sugar Camp Mine in Franklin County

1 in September of 2021, 46,000 gallons of toxic foam
2 were dumped into this Foresight mine known as
3 "forever chemicals," perfluoro alkyl substances, or
4 PFAS -- it's P-F-A-S -- ended up contaminating
5 surrounding farmland and surrounding ground and
6 surface waters.

7 A resident activist photographed the
8 foam in a nearby farm field and in a tributary to
9 Akin Creek and submitted the evidence to the
10 Illinois EPA and the Chicago Tribune. Both the fire
11 and Foresight's responses had remained secret until
12 the activist documented and reported the incident.

13 Foresight officials also hired
14 contractors to drill boreholes into the mine without
15 a permit from you guys.

16 In a press release, Attorney General
17 Raoul stated that Sugar Camp jeopardized public
18 safety and irresponsibly violated state and
19 environmental statutes. He stated that exposure to
20 PFAs can cause long-lasting damage to the
21 environment and poses a serious risk to public
22 health.

23 Foresight was negligent regarding the
24 miners' safe exit when exiting from the fire and its

1 indiscriminate dispersion of the PFAs. Foresight
2 received a citation from MSHA, but -- sorry -- from
3 MSHA for risking the safety of the miners and not
4 alerting them of the fire immediately.

5 The toxic impacts from the PFAs were
6 very apparent, harming farm animals and wildlife in
7 areas surrounding where the PFAs were used. Several
8 farmers living near the mine have lost over a
9 hundred and ten livestock, have new upwelling
10 springs containing the PFAs, tumors on the lips of
11 deers, malformed fish in a nearby pond.

12 One of the severely affected
13 neighbors, the Dennis Clark family, filed a
14 complaint against Foresight Energy, LLC, and
15 associates, in the Circuit Court. Foresight moved
16 to dismiss the complaint or compel arbitration. The
17 back-and-forth filings between Clark and Foresight
18 ended with Clark being forced into arbitration.
19 This tragedy is another example of coal privilege
20 and coal's harmful influence on communities.

21 Foresight Energy has shown by its
22 actions that the primary mode of operation is to
23 maximize profits while risking the safety of its
24 employees, the safety of neighbors, while using the

1 environment as its waste receptacle. Tragically,
2 five miners have lost their lives at the Sugar Camp
3 Mine since 2008.

4 In addition, Foresight has not
5 carried out the best management operations that are
6 designed in the four Deer Run Mine permits under
7 consideration. There are serious concerns about why
8 the original operation of Deer Run Mine was not
9 designed to address the appropriate safety issues
10 that offset pyritic sulfur's known ability to create
11 spontaneous combustion and hotspots in longwall
12 panels.

13 Deer Run Mine started longwall
14 production in 2012, develop its first hotspot in
15 2014, followed by another in 2015, with a mine being
16 sealed in 2016. MSHA, finally in 2019, required
17 Deer Run Mine to develop an alternate method of
18 mining coal. Deer Run Mine was switched from a
19 bleeder system to a U-type ventilation plan,
20 according to Mark Cornell, president of Patton
21 Mining, LLC at the time. I think this was in
22 January -- January of 2020, but I'm not sure of the
23 date.

24 If revision two of Permit 399 is

1 renewed, more high-hazard impoundments will be
2 needed to impound the toxic wash-water from the coal
3 preparation plant that is located very near
4 Hillsboro Hospital. The threat of failure of the
5 two high-hazard coal slurry impoundments is a
6 deterrent for community development, especially when
7 the placement of these impoundments endangers the
8 lives of residents and a drinking water supply.

9 The required water monitoring for
10 coal mine permits is not extensive enough to
11 determine the amount of contamination in the
12 surrounding areas. Even with the adequate
13 monitoring, most of the 400 violations of Foresight
14 involves water with many still having a status of
15 not being abated.

16 Sugar Camp has often been found on
17 EPA's chronic violators' list of the Federal Clean
18 Water Act. As far as air pollution is concerned,
19 there are no coal dust restrictions in Hillsboro.
20 Air pollution is a very real, ongoing health problem
21 for coal communities.

22 The damage to farmland that
23 was -- that has happened from longwall mining is not
24 in agreement with the outcomes presented in

1 Permit 399 from subsidence. The flooded fields with
2 drainage obstructions are not -- excuse me -- are
3 not restored if restoration is possible. Some of
4 the fields have not been capable of planting for
5 over three years.

6 Contemporaneous reclamation required
7 by SMCRA is not happening at Deer Run Mine.

8 Reclamation of coal mine sites is an expensive,
9 time-consuming process that coal operators are
10 obligated to complete. However, with a declining
11 coal industry, realizing this actual reclamation is
12 even more at risk. This failure to reclaim mine
13 sites places surrounding communities at risk of
14 landslides, catastrophic flooding events, water
15 pollution, and additional health and safety hazards.

16 Citizens Against Longwall Mining, or
17 CALM, recently signed a letter in support of a 2024
18 reclamation policy platform to address modern-era
19 coal mine costs and liability. The policy document
20 is a summation of a broad coalition working together
21 for several years led by the Appalachian Law Center
22 and Appalachian Voices. By adopting improvements to
23 federal laws and regulations, we can help ensure
24 that coal communities like ours will no longer be

1 left with degraded land and water resources.

2 Neither coal communities nor
3 taxpayers should be burdened with reclamation costs
4 and cleanup from post-1977 mines that are inactive
5 or closed. Prior to 1977, the Abandoned Mine Lands,
6 or AML, fund is supposed to cover reclamation costs
7 of these mines.

8 With the declining market for coal,
9 and climate change issues, coal companies can
10 financially or -- I'm sorry -- coal companies are
11 financially compromised. To delay reclamation, coal
12 operators classify the mine as active when the mine
13 is basically abandoned. The term "zombie" describes
14 the status and function of the orphaned mines.

15 MR. NAVARRETE: Ms. DeClue, you're
16 over time. Are you almost done, or can we come
17 back?

18 MS. DECLUE: Come back.

19 MR. NAVARRETE: All right. Let's do
20 that.

21 MS. DECLUE: Thank you. You've been
22 very kind.

23 MR. NAVARRETE: Would you like to
24 come on up, ma'am?

1 MS. DRESSEN: My name is Karyl
2 Dessen.

3 I want to state my opposition to the
4 renewal of Hillsboro Energy's Deer Run Mine, Permits
5 399 and 424.

6 I'm a resident of Montgomery County.
7 I grew up on a farm in the area being longwall
8 mined, and my family still lives and farms there.

9 What have I observed since these
10 permits were first approved? There is now a coal
11 processing facility near the adjoining towns of
12 Hillsboro and Schram City. There are two
13 high-hazard coal slurry impoundments containing
14 contaminating waste from washing the coal.

15 I learned at a hearing for Permit 424
16 that a failure at the impoundment could inundate
17 part of the town. An entire farming community is
18 gone; land, taken up by the processing facility and
19 slurry impoundments, can no longer produce crops.
20 More than a dozen homes within the first mine panels
21 have been torn down. Leaning and damaged structures
22 remain at a few sites.

23 For the past three years, county
24 residents have endured delays and detours on a state

1 highway, Route 185, due to subsidence damage from
2 longwall mining. A long section is still reduced to
3 20 miles per hour due to severe pavement distress.

4 I've witnessed the ongoing
5 devastation to my family's farm fields for three
6 years. Once level farm fields are now subsided 6 to
7 7 feet above the longwall mine panels.

8 The room-and-pillar mine passageways
9 do not subside impeding drainage. The natural
10 direction of drainage has also been disrupted due to
11 the direction the panels are being mined and
12 subsided.

13 Formerly flat fields with good
14 drainage and minimum erosion now have large areas of
15 pooled water. Topsoil is lost from erosion on the
16 slopes caused by the longwall panels and the large
17 ditches dug as part of the mine's attempts at
18 drainage mitigation.

19 Revision two to Permit 399 added
20 7,731.8 more acres of shadow area to be damaged by
21 longwall mining subsidence.

22 Appendix F in this permit revision
23 stated, "Hillsboro Energy must correct material
24 damage resulting from subsidence caused to surface

1 lands, to the extent technologically and
2 economically feasible, by restoring the land to a
3 condition capable of maintaining the value and
4 reasonably foreseeable uses which it was capable of
5 supporting before subsidence."

6 Level farm ground will never be
7 restored to what it was before being subsided.
8 Topsoil lost to erosion cannot be restored. Ground
9 flooded for long periods of time will never be as
10 productive.

11 Appendix F stated, "The Department
12 will review the performance of Hillsboro Energy's
13 subsidence control plan in the field concerning
14 prompt and effective mitigation. The Department
15 will monitor Hillsboro Energy's performance in
16 meeting land mitigation requirements, replacement of
17 protected water supplies, and structure mitigation
18 requirements."

19 It also required the mine to submit
20 quarterly reports detailing the mitigation
21 accomplished and outline future mitigation planning.
22 There are no details in the mine's quarterly reports
23 under monitoring or mitigation. These sections
24 contain the same cut-and-paste comments in all of

1 the reports for 2022 and 2023.

2 The monthly land reclamation general
3 inspection reports from IDNR also contained a
4 cut-and-paste lack of detail. Especially as
5 pertaining to the shadow area from January through
6 December of 2023, the report stated the Deer Run
7 Mine conducts subsidence mitigation to correct
8 surface-water drainage over the mined-out panels.
9 The operator is continuing to monitor all longwall
10 panels that have been mined out and is performing
11 longwall subsidence mitigation in an appropriate
12 manner.

13 How is IDNR monitoring Hillsboro
14 Energy's prompt and effective mitigation in the
15 shadow area when there are no details in either
16 IDNR's or the mine's reports on what actual surface
17 subsidence is being observed in the mine panels are
18 actual mitigation to correct surface drainage? What
19 is the timeline for prompt mitigation since one of
20 my family's fields will now be left unplanted for
21 the fourth year?

22 Deer Run is currently longwall mining
23 on panel 6 with 11 more panels approved by IDNR in
24 revision two in 2021. Renewal of Deer Run's permits

1 means longwall mining and an additional
2 7,731.8 acres of shadow area, much more than in
3 their original permit.

4 Renewal means more homes and farm
5 buildings damaged and farm families displaced, more
6 public roads damaged, impacts to the west edge of
7 Coffeen Lake and streams such as Bearcat Creek,
8 level farm fields permanently altered with large
9 subsided areas of pooled water due to the
10 subsidence, and disruptions of the natural drainage
11 patterns, and added ditching through their fields.

12 Why is the mining company allowed to
13 damage private and public property, especially a
14 company that has already filed for bankruptcy once
15 since the start of operations here and has a history
16 of violations?

17 Over 400 violations are listed in the
18 renewal application for the applicant and its owners
19 with the majority being at the Illinois mines.

20 Coal falls under the umbrella of
21 Illinois Department of Natural Resources, but clean
22 air and water and productive farmland are also one
23 of the state's natural resources. Even the mine
24 company referred to the valuable farm ground that

1 overlies the shadow area in an application.

2 In closing, I would like to reference
3 some comments of the late Catherine Edmiston, who
4 grew up in Montgomery County, and fought tirelessly
5 to protect our community from longwall mining. She
6 pointed out that our area was the beginning of the
7 broad, flat, prairie land, the richest ground in the
8 world.

9 She asked: Do we sacrifice that for
10 future generations for the one-time taking of coal?

11 Thank you for the opportunity to
12 speak.

13 MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you,
14 Ms. Dressen.

15 Please.

16 MR. SCHROEDER: Yes. My name is
17 William "Bill" Schroeder. I live in Hillsboro,
18 11 -- 62049.

19 I'm going to touch on some of the
20 subjects that previously were addressed by
21 Ms. Blumenshine and Ms. Dressen about the drainage.

22 Going back to the beginning of the
23 permitting process of 399 when this first came to
24 town, the public hearings that were held, there was

1 a guarantee by the mine and IDNR that there would
2 be -- that a comprehensive drain plan, somehow or
3 another, would be comprised and adhered to going
4 forward.

5 This personally -- the beginning was
6 that the drainage plan would be modeled on the first
7 two panels, which, as it turned out, the first two
8 panels, the drainage was from the south to the
9 north.

10 After that, which they wouldn't -- or
11 complete a plan, which it seemed to be a little odd
12 at the time, because from there forward, the
13 drainage was going to be from the north to the
14 south. So everything that was easily done -- the
15 first two panels -- which the second panel drained
16 into the first panel, so that was no big deal.

17 From now on, the panels drained to
18 unmined area, and so far it's been required that
19 there would be -- and the farther south this goes,
20 the more complicated it gets.

21 There was a lot of concern at the
22 beginning of this hearing process back then about
23 ditches that would have to be dug and how much
24 ground that they would take out of place. It was

1 guaranteed: No, that wasn't going to be a problem.

2 Well, as it turns out -- you can
3 witness it yourself -- there's been some tremendous
4 ditches, and from my -- from what I've learned or
5 what I know, without any approval from the Corps of
6 Engineers. If I were to go out and dig a ditch like
7 that, the Corps of Engineers would have me in jail
8 the next day. So I don't understand how that works.

9 But the concerns that big ditches
10 with big, long, black, back slopes would be taking
11 out even more productive farmland has come to pass,
12 and it seems like the only way that it's going
13 to -- the drainage would be completed with -- would
14 be more ditches and more ground taken out of
15 production, including the ground that was already
16 flooded.

17 The beginning -- the -- excuse me.

18 As I see it with the ponding, without
19 digging ditches, there would have to be either
20 something installed like pumping stations or lift
21 stations similar to what some of the distant
22 subdivisions have to use for municipal sewer
23 systems.

24 If this is the case, rather than dig

1 ditches, if this would be part of the plan, then,
2 again, it raises the question: Who is going to pay
3 for them? How will they be maintained? And
4 the -- and where will they actually go to? I mean,
5 will they -- will they pump to a bigger ditch, or
6 how will that work?

7 Anyway, my concern, again, is that as
8 the farther south you go -- and I am south -- the
9 more complicated the drainage gets, and as of to
10 right now, as near as I can tell, there has never
11 been the promised drainage plan completed or filed
12 in any -- in any portion of the DNR.

13 So my request is: Up and until there
14 is at least some type of comprehensive drain plan
15 that would detail how this was going to take place,
16 how much ground would be taken out of production,
17 and how it would be influencing the natural flow of
18 water, I would hope that there would be a hold on
19 this permit until that is completed.

20 I appreciate that, and thank you very
21 much.

22 MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you.

23 MS. OPLT: Good evening. My thanks
24 to the IDNR for hosting this public hearing and

1 allowing the people in this room to voice their
2 truths.

3 My name is Toni Oplt. I live in
4 Edwardsville, Illinois. I am a member of the
5 Illinois Sierra Club; I chair the Metro East Green
6 Alliance; and I cochair the Illinois chapter's
7 Conservation Committee. I'm also a commissioner on
8 the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. And while
9 I hold no authority to speak on behalf of these
10 organizations, save Metro East Green Alliance, I
11 come here today to speak my own informed truth to
12 power.

13 I began in a place many do not wish
14 to go at the threshold of climate change. Climate
15 change is here and threatens global well-being
16 daily, but acknowledging it requires us to say out
17 loud that it is the truth; requires us to act
18 accordingly by reducing human manifested carbon
19 emissions at a global scale in ways not everyone
20 will favor.

21 One of my proudest moments as an INPC
22 commissioner was being directed to the IDNR's
23 climate action plan, plain to see on your website
24 for everyone. It is -- and I quote -- a roadmap for

1 zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The IDNR
2 climate action plan outlines strategies for reducing
3 emissions from operations, buildings, and
4 transportation, increasing renewable energy
5 production, and helping Illinois natural resources
6 be more resilient to the impacts of climate change.
7 So you see, in my mind, that's what we call "walking
8 the walk."

9 So I am somewhat confused by the
10 intention you entertain to renew Hillsboro Energy's
11 permits for the next five years, allowing it to
12 continue its extractive, polluting, and
13 community-destroying activities in the face of
14 climate change.

15 Of course, I could speak to the air
16 pollution the mine forces on the community to suffer
17 through 24/7, the loss of habitat and species to its
18 ongoing extraction, the multiple violations the
19 company has incurred while continuing with seeming
20 impunity for profit, the destruction of family farms
21 and homes caused by the mine's planned collapsed
22 panels, the continually flooded and collapsed public
23 roads that threaten to hinder any emergency
24 vehicles, not to mention seriously impacting the

1 lives of residents.

2 I could talk about the few number of
3 jobs the mine actually provides in a highly
4 mechanized operation that sends underground workers
5 to their grave years earlier than expected with
6 deadly black lung, or the fact that no one truly
7 profits from the mine's operation but the energy
8 company itself.

9 But I will rest my truth on climate
10 change, the one undeniable truth from which no one
11 will escape, not even the CEO of Hillsboro Energy.
12 Of course, we could follow the steps like the IDNR's
13 climate action plan. We could shut down this mine
14 and others like it.

15 So I come tonight, in truth and good
16 faith, to ask that your office of surface mines and
17 minerals deny the permit to Hillsboro Energy as a
18 positive step toward resiliency in the face of
19 climate change.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you.

22 MR. SCOTT: Do I need to stand at the
23 podium?

24 What I -- it's too complex to do in

1 six minutes, really.

2 My name is John Scott. I live in
3 Champaign, Illinois, but I own land in Hillsboro
4 Township, and I appreciate the presenters that came
5 before me, especially Joyce Blumenshine's organized
6 and thoughtful presentation, as well as everyone
7 else's. And I probably will not be as eloquent, but
8 I did hit the print button on my printer.

9 I know the coal company -- is Jeff
10 here? Is the coal company here tonight?

11 I see Amy, right?

12 MS. OAKES: I think you're referring
13 to our prior manager, who Kemi has taken his
14 position.

15 MR. SCOTT: Who has?

16 MS. OAKES: Kemi.

17 MR. SCOTT: You work for the coal
18 company?

19 MS. OSIBAMOWO: No. I work for IDNR.
20 So are you referring to Jeff Steiner?

21 MR. SCOTT: No, the coal company
22 lawyer.

23 MS. OAKES: No coal company lawyer is
24 present this evening. A representative from the

1 coal company is here this evening.

2 MR. SCOTT: And you're -- what's your
3 representation, and who are you?

4 MR. CROSS: I'm a representative of
5 the coal company.

6 MR. SCOTT: You're a miner or what?

7 MR. CROSS: I'm a representative. My
8 name is Clayton Cross.

9 MR. SCOTT: You're just here? Yeah.
10 Your background on this -- well, I just represent
11 myself. I don't represent any companies.

12 But, you know, I'm surprised that
13 this proceeding has gone ahead. I guess I'm
14 calling -- I would like to see 399 -- and is it
15 242 -- not approved.

16 The coal company has been trying to
17 prove that they don't have standing in the case for
18 a number of years. I don't know that that's true.

19 You know, my family has lived in this
20 area for quite a while, and this millstone out in
21 the yard here comes from the -- off of some -- off a
22 mill from some land that we own, and we do own land
23 in Hillsboro Township.

24 I printed this thing off.

1 I had contacted Amy about finishing
2 the last case, and I haven't received anything from
3 the Honorable Judge Dan Schuering, regarding
4 finishing that case, and it's my understanding that
5 he has to make a judgment -- a final judgment on
6 this case, whether it's just paperwork or whatever,
7 before any cases can proceed, because it seems like
8 these permits are not mutually exclusive, that he
9 has the right to reject the permit based on that
10 judicial review, but we haven't heard a final on
11 that yet.

12 And let's see if I can find the
13 exact -- here it is on the State of Illinois Bureau
14 of Administrative Hearings, Department of Natural
15 Resources.

16 John R. Scott, Joyce Blumenshine,
17 Mary Ellen DeClue, Citizens Against Longwall Mining,
18 a nonprofit corporation, petitioner; Department of
19 Natural Resources and Hillsboro Energy. The matter
20 comes for a decision . . .

21 And so basically to make it short, he
22 discounts Blumenshine and DeClue, but he says at the
23 end that there's a -- let's see. Scott
24 requests -- one-page letter.

1 Anyway, he says that my
2 comments -- he didn't take me off the case and asked
3 me to write another permit -- I mean write another
4 response, and then the coal company is to write a
5 response. So I had two weeks to write a response,
6 and the coal company had four weeks to write a
7 response, which they did, and then we didn't hear a
8 final on that. And I contacted Schuering's office
9 multiple times, and I emailed Amy, and Amy actually
10 sent an email saying that -- requesting a response.

11 Let's see if there's an
12 updated -- this is from -- if there's an update on
13 this case, I have not received any communication
14 from John Scott. It's still pending with BAH. This
15 is -- thank you, Amy.

16 And then there's another one. This
17 is on October 25, '23. As bystander to completion,
18 I'm looking for an update to DNR OMN LRDP ER
19 21001 (phonetic). Please -- thank you, Amy.

20 And I haven't -- I haven't received
21 anything that I know of either. I haven't received
22 any emails. I haven't received any written
23 notifications. So unless I'm, you know, in the
24 dark, or I don't -- you know, I've missed something

1 here, it seems to me like the last judicial review
2 has not been completed.

3 MS. OAKES: Mr. Scott, you're aware
4 that's with the Bureau of Hearings under Judge
5 Schuering? So Judge Schuering is the one that needs
6 to respond to that, and then DNR is a bystander
7 status at that point in this case.

8 MR. SCOTT: What's a bystander
9 status?

10 MS. OAKES: That means until there's
11 a ruling on standing or until there's a hearing,
12 that although I represent the Department, we are not
13 involved until the permit renewal actually comes
14 into question. We have to pass standing.

15 MR. SCOTT: Right. Well, I think the
16 permit renewal was under question -- I mean, that
17 was part of the judicial review since the judge had
18 the authority to dismiss the permit, and so since
19 there hasn't been a judgment on keeping or
20 dismissing that permit, then I don't see how this
21 request for renewal can even proceed.

22 MS. OAKES: Okay. And you're aware
23 that that's something you'll need to take up with
24 Judge Schuering on the appeal of that part?

1 MR. SCOTT: You told me that.

2 MS. OAKES: Sure.

3 MR. SCOTT: I don't -- I don't
4 understand the logic of that myself, but it doesn't
5 seem to make sense.

6 Okay. Now, if we're going to -- with
7 this other permit -- can I get a copy of this 424?

8 MS. OSIBAMOWO: The entire permit?

9 MR. SCOTT: Yeah.

10 MS. OSIBAMOWO: It's available on the
11 website.

12 MR. SCOTT: And this 208.144, can I
13 get a copy of --

14 MS. OSIBAMOWO: The renewal
15 application, yes, it's on the website.

16 MR. SCOTT: The original permit, I
17 think there's problems with it that -- you know, I'm
18 sure that the Illinois DNR -- you know, I appreciate
19 you as individuals and that you're here, and you
20 care about these things, but I think the Illinois
21 DNR has failed in protecting the citizens of
22 Illinois regarding this longwall mining permit. I
23 mean, it's got a myriad of problems. I know you're
24 all going to divorce yourself from the actual

1 problems because you just do the permit.

2 For example, when the mineral rights
3 were sold back in the late 1800s, early 1900s, my
4 grandfather was present at some of those signings,
5 and he told me that the coal company was selling it
6 as a longwall mining, and that the farmers, if you
7 signed up, would not be affected by it at the
8 surface whatsoever. And if there was an unusual
9 occurrence, it would be a small sinkhole
10 that -- one, maybe two at the most on your property.
11 So these people that sold their mineral rights, they
12 sold them under that basis, not under the basis that
13 their whole farm and their buildings would be in a
14 sinkhole.

15 So I think the current mining on them
16 is being done under false pretenses, and I know you
17 guys divorce yourself from that reality because
18 you're just doing the permit process.

19 Also, back -- what was it?

20 19 -- well, a number of years ago, Peabody Coal
21 decided they weren't going to do the mining anymore.
22 So they wanted to get rid of the permits -- or their
23 leases. And so they didn't want to go through the
24 process of giving them back to individual

1 landowners, so they made a deal with the county.

2 The county would take them and turn them back or do
3 whatever.

4 The county, instead of turning them
5 back to the landowners so the landowners could make
6 their personal choice on whether they wanted their
7 land destroyed by longwall mining and subsidence,
8 they sold all the permits to -- that I know of, to a
9 coal company out east, and so that's where we're at.

10 Now, the current coal company is
11 mining under the assumption that they have the right
12 to longwall mine, but nobody that was not the
13 process -- and I think it's created a lot of hard
14 feelings and neighbor against neighbor, and it's not
15 just -- you know, everyone here is responsible for
16 the destruction that's going on to the land here.

17 You know, we -- it's easier -- easy
18 for someone to say, "Oh, it's the bad coal company
19 or whatever that's causing it," but us allowing it
20 to go on, we're -- we're affecting our neighbors;
21 we're affecting the environment, especially where
22 this coal is going.

23 I think the coal miners even know
24 that they're destroying people's property. They may

1 be down there getting a livelihood, but that's what
2 the solution is.

3 And I'm impressed that I haven't been
4 coughing. I'm trying to get over a respiratory
5 illness. So if I cough, I'm sorry, but I discovered
6 recently that -- well, I've been diagnosed with
7 asthma. I live a mile downstream from -- or
8 downwind from the coal-fired power plant in
9 Champaign, Illinois, that's owned by the University
10 of Illinois.

11 MR. NAVARRETE: Mr. Scott, sorry to
12 interrupt, but I think your time is up, but I think
13 there will probably be time at the end so you could
14 come back and finish your thoughts, but I just want
15 to make sure everyone has a chance.

16 MR. SCOTT: Okay. That's good.
17 Well, I want to make sure because there's a couple
18 of important issues with the permit that weren't
19 taken into consideration by the IDNR that I think
20 really should be taken into consideration instead of
21 ignored as usual.

22 MR. NAVARRETE: Okay. Thank you.

23 MR. SCOTT: Thank you.

24 One other thing I wanted to say. I

1 appreciate her mentioning my mother Barbara Scott's
2 twin sister, Catherine, and her work in this area
3 also, because her land that my cousins own now is
4 adjoining our property there.

5 MS. BURGESS: Good evening. Thank
6 you for this opportunity. My name is Sally Burgess.
7 I'm the downstate organizing manager for the
8 Illinois Chapter of Sierra Club, and I provide staff
9 support for the chapter's mining issues team.

10 The mining team has toured the area
11 around Deer Run Mine. We've seen with our own eyes
12 the damage to Larry Schraut's farm and now buildings
13 and the State Highway 185, but also one of the
14 issues that the mining team discusses is the glaring
15 discrepancy between Illinois' goal of being a
16 national leader on climate and energy policy and the
17 fact that we're the fourth largest coal producer in
18 the country.

19 Many coal-fired power plants in
20 Illinois have retired or have retirement dates.
21 Utility companies understand the renewable
22 technologies, such as wind and solar, are rapidly
23 growing in popularity and are economical and are
24 therefore the path for the future. Utilities also

1 know that coal is highly toxic, and because of that,
2 requires expensive technologies to mitigate damage
3 to air and water.

4 Of course, there's always been a
5 tension between the role coal has played in
6 advancing humanity and its dangers to humans in the
7 environment. As early as the 1300s, according to
8 the EPA website, the burning of coal was associated
9 with air that was dangerous to breathe.

10 Quote: "At the turn of the century,
11 cries to reduce the smoke faced a tough opponent.
12 Coal was fueling the Industrial Revolution. To be
13 against coal burning was to be against progress, but
14 progress won out."

15 But at what cost?

16 NASA has a graphic on its website,
17 which illustrates the relentless rise of CO2 since
18 about 1950. Scientists warned back in the 1980s
19 that we must not exceed the 350 parts per million
20 CO2. Otherwise life-threatening climate events
21 would occur more often and be more expensive. We
22 now find ourselves hitting historical records of CO2
23 ppm on an annual basis, and all of the consequences
24 we've been warned about for decades have come to

1 pass.

2 According to the National Oceanic and
3 Atmospheric Administration's global monitoring
4 website, yesterday's level of CO2 was nearly 426
5 parts per million. One year ago, it was 420. Ten
6 years ago, it was 398. That is the relentless rise
7 of CO2. As carbon dioxide increases, so does the
8 global temperature. They go together like hand in
9 glove.

10 2023 was the hottest year on record,
11 and according to NOAA, almost the expensive when you
12 take into account billion-dollar, climate-related
13 events. And let us not forgot last spring's
14 drought-related dust storm here in the downstate on
15 I-55 that involved 72 vehicles, injured over 30
16 people, and killed 8.

17 So let's take a look at the
18 contribution coal makes. The Energy Information
19 Administration reports that combustion of one short
20 ton of coal will result in nearly three short tons
21 of CO2 in the environment. Deer Run extracted
22 4,469,223 short tons of coal in 2022 according to
23 the IEA's coal data browser and the Illinois Coal
24 Annual Statistical Report for 2022. Coal extracted

1 results in coal combusted and exacerbates the
2 relentless rise of CO2.

3 Yes, coal has made a significant
4 contribution to the advancement of humanity, but for
5 too long it has been considered necessary.

6 And passing the Future Energy Jobs
7 Act in 2016 and the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act
8 in 2021, Illinois made a clear commitment to
9 advancing beyond dirty coal to the cleaner and safer
10 alternatives of solar and wind. The State of
11 Illinois cannot boast of leading the way on climate
12 and energy policy while at the same time allowing
13 Deer Run to extract millions of tons of coal.

14 I urge IDNR to deny the permit
15 renewal application by Hillsboro Energy, LLC. Thank
16 you for your time.

17 MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you,
18 Ms. Burgess.

19 Is there anyone else who hasn't had a
20 chance to speak yet for a first time who would like
21 to come up?

22 MR. KASTEN: Hello. My name is Allen
23 Kasten.

24 And me and Larry are probably the

1 most affected by this mine. Do not issue them a
2 permit.

3 I have dealt with him, and they are
4 crooked. They have done stuff to us that's
5 terrible. Our land has been destroyed. It's a
6 mess.

7 And, second of all, they still have
8 not paid us for crop damages from last year. It's
9 ridiculous. These people are a disgrace, complete
10 disgrace. Somebody needs to help us.

11 And I don't know why you would ever
12 issue them a permit when you look at all the soil
13 erosion that they have caused. Look at it. It's
14 everywhere. If I'd done something like that,
15 I -- soil and water, you know, I'd lose all my
16 government payments, everything. It's not right
17 what they've done. It's illegal.

18 And I will be issuing -- or, well,
19 filing a lawsuit, and I -- if something don't get
20 done, IDNR is going to be on that lawsuit also
21 because you guys have not followed the proper
22 procedures with things, and I have legal proof of
23 it.

24 Thank you.

1 MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you,
2 Mr. Kasten.

3 Is there anyone else who would like
4 to speak for the first time who has not had a chance
5 yet?

6 Ms. DeClue, would you like to come
7 back up?

8 MS. DECLUE: You know it.

9 Thank you for your patience.

10 I think I left off about the zombie
11 mines, that basically that's mines that have been
12 established since 1977 that are inactive. They're
13 not productive. They're sitting there and should be
14 reclaimed. Okay. Here we go from that.

15 Who will pay the reclamation and
16 cleanup liabilities of these failed companies where
17 bonding is insufficient and coal operators are
18 bankrupt? We see that coal mine bankruptcies have
19 resulted in forgiveness of environmental
20 liabilities, health obligations, and pensions, which
21 is contrary to federal law. Between 2012 and 2017,
22 four of the largest coal companies in the U.S. were
23 able to shed almost 5.2 billion of environmental and
24 retiree liabilities.

1 In 2016, Peabody Coal declared
2 bankruptcy in the State of Illinois for 17 cents on
3 the liability dollar. This resulted in Illinois
4 accepting 16.1 million for a debt of 92.2 million.
5 Peabody is still mining and producing more
6 environmental damage. So not only are coal
7 operators clued in to how to rid themselves of
8 financial obligations, but the original debt against
9 them is not adequate or secure.

10 Foresight and its subsidiaries filed
11 for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on March 10, 2020, after
12 entering a restructuring agreement. The Foresight
13 Energy longwall mines continue operations in
14 Illinois without adequate bonding and reclamation
15 security.

16 The first problem listed in the 2024
17 reclamation policy platform was the insufficiency of
18 existing coal bonding systems that guarantee
19 reclamation. The bonding required in HEL's permits
20 are not sufficient to appropriately reclaim the
21 permit and the shadow area. I'm astounded that the
22 bonding required for a longwall mine is equal to the
23 bonding for room and pillar with the same permit
24 area size.

1 Longwall mining causes extensive
2 subsidence damage in the shadow area, but not the
3 permit area. Revision two of Permit 399 must not be
4 renewed. The 7,731.8-acre addition is not bonded.

5 The environmental damage from
6 longwall mining is much too destructive. The system
7 is so off-scale with IDNR giving HEL control over
8 farmers' livelihoods. With ever-diminishing coal
9 needs, we must not continue to sacrifice
10 agricultural, but, rather, we must conserve farmland
11 and water resources.

12 As the system works now, farmers must
13 be -- must be compensated for loss of crops during
14 the times of inability to plant, but not
15 unfortunately permanent damage to the land itself,
16 which is terrible.

17 Financial compensation to the farmer
18 for damage or contamination is an unequal struggle
19 between the powerful coal operator and the
20 individual landowner. HEL is not required to cover
21 material damage to land and water. This is apparent
22 in the lack of bonding required. It does allow HEL
23 to longwall mine with extensive destruction with no
24 time frame for reclamation or compensation. This

1 environmental injustice is not acceptable.

2 As of 2023, there are 32,500
3 acres -- I'll repeat that. As of 2023, there are
4 32,500 acres in Illinois of modern mines needing
5 cleanup with only 6,600 acres partially reclaimed.

6 Of the 400 -- 419 million coal
7 company bonds in Illinois, 68 percent of these bonds
8 are held by one company. IDNR must not renew Permit
9 399, revision one and two of Permit 399, and Permit
10 424. Instead, start the transition to closure.

11 Excuse me.

12 Another concern in the 2024 policy
13 platform is the failure of companies and regulators
14 to plan for mine closures. There needs to be more
15 stringent requirements for permit renewals so that
16 regulators can better evaluate the coal company's
17 reclamation ability. IDNR must reevaluate the
18 negative outcomes of longwall mining on coal
19 communities.

20 Why is the state supporting
21 destructive coal mining since it is not a viable
22 long-term investment for the community or the state?

23 By denying the renewal of the four
24 permits, the health, safety, and economic growth of

1 Montgomery County will improve. Do not approve the
2 renewal of the Deer Run Mine mine permits.

3 Thanks so much.

4 MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you.

5 MS. DECLUE: I will submit the text,
6 but I also wanted to add all the -- all the
7 discussion -- excuse me -- all the discussion about
8 the drainage.

9 At one time -- March 24,
10 2008 -- the Montgomery County Soil and Water
11 Conservation District submitted a letter to IDNR to
12 Scott Fowler, the supervisor, and basically in there
13 described that the way that the 399 -- the operation
14 of it, that there would be major drainage problems.
15 It was pointed out there.

16 Unfortunately, this letter was not
17 discovered until a couple of years later. It was
18 not in the findings that IDNR likes -- you know, the
19 comments of the various departments like Department
20 of Agricultural. Normally they have the letters of
21 communication. This was not included, and this was
22 accidentally found a couple of years later.

23 Yeah, I know, Amy. It surprised me,
24 too.

1 I'll submit this because I think it
2 kind of says from the beginning, there was some
3 major mistakes in the design of Deer Run Mine.

4 MR. NAVARRETE: Mr. Scott, did you
5 want to come back up?

6 MR. SCOTT: Well, the original
7 permit, there was a water section that Illinois DNR
8 exempted the coal company from doing any water
9 testing because they found, like, three wells, I
10 think? I think just about everybody in this area
11 has water wells.

12 So I think that -- I don't understand
13 how the coal company could be exempted from water
14 testing when the state requires it, unless they have
15 an exemption, and that's on Permit 399. I think
16 just everybody out there has got a water well.

17 And they look on the state's map for
18 water wells, and on my land it shows a water well,
19 and there's no water well there. There's other
20 water wells that it doesn't show. I don't know if
21 they're looking at a water well on the neighbor's
22 land, or they just put one in there because they
23 thought there ought to be one there. I don't know
24 what the thing is.

1 But then on these -- oh, shows how
2 you can fix up problems when you -- that you're
3 responsible -- the mining company, that when you
4 make a mistake, or you create a -- something that
5 the federal mining agency thinks is a -- shouldn't
6 be doing, they shut you down, and you have to show
7 that you -- you've, what, made restitution or you
8 fixed that problem?

9 And all of those are -- as I recall,
10 are from other states. They're from Kentucky, West
11 Virginia, which in the State of Illinois, it seems
12 like -- and we know that they have plenty of -- tons
13 they've been cited in Illinois, but that hasn't been
14 used in the permits whatsoever that I'm aware of.

15 And it seems interesting to me that
16 most people, when they have a job, the more
17 infractions they have -- even though if they show an
18 excuse or they show they've rectified the
19 infraction, they usually don't keep their job.

20 I mean, I work two full-time jobs,
21 seven days a week for over 30 years by working long
22 hours on weekends and during the week, and it was
23 always my feeling that I had to do my job perfectly
24 or pretty close to perfectly -- you know, show up on

1 time -- and on my evaluations not have anything
2 negative, only positives. But it seems like in the
3 Illinois DNR permitting process, the more negatives
4 the coal company has, the better on getting -- as
5 long as they show how somehow they've rectified it.

6 And they -- IDNR seems to think that
7 that's okay, which seems, to me, the opposite of
8 reality. And I think most people out here who work
9 or have a business find the same thing. If you're a
10 farmer, and you -- and your equipment is broken down
11 all the time, if you say you've got it fixed up,
12 that's not going to fix your problem. You know, you
13 have to be able to do the work and do it right.

14 And, also, in the State of Illinois,
15 as it -- from other states, like, for example, other
16 state licenses aren't that way. Like my Utah
17 out-of-state concealed carry license is not valid in
18 the State of Illinois. I've got to go through a
19 two-day additional class to prove my competency,
20 even though-- it's a moot point in Utah because they
21 have constitutional carry now.

22 In addition, I think there's -- I'd
23 like to read something from the -- let's
24 see -- conservation status of freshwater clams and

1 mussels. I think the current permit was designed so
2 long ago that it doesn't apply today. So the format
3 is wrong, and that's part of the problem. I think
4 the permit needs to be redesigned for today's
5 ecological standards and environmental standards
6 instead of the ones from -- I don't know when. It
7 was before 2015 this permit came around. Maybe it
8 was a hundred years ago. I don't know.

9 Let's see if I can find this thing on
10 the -- anyway, when I was a child, we used to go
11 down to Shoal Creek, and we pulled mussels out of
12 the -- besides fishing on Shoal Creek, we could
13 reach down in the mud and pull mussels out, and we'd
14 even find some that would have pearls in them
15 sometimes.

16 But recently, the -- all of the
17 freshwater mussels in the United States are
18 endangered, and according to the current research in
19 part from -- there's a section here that tells how
20 the U.S. mussel population is the most diverse
21 animal group in the world. There used to be so many
22 in the rivers and streams of the United States, but
23 basically they are not there anymore, and this is
24 the same Shoal Creek that the coal company dumped a

1 slurry of coal down from -- you know, it went
2 through Hillsboro here and went down Shoal Creek
3 adjoining our land where these mussels are.

4 And I think it's federal law that
5 these kinds of things need to be followed. I don't
6 think there's just one section of Shoal Creek. It's
7 the only place in the entire United States where
8 these mussels are not endangered, and they are
9 everywhere else. And has that been taken into
10 consideration?

11 I think there's new evidence of
12 negative health effects of coal pollution. There's
13 an article that came out last week that -- in fact,
14 the EPA just this last week lowered the threshold
15 for PM 2.5 down to 9. It was up to 35 if
16 you -- years ago, but that's the small pieces of
17 coal particles that get in our lungs and go into our
18 bloodstream and kill us basically.

19 And I was unaware of that when I was
20 younger because getting up for work in the morning,
21 people would tell me the dust in the car was related
22 to farm dust because it was in the farm or whatever.
23 I didn't think it was the coal-fired power plant a
24 mile down the street, but I realized recently that I

1 get up in the morning, and I'm going off to work in
2 the -- when the sun is rising, and all those pieces
3 of dust are sparkling like glass, and I'm, like, you
4 know, those are coming from coal dust off of
5 the -- and we've been -- I've been breathing that in
6 the last 60 years in my lungs and in my bloodstream.

7 And recent research shows that
8 anyone, whether it's a plant that has scrubbers on
9 it or not, is at -- doesn't live as long, is at
10 higher risk for cardiovascular disease and lung
11 disease.

12 So it's not just, you know, the bad
13 coal company dropping, you know, Montgomery County
14 into a sinkhole. It's affecting the whole world.

15 And where does the coal go? I mean,
16 besides the trucks that are carrying it up to the
17 coal plant at the University of Illinois. Most of
18 the stuff is going to the East Coast and being
19 shipped off to -- I'm guessing -- I don't know where
20 it's going. The coal company claims it's not to
21 China when they were asked, but they are shipping it
22 out somewhere. And my guess is they couldn't be
23 shipping it out anyplace that has better standards
24 for burning coal than we do here in the United

1 States. They're shipping it someplace where that
2 pollution is going to go into the air, and it's
3 going to come right back to us.

4 Even here in the United States, we're
5 finding that people's lives are affected even with
6 our high standards. So not just here, but -- and
7 this is high sulfur coal. It's not
8 anthrax -- anthracite. It's . . .

9 I think that's -- I don't know. I'm
10 tired of talking, and I think that's some of the
11 things I wanted to discuss, but I plan to submit an
12 additional and organized written comment during the
13 comment time.

14 MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you.

15 Is there any -- yes, ma'am.

16 MS. DRESSEN: One thing. Could I ask
17 a question on something just to get clarified?

18 Okay. So the renewals of the
19 Permits 399 and 424, so is the permit renewal for
20 399 not including the revisions that have been done
21 to it or some of the boundary revision? I thought
22 everything was included in this.

23 MR. SCHAFER: Let me see if I can
24 explain it.

1 So you have the permit on the 399,
2 and you have the Permit 424.

3 MS. DRESSEN: Yes.

4 MR. SCHAFER: We combined it -- Kemi
5 said at the beginning of the hearing, we decided to
6 combine so we can look comprehensively at the entire
7 mine operations during the renewal process. So we
8 combined all of the mine permits into one renewal
9 process. So we're not just looking at the 399 when
10 it comes up for renewal. We're not looking at just
11 424 when it comes up for renewal.

12 When you have a revision application,
13 that revision is a change in operations in some
14 manner. That really doesn't affect the renewal,
15 because once we issue the permit, 399 or 424, they
16 both have the opportunity for renewal for another
17 term. So this is what we're discussing: The
18 renewal of the terms for those two permits.

19 The 399 revision, one and two, is a
20 revision to the operations in some form. That
21 doesn't affect the term of the permit that was
22 issued for 399.

23 This is an example. I don't know the
24 dates. We issue a permit in 2013. They ask for a

1 revision of some sort in 2015. That permit that was
2 issued in 2013 is up for renewal five years later.

3 Help me. 2018. Thank you.

4 The 2015 revision is not going to
5 have its own renewal because that revision is part
6 of that 399 permit, okay? So when we talk about
7 revision applications and renewal applications,
8 there are applications to either change something in
9 the operations plan or to renew the permit that they
10 already have issued.

11 MS. DRESSEN: So if revision two is
12 approved in 2021, then is it coming up --

13 MR. SCHAFER: There is no renewal for
14 a revision.

15 MS. DRESSEN: It's included -- it is
16 grandfathered in with the big permit, correct?

17 MR. SCHAFER: It's a revision to the
18 application.

19 MS. DRESSEN: Okay.

20 MR. SCHAFER: It's not a new permit.
21 It's a revision to the operations of the permit.

22 We don't start over and say, "Okay.
23 You made a revision in 2015; therefore, now your
24 renewal date is 2020."

1 What we're saying is that there's a
2 revision in operations.

3 MS. OAKES: So revision becomes part
4 of the permit, and then the permit renewal is every
5 five years where we did the synchronization. So it
6 didn't come every five years because it became the
7 shorter amount of time, and then they're reviewed
8 together. So it's changes within the permit, and
9 the permit length is what's up for renewal.

10 MS. DRESSEN: Okay. I have just one
11 more question.

12 I think you'd mentioned that, like,
13 whenever they were talking about Permit 424, it was
14 on the IDNR website. I'm not finding some of these
15 permits on the website.

16 In fact, like, when this came up for
17 some different things, the only way we've seen it on
18 the website is -- and I appreciate it. I've asked
19 Mr. Schafer, because sometimes it will say do you
20 want to see this? It's in the office at Springfield
21 at IDNR, which is quite a distance, as you know, to
22 go to look at it.

23 When I've mentioned that and asked,
24 Mr. Schafer has put some of them online, but I'm not

1 seeing the older permits on the website. It's only
2 the ones that are pending.

3 MS. OAKES: The renewal is what's
4 pending, because these permits have a tendency to go
5 back so far. So once the original 399 is granted,
6 that's what -- if we have the capability, then it
7 would have been on the website.

8 Then when the renewal comes along,
9 it's the renewal application that goes on the
10 website. The other one has already been granted and
11 passed that time. So the renewal part of the
12 application, we don't go back to the original
13 application to look at the renewal.

14 MS. DRESSEN: Okay. If anyone would
15 want to view those original ones, then the only
16 place that it's going to be available is to
17 come -- is there a physical copy that you can look
18 at, at --

19 MR. SCHAFER: We have electronic
20 copies of our applications.

21 MS. DRESSEN: Okay.

22 MR. SCHAFER: Normally we ask
23 citizens or anyone to ask for a FOIA or through a
24 FOIA for that particular application, and we can

1 provide it for you that way.

2 Applications are usually put on our
3 Web page when they're in the process of being
4 reviewed so everybody has access to it. We hold on
5 to them for 30, 40 days afterwards on our Web page.

6 Once the informal -- I'm
7 sorry -- the administrative review period is past,
8 we usually take those down off our Web page because
9 of storage availability. We do have electronic
10 copies of them, and we can get copies to you for
11 that. We just ask that you go through a FOIA, and
12 you ask for that so we have records of everything.

13 MS. OAKES: They've been filed with
14 the county for every renewal process, so they are
15 still available through the county.

16 MS. DRESSEN: Okay.

17 MS. OAKES: Again, that's
18 geographically more appropriate because they are
19 huge files, and sending them electronically
20 sometimes is an issue. But they are
21 always -- that's why we denote in the beginning that
22 they are filed with the county.

23 MS. DRESSEN: Okay. I want to submit
24 my comments tonight, but I also want to submit

1 photos again. We've talked about documentation of
2 what's going on in the shadow area.

3 You can certainly ask my brother
4 what's going on. The Kasten family can tell you
5 what's going on with these farms.

6 So I mentioned about there seems to
7 be a lack of detail in the reports that I've FOIA'd
8 both from IDNR and from the mine, but, obviously,
9 I've been documenting some of what this land looks
10 like after being subsided. So I want to submit that
11 then with my comments.

12 I have photos of a field of my
13 brother's that was subsided with panel five, photos
14 from back in -- starting in March of '23. I have
15 photos and drone photos of the same field. That
16 field is still not draining. The way they drain it
17 is they have pumps out there that are pumping the
18 water out. So that's been almost a year now on it,
19 and I want to submit the photos from it.

20 Panel six is the panel that they are
21 currently longwall mining. That's the one that my
22 brother referred to with the buildings that have
23 been subsided. I have a photo of some of the
24 surface cracks from that subsidence, a photo of what

1 his field there looked like before and after
2 subsidence. So I want to submit those also to let
3 you know -- and the photos don't really do it
4 justice either with what these fields look like.

5 I also have a photo showing you some
6 of the ditching that is done to try to correct some
7 of this, these huge ditches that are dug because the
8 drainage isn't going in the natural pattern. So I'd
9 like to submit those then, too, with my comments.

10 Thank you.

11 MR. SCOTT: I thought of something
12 else I didn't mention.

13 Do any of you know if -- I mean our
14 governor is an environmentally conscious guy. You
15 know, he went to -- I think, in Europe, he went to
16 an environmental conference when the president and
17 other dignitaries were there. Is he aware that he's
18 on the first line at the top of these permits as
19 approving these permits? I can't believe that he
20 is. Do you know if he's aware of that?

21 MS. OAKES: Mr. Scott, any -- any
22 comments and questions that are going to be
23 responded to were responded to within the informal
24 conference or the public hearing. As I stated

1 earlier, we will respond to those within the
2 confines of the appendix if the permit renewal is
3 granted.

4 MR. SCOTT: Okay.

5 And another thing I was curious
6 about, is there anybody in the audience here that's
7 opposed to this being recorded? So it's just the
8 DNR that's opposed to it being recorded? As a
9 public meeting with the citizens, there are no
10 citizens here that would be opposed to it.

11 MS. OAKES: Mr. Scott, we provided
12 for this public hearing a court reporter to take
13 down the comments and responses.

14 MR. SCOTT: Yeah, you mentioned that
15 before. I was just curious about why there
16 wasn't -- I mean, in this -- today, everything is on
17 Facebook, Instagram, whatever. I was just kind of
18 surprised that the news media wasn't here to record
19 this. That's all. But I guess you guys don't allow
20 it? I'm not sure what you're afraid of, but . . .

21 MS. OAKES: Sharks. Just in case you
22 are concerned, I am very afraid of sharks. I know
23 that's not appropriate for tonight, but if you're
24 asking, that's one of them.

1 MR. SCOTT: You mean like sharks in
2 the ocean?

3 MS. OAKES: In the ocean.

4 MS. DECLUE: Me, too.

5 MR. NAVARRETE: Any other?

6 Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. OPLT: A woman who came to your
8 informal hearing was planning to come back and give
9 an informal statement. It's very brief, and she
10 can't come tonight. Would you mind if I read it?

11 MR. NAVARRETE: No.

12 MS. OPLT: Thank you.

13 Her name is Sandy Crawford, and she
14 lives in Godfrey.

15 "I would like to submit a comment
16 regarding the permit renewal request for Deer Run
17 Mine. I live in Godfrey and own farmland in
18 Montgomery County near Waggoner. I have several
19 concerns about this permit request.

20 I attended an informal conference for
21 submissions of comments in Hillsboro on December 4,
22 2023, and heard statements from local farmers who
23 have experienced subsidence due to longwall mining.

24 This subsidence and resulting

1 drainage and erosion problems have devastating
2 consequences for plantings, crops, structures, and
3 roads. Montgomery County has prime farmland, and
4 the impact on productivity of this land due to
5 subsidence, erosion, and pooling of water compounds
6 the economic challenges farmers already face. This
7 subsidence damages the farmland, permanently
8 diminishing crop production.

9 Deer Run and its parent company have
10 a history of permit violations, and given the
11 negative environmental and agricultural impacts of
12 longwall mining, it does not seem to make sense to
13 continue to extract coal at this cost during a time
14 when we should be transitioning from coal to
15 renewable energy.

16 I do not think that we should jeopardize
17 the livelihood of farmers and risk damage to
18 valuable farmland productivity, the resulting food
19 supply, and natural resources. I would ask that
20 your office take all of these concerns into
21 consideration and deny the Deer Run permit renewals.

22 Thank you for your consideration of my
23 comments."

24 And it's Sandy Crawford. And I can submit

1 both these comments, mine and hers.

2 Thank you very much.

3 MR. NAVARRETE: Any other comments?

4 (No response.)

5 MR. NAVARRETE: All right. Seeing
6 there's no other comments, I am going to start
7 closing this hearing.

8 Please drop off any written comments
9 or statements that you haven't already -- any other
10 documentation, which will be a part of the record.

11 Pursuant to 62 Illinois Admin. Code
12 1773.14(d)(5), the record shall remain open for
13 additional written statements responsive to the
14 statements or other documents within ten days
15 following the close of today's hearing.

16 All comments made and collected at
17 tonight's hearing, along with any additional
18 comments received in the next ten days by the
19 Department, shall be considered, along with its own
20 review of the application in making the final
21 decision, issued or denied, of the company's renewal
22 application.

23 Anyone attending the public hearing,
24 who has provided written comments to the Department

1 during the comment period and has provided us with
2 your contact information, will receive a copy of the
3 Department's decision regarding this application.

4 I'd like to thank all of you for your
5 participation. This public hearing is adjourned.

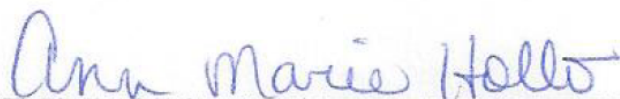
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8 (Hearing ended 7:24 p.m.)
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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, Ann Marie Hollo, Certified

Shorthand Reporter, Registered Diplomatic Reporter,
and a Certified Realtime Reporter within and for the
State of Illinois, do hereby certify that the
foregoing informal conference was taken by me to the
best of my ability and thereafter reduced to
typewriting under my direction; that I am neither
counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the
parties to the action in which this informal
conference was taken, and further that I am not a
relative or employee of any attorney or counsel
employed by the parties thereto, nor financially or
otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

Dated this 12th day of January, 2024.



Certified Shorthand Reporter
State of Illinois

A				
abandoned 37:5 37:13	addition 10:15 34:4 66:4 71:22	affect 19:4,4 76:14,21	animal 72:21	50:4 55:18 59:1 78:18
abated 35:15	additional 13:23 14:2 22:17 28:4 36:15 42:1 71:19 75:12 86:13,17	afraid 83:20,22	animals 33:6	appropriate 34:9 41:11 80:18 83:23
ability 13:13 18:15 22:18 25:16 34:10 67:17 88:8	address 8:17 34:9 36:18	afternoon 2:10 2:11	Ann 1:24 2:13 3:22 4:2 88:3	appropriately 65:20
able 4:19 6:11 6:14 64:23 71:13	addressed 14:24 31:12 43:20	agencies 7:8 30:18	annual 60:23 61:24	approval 14:14 16:12 21:23,24 45:5
acceptable 67:1	adequate 31:21 35:12 65:9,14	agency 26:21 27:24 28:3,23 70:5	anthracite 75:8	approvals 29:13
acceptance 28:15	adequately 22:19	ago 26:16 29:10 56:20 61:5,6 72:2,8 73:16	anthrax 75:8	approve 13:3 14:11 68:1
accepting 65:4	adhered 44:3	AGREED 4:1	anybody 5:4,4 11:8 12:5 14:7 83:6	approved 12:22 14:9 23:4,18 24:12 27:11 38:10 41:23 51:15 77:12
access 80:4	adjoining 38:11 59:4 73:3	agreement 35:24 65:12	anyplace 74:23	approving 82:19
accidentally 68:22	adjourned 87:5	agricultural 66:10 68:20 85:11	anyway 26:23 46:7 53:1 72:10	arbitration 33:16,18
accomplished 40:21	adjust 24:20	ahead 27:15 30:17 51:13	Appalachian 36:21,22	area 26:17 28:17 38:7 39:20 41:5,15 42:2 43:1,6 44:18 51:20 59:2,10 65:21,24 66:2 66:3 69:10 81:2
accomplishing 25:8	adjusted 28:16	air 35:18,20 42:22 48:15 60:3,9 75:2	apparent 33:6 66:21	arbitration 33:16,18
account 61:12	adjustment 28:13	Akin 32:9	appeal 54:24	area 26:17 28:17 38:7 39:20 41:5,15 42:2 43:1,6 44:18 51:20 59:2,10 65:21,24 66:2 66:3 69:10 81:2
accurate 6:12 13:3	Adm 2:15	alerting 33:4	appendix 18:18 24:4 39:22 40:11 83:2	arbitration 33:16,18
acknowledging 47:16	Admin 86:11	alkyl 32:3	applicable 9:16	area 26:17 28:17 38:7 39:20 41:5,15 42:2 43:1,6 44:18 51:20 59:2,10 65:21,24 66:2 66:3 69:10 81:2
acres 25:23 39:20 42:2 67:3,4,5	administered 4:13	Allen 62:22	applicant 10:8 14:4,10 42:18	arbitration 33:16,18
act 2:17 7:18,19 13:10,13 23:23 25:17 35:18 47:17 62:7,7	administering 7:9	Alliance 47:6,10	applicant's 28:15	arbitration 33:16,18
action 16:9 31:8 47:23 48:2 49:13 88:11,15	Administration 61:19	allow 66:22 83:19	application 2:22 8:1 9:13,19,23 10:4,5,9,13 11:15 13:3 14:9,11,12,12 14:17 15:8 16:24 17:1 31:7 42:18 43:1 55:15 62:15 76:12 77:18 79:9,12 79:13,24 86:20 86:22 87:3	arbitration 33:16,18
actions 16:20 28:1 33:22	Administratio... 61:3	allowed 42:12	apply 72:2	arbitration 33:16,18
active 37:12	administrative 7:8,20 8:21 9:20 18:3 21:22 24:10 28:4 52:14 80:7	allowing 47:1 48:11 57:19 62:12	appointed 4:12	arbitration 33:16,18
activist 32:7,12	administrativ... 10:6,12	altered 42:8	appreciate 21:15 46:20	arbitration 33:16,18
activities 22:6 48:13	adopting 36:22	alternate 34:17		arbitration 33:16,18
actual 29:5 36:11 41:16,18 55:24	advancement 62:4	alternatives 62:10		arbitration 33:16,18
ad 10:18	advancing 60:6 62:9	Alton 11:6		arbitration 33:16,18
add 68:6	adverse 19:7	AML 37:6		arbitration 33:16,18
added 15:6 39:19 42:11	adversely 14:16 18:23,24 19:4	amount 28:6,13 28:14 35:11 78:7		arbitration 33:16,18

attempts 39:17	based 5:22 15:8	28:7,14,15,17	capability 79:6	50:3 58:9
attended 84:20	16:24 24:21	bonded 66:4	capable 22:8,9	chance 6:1 58:15
attending 86:23	52:9	bonding 26:4	36:4 40:3,4	62:20 64:4
attitudes 27:4	basically 14:5,8	28:4 64:17	capture 29:5	change 28:9
attorney 4:10	14:22 37:13	65:14,18,19,22	car 73:21	37:9 47:14,15
18:10 32:16	52:21 64:11	65:23 66:22	carbon 3:23	48:6,14 49:10
88:13	68:12 72:23	bonds 67:7,7	47:18 61:7	49:19 76:13
audience 83:6	73:18	boreholes 32:14	cardiovascular	77:8
authority 47:9	basis 56:12,12	boundaries	74:10	changed 20:3
54:18	60:23	12:22	care 55:20	changes 28:19
authorizing 7:12	Bates 11:5	boundary 75:21	career 19:11	29:18 78:8
7:16	Bear 24:1	breach 26:18	caring 19:12	Chapter 7:18
availability 80:9	Bearcat 24:1	breathe 60:9	carried 34:5	59:8 65:11
available 6:21	42:7	breathing 74:5	carries 17:12	chapter's 47:6
9:12 10:15,17	began 47:13	brevity 9:12	carry 12:21	59:9
14:6 55:10	beginning 43:6	Brian 3:3 4:9	71:17,21	chemicals 32:3
79:16 80:15	43:22 44:5,22	brian.m.navar...	carrying 74:16	Chicago 32:10
aware 22:12	45:17 69:2	3:7	case 10:12 11:3	child 72:10
54:3,22 70:14	76:5 80:21	brief 8:4 84:9	12:3 16:5	China 74:21
82:17,20	behalf 47:9	broad 36:20	28:23 45:24	choice 57:6
<hr/>	believe 82:19	43:7	51:17 52:2,4,6	chronic 35:17
B	best 18:15 20:8	broken 71:10	53:2,13 54:7	Circuit 33:15
b 13:7 23:19	20:10 34:5	brother 81:3,22	83:21	citation 33:2
28:5	88:8	brother's 81:13	cases 52:7	cited 70:13
B-L-U-M-E-N...	better 22:10	brower 61:23	catastrophic	citizens 36:16
20:21	67:16 71:4	buildings 42:5	36:14	52:17 55:21
back 27:13	74:23	48:3 56:13	Catherine 43:3	79:23 83:9,10
37:17,18 43:22	beyond 62:9	59:12 81:22	59:2	City 1:1 2:1
44:22 45:10	big 44:16 45:9	burdened 37:3	cause 2:14 32:20	38:12
56:3,19,24	45:10 77:16	Bureau 52:13	caused 39:16,24	claims 74:20
57:2,5 58:14	bigger 46:5	54:4	48:21 63:13	clams 71:24
60:18 64:7	Bill 43:17	Burgess 59:5,6	causes 66:1	clarified 75:17
69:5 75:3 79:5	billion 64:23	62:18	causing 57:19	Clark 33:13,17
79:12 81:14	billion-dollar	burning 60:8,13	Center 36:21	33:18
84:8	61:12	74:24	cents 65:2	class 71:19
back-and-forth	bins 19:9	business 71:9	centuries 30:21	classify 37:12
33:17	black 45:10 49:6	button 50:8	century 60:10	Clayton 3:19
background	bleeder 34:19	bystander 53:17	CEO 49:11	51:8
51:10	blocked 26:22	54:6,8	certain 2:14	clean 35:17
bad 57:18 74:12	bloodstream	<hr/>	certainly 81:3	42:21
BAH 53:14	73:18 74:6	C	CERTIFICATE	cleaner 62:9
band-aids 23:14	Blumenshine	c 3:1 13:11	88:2	cleanup 37:4
bankrupt 64:18	11:6 20:20,21	21:23 25:12	Certified 4:3	64:16 67:5
bankruptcies	27:16 30:11	C-A-T 24:1	88:3,5,23	clear 62:8
64:18	43:21 52:16,22	call 48:7	certify 88:6	clearly 6:11
bankruptcy	Blumenshine's	calling 51:14	chair 47:5	21:21 22:20
26:3 42:14	50:5	CALM 36:17	challenges 85:6	24:15 25:22
65:2,11	board 11:24	Camp 27:2	challenging	26:2,3 28:21
Barbara 59:1	boast 62:11	31:24 32:17	30:17	clerk 10:10,14
Barkley 8:13	bond 13:20,23	34:2 35:16	Champaign	clerk's 10:16

climate 37:9 47:14,14,23 48:2,6,14 49:9 49:13,19 59:16 60:20 62:7,11	75:7 85:13,14 coal's 33:20 coal-fired 58:8 59:19 73:23 coalition 36:20 Coast 74:18 cochair 47:6 Code 2:15 7:21 21:22 24:10 28:5 86:11 Coffeen 11:5 42:7 cognizance 21:1 collapsed 48:21 48:22 collect 17:24 collected 86:16 combine 76:6 combined 76:4,8 combusted 62:1 combustion 34:11 61:19 come 4:19 6:14 18:8 21:14 27:13 30:13 37:16,18,24 45:11 47:11 49:15 58:14 60:24 62:21 64:6 69:5 75:3 78:6 79:17 84:8,10 comes 51:21 52:20 54:13 76:10,11 79:8 coming 74:4 77:12 comment 12:11 75:12,13 84:15 87:1 comments 2:20 5:3 10:23 11:17,19 12:10 14:22 15:3 16:6 18:1,14 18:18 30:7 40:24 43:3 53:2 68:19 80:24 81:11 82:9,22 83:13	84:21 85:23 86:1,3,6,8,16 86:18,24 Commission 47:8 commissioner 47:7,22 commitment 62:8 Committee 47:7 communication 31:21 53:13 68:21 communities 30:22,24 31:5 31:15 33:20 35:21 36:13,24 37:2 67:19 community 31:12 35:6 38:17 43:5 48:16 67:22 community-de... 48:13 compaction 23:12 27:6 companies 37:9 37:10 51:11 59:21 64:16,22 67:13 company 26:14 27:21 29:9 42:12,14,24 48:19 49:8 50:9,10,18,21 50:23 51:1,5 51:16 53:4,6 56:5 57:9,10 57:18 67:7,8 69:8,13 70:3 71:4 72:24 74:13,20 85:9 company's 67:16 86:21 compare 29:12 compel 33:16 compensate 20:4 compensated 66:13	compensation 66:17,24 competency 71:19 compilation 11:18 compile 15:3 compiled 7:18 12:13 14:23 complaint 33:14 33:16 complete 10:6 10:12 13:3 29:18 36:10 44:11 63:9 completed 45:13 46:11,19 54:2 completeness 9:20,24 completion 53:17 complex 49:24 compliance 10:4 13:8 23:21 24:3,10 25:10 complicated 44:20 46:9 comply 13:13 21:22 25:17 27:20 compounding 23:10 compounds 85:5 comprehensive 8:24 44:2 46:14 comprehensiv... 76:6 comprised 44:3 compromised 37:11 concealed 71:17 concern 26:3 44:21 46:7 67:12 concerned 35:18 83:22 concerning 24:8 40:13 concerns 23:11	26:1,7,11 27:22,24 28:22 30:4 34:7 45:9 84:19 85:20 condition 25:3 40:3 conditions 13:5 21:2 22:2,8 23:16 28:9 29:5 conduct 10:3 11:13 conducted 2:21 conducting 5:1 conducts 41:7 conference 8:10 11:1,4,9,14,20 11:23 12:12 15:5 18:13,17 26:4,6 82:16 82:24 84:20 88:7,12 conferences 19:20 confines 83:2 confused 48:9 conscious 82:14 consecutive 10:11 consequences 60:23 85:2 conservation 2:16 7:17 47:7 68:11 71:24 conserve 66:10 consider 14:19 16:3 consideration 30:7 34:7 58:19,20 73:10 85:21,22 considerations 27:20 considered 12:14 14:24 62:5 86:19 consistently 26:1 constant 23:10 constantly 23:7
---	---	--	--	--

constitutional 71:21	Corps 45:5,7	42:7 72:11,12	76:24	delay 37:11
consult 29:24	correct 5:11	72:24 73:2,6	day 2:11 45:8	delays 38:24
contact 87:2	39:23 41:7,18	cries 60:11	88:18	denied 31:8
contacted 52:1	77:16 82:6	criteria 14:13	days 11:2 12:1	86:21
53:8	cost 20:7 28:18	15:8 21:24	70:21 80:5	Dennis 33:13
contain 40:24	60:15 85:13	critical 31:2	86:14,18	denote 80:21
contained 41:3	costly 20:4	crooked 63:4	deadly 49:6	deny 14:14
containing	costs 25:22	crop 63:8 85:8	deal 23:7 44:16	49:17 62:14
33:10 38:13	36:19 37:3,6	crops 38:19	57:1	85:21
contaminating	cough 58:5	66:13 85:2	dealing 16:15	denying 67:23
32:4 38:14	coughing 58:4	Cross 3:19 51:4	dealt 63:3	Department
contamination	counsel 3:4 4:12	51:7,8	debt 65:4,8	2:17,21 3:2,5
35:11 66:18	88:10,13	cross-referenc...	decades 60:24	3:10,15 4:11
Contemporan...	counted 5:23	9:16	December 11:15	4:22 6:6,8 8:18
36:6	country 21:4	CRR 1:24 2:14	31:20 41:6	10:3 11:3 13:2
continually	59:18	3:22	84:21	13:23 14:3,11
22:22 48:22	county 2:12	CSR 1:24 2:14	decide 16:22	14:14 17:24
continue 13:21	10:10,10,13,16	3:22	decided 56:21	24:6 28:6,16
22:20 23:17	11:24 20:23	curious 83:5,15	76:5	40:11,14 42:21
24:12 25:20,23	31:3,10,18,24	current 25:3	decision 14:17	52:14,18 54:12
48:12 65:13	38:6,23 43:4	56:15 57:10	15:7 16:16,23	68:19 86:19,24
66:9 85:13	57:1,2,4 68:1	72:1,18	31:1 52:20	Department's
continued 4:17	68:10 74:13	currently 41:22	86:21 87:3	6:20 15:7 87:3
10:21	80:14,15,22	81:21	declared 65:1	departments
continues 25:4	84:18 85:3	cut-and-paste	declining 36:10	68:19
continuing	County-wide	40:24 41:4	37:8	deposit 28:14
13:12 25:8,16	10:20	<hr/>	DeClue 5:21	described 68:13
41:9 48:19	couple 58:17	D	11:7 15:20,22	describes 37:13
contractors	68:17,22	D 13:15	16:1,11 17:3	descriptive 29:2
32:14	course 30:2	D.C 21:11	17:10,14,17	design 69:3
Contractors'	48:15 49:12	daily 47:16	30:14,15 37:15	designed 34:6,9
20:7	60:4	damage 32:20	37:18,21 52:17	72:1
contrary 64:21	court 3:21 6:9	35:22 39:1,24	52:22 64:6,8	destroyed 57:7
contribution	6:11,16,23	42:13 59:12	68:5 84:4	63:5
61:18 62:4	33:15 83:12	60:2 65:6 66:2	decreased 28:18	destroying
control 24:8	courthouse 2:12	66:5,15,18,21	deemed 10:6	57:24
29:7 40:13	2:13 11:16	85:17	Deer 1:10 2:4,8	destruction
66:7	20:24	damaged 38:21	2:22 8:2 22:14	48:20 57:16
conversant 30:4	cousins 59:3	39:20 42:5,6	27:23 31:13	66:23
Coordinator	cover 37:6 66:20	damages 63:8	34:6,8,13,17	destructive 66:6
3:14	coverage 28:17	85:7	34:18 36:7	67:21
copies 9:11 14:6	cracks 81:24	Dan 8:13 52:3	38:4 41:6,22	detail 29:15 41:4
79:20 80:10,10	Crawford 84:13	dangerous 60:9	41:24 59:11	46:15 81:7
copy 6:19 10:9	85:24	dangers 60:6	61:21 62:13	detailed 10:1
30:8 55:7,13	create 6:11	dark 53:24	68:2 69:3	29:1
79:17 87:2	34:10 70:4	data 61:23	84:16 85:9,21	detailing 24:9
Cornell 34:20	created 57:13	date 4:18 34:23	deers 33:11	26:7 40:20
corporation	creating 22:22	77:24	defined 22:12	details 40:22
52:18	Creek 3:23 24:1	Dated 88:18	definition 25:1	41:15
	31:17,20 32:9	dates 8:22 59:20	degraded 37:1	determine 10:1

28:6 35:11	disrupted 39:10	22:19,22 23:6	east 47:5,10 57:9	72:18 73:8
deterrent 35:6	disruptions	23:8,9,11,15	74:18	endangers 35:7
detours 38:24	42:10	36:2 39:9,10	easy 57:17	ended 32:4
devastating 85:1	distance 78:21	39:14,18 41:8	ecological 72:5	33:18 87:8
devastation 39:5	distant 45:21	41:18 42:10	economic 31:9	endured 38:24
develop 34:14	distress 39:3	43:21 44:6,8	31:11 67:24	energy 1:10 2:4
34:17	District 3:10	44:13 45:13	85:6	2:7,24 3:19 8:2
developed 8:23	4:15 8:12	46:9,11 68:8	economical	22:3 24:2,7,17
development	68:11	68:14 82:8	59:23	24:20 26:13,14
31:11 35:6	ditch 45:6 46:5	85:1	economically	31:7,13 33:14
diagnosed 58:6	ditches 39:17	drainages 23:12	40:2	33:21 39:23
difference 18:13	44:23 45:4,9	drained 44:15	edge 42:6	48:4 49:7,11
different 12:17	45:14,19 46:1	44:17	Edmiston 43:3	49:17 52:19
18:15 23:14	82:7	draining 81:16	Edwardsville	59:16 61:18
78:17	ditching 23:24	dredging 23:12	47:4	62:6,12,15
difficult 23:24	42:11 82:6	Dressen 11:5	effect 13:21,22	65:13 85:15
dig 45:6,24	diverse 72:20	38:1,2 43:14	19:7	Energy's 38:4
digging 45:19	Division 2:19	43:21 75:16	effective 24:9	40:12,15 41:14
dignitaries	4:23 7:7 21:16	76:3 77:11,15	40:14 41:14	48:10
82:17	divorce 55:24	77:19 78:10	effects 23:20	enforcement
diminishing	56:17	79:14,21 80:16	29:19 73:12	7:14
85:8	DNR 46:12	80:23	effort 23:14	enforcing 7:9
dioxide 61:7	53:18 54:6	drill 32:14	eight 19:3	engineers 27:3
Diplomatic 88:4	55:18,21 69:7	drinking 35:8	Eileen 11:6	45:6,7
directed 47:22	71:3 83:8	driveway 21:4	either 19:19,22	ensure 36:23
direction 39:10	document 29:12	driving 21:1	41:15 45:19	entering 65:12
39:11 88:9	36:19	drone 81:15	53:21 77:8	entertain 48:10
Director 21:16	documentation	drop 86:8	82:4	enthusiasm 5:21
dirty 62:9	81:1 86:10	dropping 74:13	electronic 79:19	entire 8:24 14:1
disappointed	documented	drops 23:1	80:9	17:8 19:11
19:18 20:11	26:14 32:12	drought-related	electronically	38:17 55:8
disappointing	documenting	61:14	80:19	73:7 76:6
19:23	81:9	due 22:13 39:1,3	Ellen 11:7 30:15	environment
discounts 52:22	documents	39:10 42:9	52:17	26:9 32:21
discovered 58:5	86:14	84:23 85:4	eloquent 50:7	34:1 57:21
68:17	doing 56:18 69:8	dug 39:17 44:23	else's 50:7	60:7 61:21
discrepancy	70:6	82:7	email 53:10	environmental
59:15	dollar 65:3	dumped 32:2	emailed 53:9	13:9 23:22
discuss 75:11	dominated	72:24	emails 53:22	32:19 64:19,23
discusses 59:14	30:20	dust 35:19 61:14	emergency 4:18	65:6 66:5 67:1
discussing 76:17	door 7:3	73:21,22 74:3	26:15,21 48:23	72:5 82:16
discussion 68:7	downstate 59:7	74:4	emissions 47:19	85:11
68:7	61:14	<hr/>	48:1,3	environmenta...
disease 74:10,11	downstream	E	emotional 19:7	82:14
disgrace 63:9,10	58:7	E 3:1,1 13:19	employed 88:10	EPA 32:10 60:8
dismiss 33:16	downwind 58:8	earlier 49:5 83:1	88:14	73:14
54:18	dozen 38:20	early 56:3 60:7	employee 88:13	EPA's 35:17
dismissing 54:20	drain 22:19 44:2	easier 6:16	employees 33:24	equal 65:22
dispersion 33:1	46:14 81:16	57:17	encompass 9:13	equipment
displaced 42:5	drainage 20:5	easily 44:14	endangered	71:10

Equitable 62:7	existing 12:23	false 56:16	36:1,4 39:5,6	flat 19:24 39:13
ER 53:18	13:5,14 22:2	families 42:5	39:13 41:20	43:7
erosion 20:1	25:18 28:2	family 33:13	42:8,11 82:4	flooded 36:1
24:22 31:11	65:18	38:8 48:20	fighting 23:8	40:9 45:16
39:14,15 40:8	exit 32:24	51:19 81:4	file 10:9	48:22
63:13 85:1,5	exiting 32:24	family's 39:5	filed 10:13 33:13	flooding 36:14
escalating 25:23	expected 49:5	41:20	42:14 46:11	floor 7:3
escape 49:11	expedited 6:19	far 35:18 44:18	65:10 80:13,22	flow 46:17
especially 35:6	expensive 36:8	79:5	files 80:19	foam 32:1,8
41:4 42:13	60:2,21 61:11	farm 32:8 33:6	filing 63:19	FOIA 26:21
50:5 57:21	experienced	38:7 39:5,6	filings 33:17	79:23,24 80:11
established	84:23	40:6 42:4,5,8	final 52:5,10	FOIA'd 81:7
64:12	expiration 12:23	42:24 56:13	53:8 86:20	follow 49:12
Europe 82:15	explain 75:24	59:12 73:22,22	finally 34:16	followed 34:15
evaluate 67:16	exposure 32:19	farmable 25:2	finances 26:2	63:21 73:5
evaluated 31:2	expressly 22:12	farmed 22:15	financial 65:8	following 86:15
evaluations 71:1	extensive 35:10	farmer 18:23	66:17	follows 24:15
evening 4:9 8:7	66:1,23	66:17 71:10	financially	food 85:18
46:23 50:24	extent 40:1	farmers 33:8	37:10,11 88:14	force 13:21
51:1 59:5	extract 62:13	56:6 66:12	find 22:12 26:20	forced 33:18
events 36:14	85:13	84:22 85:6,17	52:12 60:22	forces 48:16
60:20 61:13	extracted 61:21	farmers' 66:8	71:9 72:9,14	foregoing 88:7
ever-diminishi...	61:24	farming 19:11	finding 75:5	foreseeable 40:4
66:8	extraction 48:18	20:3 38:17	78:14	Foresight 26:13
ever-increasing	extractive 48:12	farmland 19:24	findings 68:18	27:3,22 31:12
26:8	eyes 59:11	32:5 35:22	finds 13:4	32:2,13,23
everybody 6:1		42:22 45:11	finish 58:14	33:1,14,15,17
8:8,8 69:10,16	F	66:10 84:17	finishing 52:1,4	33:21 34:4
80:4	F 14:2 24:4,4	85:3,7,18	fire 31:24 32:10	35:13 65:10,12
everyplace 73:9	39:22 40:11	farms 38:8	32:24 33:4	Foresight's
evidence 13:16	face 48:13 49:18	48:20 81:5	first 5:2,10,13	32:11
13:20 32:9	85:6	farther 44:19	5:24 6:22 9:18	forever 32:3
73:11	Facebook 83:17	46:8	10:18 12:1	forgiveness
exacerbates	faced 60:11	favor 47:20	34:14 38:10,20	64:19
62:1	facilitate 8:23	fear 26:18	43:23 44:6,7	forgot 61:13
exact 52:13	facility 38:11,18	feasible 40:2	44:15,16 62:20	form 76:20
example 33:19	fact 23:7 49:6	FEBRUARY	64:4 65:16	format 72:2
56:2 71:15	59:17 73:13	1:13 2:8	82:18	Formerly 39:13
76:23	78:16	federal 7:8	fish 33:11	forward 20:18
excavating	factor 20:8	35:17 36:23	fishing 72:12	44:4,12
23:12	failed 22:4 55:21	64:21 70:5	five 2:9 19:2	fought 43:4
exceed 60:19	64:16	73:4	22:21 25:4,24	found 7:18,20
exclusive 52:8	failing 22:4	feeling 70:23	34:2 48:11	35:16 68:22
excuse 36:2	23:16	feelings 57:14	77:2 78:5,6	69:9
45:17 67:11	fails 14:12	feet 23:2 39:7	81:13	four 10:11,22
68:7 70:18	failure 35:4	field 19:21 22:13	five-year 17:12	15:23 16:3
exempted 69:8	36:12 38:16	24:8 32:8	17:12	19:2 28:2
69:13	67:13	40:13 81:12,15	fix 70:2 71:12	29:20 34:6
exemption 69:15	faith 49:16	81:16 82:1	fixed 9:1 70:8	53:6 64:22
exhibits 26:7	falls 42:20	fields 25:2,5	71:11	67:23

fourth 41:21
59:17
Fowler 68:12
frame 66:24
Frank 24:5
Franklin 31:24
freshwater
71:24 72:17
frightened 26:17
front 4:20 5:16
fueling 60:12
full 13:21 25:10
29:16
full-time 70:20
function 37:14
fund 37:6
further 88:12
furtherance
18:16
future 19:1,5
28:18 31:2
40:21 43:10
59:24 62:6

G

gallons 32:1
garage 19:10
gas 48:1
general 27:22
32:16 41:2
generally 9:13
generation
19:13
generations
43:10
gentlemen 4:9
geographically
80:18
getting 5:7 20:14
58:1 71:4
73:20
Ginger 3:23
give 84:8
given 6:4 24:20
27:18 31:4
85:10
gives 2:19
giving 56:24
66:7
glaring 59:14

glass 74:3
Glen 3:23
global 47:15,19
61:3,8
glove 61:9
go 4:24 5:10
23:4 27:15
45:6 46:4,8
47:14 56:23
57:20 61:8
64:14 71:18
72:10 73:17
74:15 75:2
78:22 79:4,12
80:11
goal 20:8 59:15
Godfrey 84:14
84:17
goes 28:8,10
44:19 79:9
going 8:15 18:4
23:6 25:23
43:19,22 44:3
44:13 45:1,12
46:2,15 55:6
55:24 56:21
57:16,22 63:20
71:12 74:1,18
74:20 75:2,3
77:4 79:16
81:2,4,5 82:8
82:22 86:6
good 4:8 5:7 8:7
8:8,10 29:11
39:13 46:23
49:15 58:16
59:5
government
63:16
governor 82:14
grain 19:9
grandfather
56:4
grandfathered
77:16
granted 18:19
79:5,10 83:3
graphic 60:16
grave 49:5
Green 47:5,10

greenhouse 48:1
greetings 8:16
grew 38:7 43:4
ground 22:23
23:15 24:22
28:21 32:5
40:6,8 42:24
43:7 44:24
45:14,15 46:16
group 72:21
growing 59:23
growth 31:9
67:24
guarantee 44:1
65:18
guaranteed 45:1
guess 5:15 16:8
16:11 17:3
51:13 74:22
83:19
guessing 74:19
guidance 24:19
guy 82:14
guys 32:15 56:17
63:21 83:19

H

habitat 48:17
hand 61:8
happen 30:2
happened 35:23
happening
24:22 29:17
36:7
hard 27:19
57:13
harm 31:5
harmful 33:20
harming 33:6
hazards 36:15
headwater 23:5
health 8:16 26:9
31:9 32:22
35:20 36:15
64:20 67:24
73:12
hear 11:9 12:6
24:14 53:7
heard 6:1 21:2
52:10 84:22

hearing 1:9 2:3
2:7,20 3:3 4:2
4:7,12,13 5:1,9
6:10 7:22 8:11
9:8,9 12:1,4,6
12:12 14:15
15:19 16:5
17:24 18:16
19:20 21:6
27:17 38:15
44:22 46:24
54:11 76:5
82:24 83:12
84:8 86:7,15
86:17,23 87:5
87:8
hearings 21:7
43:24 52:14
54:4
heavy 26:8
HEL 31:8 66:7
66:20,22
HEL's 65:19
held 7:22 9:9
43:24 67:8
Hello 62:22
help 21:8 36:23
63:10 77:3
helping 48:5
heroes 21:9
heroines 21:9
high 75:6,7
high-hazard
35:1,5 38:13
higher 22:10
74:10
highly 49:3 60:1
highway 39:1
59:13
highways 21:5
Hillsboro 1:1,10
2:1,4,7,13,23
3:19 8:2 10:19
11:4 12:3
20:23 22:3
24:2,7,17,20
26:14 31:7
35:4,19 38:4
38:12 39:23
40:12,15 41:13

43:17 48:10
49:11,17 50:3
51:23 52:19
62:15 73:2
84:21
hilly 21:3
hinder 48:23
hired 6:8 32:13
Historic 2:12
historical 60:22
history 31:4
42:15 85:10
hit 50:8
hitting 60:22
hold 46:18 47:9
80:4
Hollo 1:24 2:14
3:22 4:3 88:3
homes 26:17
38:20 42:4
48:21
honor 21:13
Honorable 52:3
hope 46:18
Hospital 35:4
host 31:15
hosting 46:24
hotspot 34:14
hotspots 34:11
hottest 61:10
hour 39:3
hours 2:9 20:9
70:22
huge 80:19 82:7
human 47:18
humanity 60:6
62:4
humans 60:6
humongous 26:2
hundred 33:9
72:8
hundreds 20:9

I

I-55 61:15
iced-in 21:3
ideally 16:5
IDNR 18:11
19:14 20:22
21:1,16,20

22:12 23:4 24:16,20 29:14 29:21 30:1 31:21 41:3,13 41:23 44:1 46:24 48:1 50:19 58:19 62:14 63:20 66:7 67:8,17 68:11,18 71:6 78:14,21 81:8 IDNR's 25:1 41:16 47:22 49:12 IEA's 61:23 ignored 58:21 Ill 2:15 illegal 63:17 Illinois 1:2 2:2 2:13 3:2,5,6,10 3:12,15,16,23 4:10,22 7:11 7:18,20 21:9 21:22 24:10 26:21 28:4 30:15 31:14,16 32:10 42:19,21 47:4,5,6,8 48:5 50:3 52:13 55:18,20,22 58:9,10 59:8 59:20 61:23 62:8,11 65:2,3 65:14 67:4,7 69:7 70:11,13 71:3,14,18 74:17 86:11 88:6,23 Illinois' 59:15 illness 58:5 illustrates 60:17 immediately 7:3 33:4 impact 85:4 impacting 48:24 impacts 23:10 29:3 33:5 42:6 48:6 85:11 impeding 39:9 important 21:7	58:18 impound 35:2 impoundment 26:15,18 38:16 impoundments 26:10,12 35:1 35:5,7 38:13 38:19 impressed 58:3 impression 17:4 17:7 improve 31:8 68:1 improvements 30:23 36:22 improving 19:12 impunity 48:20 inability 66:14 inactive 37:4 64:12 incapable 22:15 incident 32:12 included 68:21 75:22 77:15 includes 19:9 including 21:9 23:20 27:20 45:15 75:20 increased 28:18 increases 61:7 increasing 48:4 incurred 48:19 indiscriminate 33:1 individual 9:1 56:24 66:20 individuals 55:19 Industrial 60:12 industry 7:10 30:20 36:11 influence 33:20 influencing 46:17 informal 8:10 10:24 11:4,9 11:13,19,23 12:12 15:4 18:13,17 19:20 26:4,6 80:6	82:23 84:8,9 84:20 88:7,11 information 10:2 14:3,19 61:18 87:2 informed 47:11 infraction 70:19 infractions 70:17 injured 61:15 injustice 67:1 INPC 47:21 inspection 29:15 41:3 Instagram 83:17 installed 45:20 instituted 8:20 insufficiency 65:17 insufficient 64:17 insurance 13:16 intention 48:10 interest 14:16 interested 11:23 88:15 interesting 70:15 interrupt 58:12 intervals 9:1 introduce 20:19 introduced 8:11 inundate 38:16 investment 67:22 involved 27:5 54:13 61:15 involves 35:14 irresponsible 31:4 irresponsibly 32:18 isolation 9:2 issue 63:1,12 76:15,24 80:20 issued 12:21 76:22 77:2,10 86:21 issues 8:16 11:22 20:6 27:10	29:15 34:9 37:9 58:18 59:9,14 issuing 63:18 <hr/> J <hr/> J-O-Y-C-E 20:21 jail 45:7 James 3:14 5:6 Jane 21:9 January 4:17 34:22,22 41:5 88:18 Jeff 50:9,20 jeopardize 85:16 jeopardized 32:17 jeopardizes 13:12 25:16 Jim 4:21 9:21 job 5:7 15:3 70:16,19,23 jobs 49:3 62:6,7 70:20 John 50:2 52:16 53:14 Johnson 21:10 Journal-News 10:19 Joyce 11:6 20:20 50:5 52:16 judge 52:3 54:4 54:5,17,24 judgment 52:5,5 54:19 judicial 52:10 54:1,17 July 9:24 June 9:24 justice 82:4 justified 31:4 <hr/> K <hr/> Karyl 11:5 38:1 Kasten 62:22,23 64:2 81:4 keep 70:19 keeping 54:19	Kemi 3:9 4:20 8:12 15:16 50:13,16 76:4 Kentucky 70:10 key 18:13 kill 73:18 killed 61:16 kind 19:20 27:4 37:22 69:2 83:17 kinds 73:5 know 7:4 8:6,15 15:22 17:4 19:7,24 26:11 27:4 29:23 30:1 45:5 50:9 51:12,18,19 53:21,23,24 55:17,18,23 56:16 57:8,15 57:17,23 60:1 63:11,15 64:8 68:18,23 69:20 69:23 70:12,24 71:12 72:6,8 73:1 74:4,12 74:13,19 75:9 76:23 78:21 82:3,13,15,20 83:22 known 32:2 34:10 <hr/> L <hr/> lack 22:18 26:4 41:4 66:22 81:7 ladies 4:9 Lake 42:7 land 2:16,18 4:14,22 7:6,17 19:8,12,14,18 20:5,12 22:5 23:16 37:1 38:18 40:2,16 41:2 43:7 50:3 51:22,22 57:7 57:16 59:3 63:5 66:15,21 69:18,22 73:3
--	--	---	--	---

81:9 85:4	36:19 65:3	38:19	69:3	9:3
landowner	license 71:17	longwall 19:1	majority 42:19	mention 48:24
66:20	licenses 71:16	22:5,13,17,20	making 86:20	82:12
landowners	life-threatening	22:24 23:9	malformed	mentioned 10:5
19:16 57:1,5,5	60:20	34:11,13 35:23	33:11	15:4,9 23:3
lands 37:5 40:1	lift 28:20 45:20	36:16 38:7	management	26:3,16 78:12
landslides 36:14	likes 68:18	39:2,7,16,21	26:21 34:5	78:23 81:6
large 39:14,16	limit 5:24	41:9,11,22	manager 3:10	83:14
42:8	line 26:22 29:6	42:1 43:5	8:13 50:13	mentioning 59:1
largest 59:17	82:18	52:17 55:22	59:7	mess 63:6
64:22	lips 33:10	56:6 57:7,12	manifested	met 13:6 22:3
Larry 11:4 12:3	list 15:6 27:18	65:13,22 66:1	47:18	metals 26:8
18:22 59:12	35:17	66:6,23 67:18	manner 22:7	method 34:17
62:24	listed 11:18	81:21 84:23	23:17 25:9,21	Metro 47:5,10
lastly 29:20	42:17 65:16	85:12	41:12 76:14	microphone
late 43:3 56:3	Litchfield 11:5,7	look 61:17 63:12	map 29:8,8	6:13,15
law 36:21 64:21	30:15	63:13 69:17	69:17	mile 58:7 73:24
73:4	Litigation 3:22	76:6 78:22	March 65:11	miles 39:3
laws 36:23	little 20:13 44:11	79:13,17 82:4	68:9 81:14	mill 51:22
lawsuit 63:19,20	live 43:17 47:3	looked 82:1	Marie 1:24 2:14	million 60:19
lawyer 50:22,23	50:2 58:7 74:9	looking 53:18	3:22 4:3 88:3	61:5 65:4,4
leader 59:16	84:17	69:21 76:9,10	Mark 34:20	67:6
leading 62:11	lived 51:19	looks 81:9	market 37:8	millions 62:13
Leaning 38:21	livelihood 58:1	lose 63:15	Mary 11:5,7	millstone 51:20
learned 24:17	85:17	loss 48:17 66:13	30:14 52:17	mind 48:7 84:10
38:15 45:4	livelihoods 66:8	lost 33:8 34:2	material 39:23	mindful 25:13
leases 56:23	lives 34:2 35:8	39:15 40:8	66:21	mine 1:10 2:4,8
led 36:21	38:8 49:1 75:5	lot 30:4 44:21	materials 18:2	2:22 8:2,22,24
left 6:2 18:6 25:5	84:14	57:13	matter 52:19	10:10 19:16
26:17 37:1	livestock 33:9	loud 47:17	maximize 33:23	22:14,19,22
41:20 64:10	living 33:8	loudly 6:10	mean 5:15 17:7	23:4,16 24:23
legacy 21:14	LLC 1:10 2:4,7	lowered 73:14	27:14 46:4	24:23 25:4
legal 3:4 4:11	3:19 8:2 31:8	LRD 7:7 8:20	53:3 54:16	26:2 27:2,11
63:22	33:14 34:21	9:19 11:1	55:23 70:20	27:23 29:3,4,9
length 78:9	62:15	LRD's 7:16	74:15 82:13	29:17,24 31:13
let's 37:19 52:12	load 26:8	LRDP 53:18	83:16 84:1	31:17,20,21,24
52:23 53:11	local 21:2 23:2	lung 49:6 74:10	means 14:22	32:2,14 33:8
61:17 71:23	84:22	lungs 73:17 74:6	17:16 42:1,4	34:3,6,8,13,15
72:9	located 7:3		54:10	34:17,18 35:10
letter 21:23	10:10 35:3	M	mechanized	36:7,8,12,19
23:19 24:4	logic 55:4	ma'am 37:24	49:4	37:5,12,12
25:12 28:5	logistics 5:1	75:15 84:6	media 83:18	38:4,20 39:7,8
36:17 52:24	long 27:5 39:2	machine 19:9	meet 14:9,13	40:19 41:7,17
68:11,16	40:9 45:10	machinery	meeting 30:17	42:23 44:1
letters 68:20	62:5 70:21	23:13	40:16 83:9	48:16 49:3,13
level 39:6 40:6	71:5 72:2 74:9	maintain 22:19	member 11:24	57:12 59:11
42:8 61:4	long-lasting	maintained 46:3	47:4	63:1 64:18
liabilities 64:16	32:20	maintaining	Memorandum	65:22 66:23
64:20,24	long-term 67:22	40:3	9:4	67:14 68:2,2
liability 13:16	longer 36:24	major 68:14	memorialized	69:3 76:7,8

81:8 84:17 86:1 mine's 29:22 39:17 40:22 41:16 48:21 49:7 mined 25:24 38:8 39:11 41:10 mined-out 41:8 miner 51:6 mineral 56:2,11 minerals 2:18 4:14 49:17 miners 33:3 34:2 57:23 miners' 32:24 mines 2:18 4:14 31:14 37:4,7 37:14 42:19 49:16 64:11,11 65:13 67:4 minimal 19:24 minimum 39:14 mining 2:16 7:10,15,17 13:7 19:1 21:13 22:5,10 23:19,21 26:10 30:19 34:18,21 35:23 36:16 39:2,21 41:22 42:1,12 43:5 52:17 55:22 56:6,15,21 57:7,11 59:9 59:10,14 65:5 66:1,6 67:18 67:21 70:3,5 81:21 84:23 85:12 minutes 2:9,10 18:5 50:1 missed 53:24 mistake 70:4 mistakes 69:3 mitigate 60:2 mitigation 24:9 24:21 29:7 39:18 40:14,16	40:17,20,21,23 41:7,11,14,18 41:19 mixing 23:11 mode 33:22 modeled 44:6 modeling 29:8 moderately 10:1 modern 67:4 modern-era 36:18 moments 47:21 Monday 11:15 monitor 40:15 41:9 monitoring 35:9 35:13 40:23 41:13 61:3 Montgomery 2:12 10:13,20 31:3,10 38:6 43:4 68:1,10 74:13 84:18 85:3 monthly 19:22 41:2 months 26:16 moot 71:20 morning 73:20 74:1 mother 59:1 moved 33:15 MSHA 33:2,3 34:16 mud 72:13 multiple 8:22 48:18 53:9 municipal 45:22 mussel 72:20 mussels 72:1,11 72:13,17 73:3 73:8 mutually 52:8 myriad 55:23	38:1 43:16 47:3 50:2 51:8 59:6 62:22 84:13 names 5:7 NASA 60:16 nation 21:12 national 59:16 61:2 natural 2:17 3:2 3:5,6,10,11,15 3:16 4:11,22 23:9 39:9 42:10,21,23 46:17 48:5 52:14,19 82:8 85:19 Nature 47:8 Navarrete 3:3 4:8,10 5:14,17 5:20,22 15:13 15:16,18 17:19 17:23 18:20 20:15 27:14 30:10 37:15,19 37:23 43:13 46:22 49:21 58:11,22 62:17 64:1 68:4 69:4 75:14 84:5,11 86:3,5 near 33:8 35:3 38:11 46:10 84:18 nearby 32:8 33:11 nearly 61:4,20 necessary 25:9 62:5 need 7:4 25:14 49:22 54:23 73:5 needed 26:1 35:2 needing 67:4 needs 19:15 54:5 63:10 66:9 67:14 72:4 negative 67:18 71:2 73:12	85:11 negatives 71:3 negligent 32:23 neighbor 57:14 57:14 neighbor's 69:21 neighbors 31:17 31:22 33:13,24 57:20 neither 37:2 88:9 never 19:21 20:1 40:6,9 46:10 new 12:17 33:9 73:11 77:20 news 10:18 26:19 83:18 newspaper 12:1 nine 19:4 NOAA 61:11 nonprofit 52:18 Normal 20:3 Normally 68:20 79:22 north 44:9,13 Northern 3:10 8:12 21:15 Nos 2:23 note 9:14 12:15 15:6 notice 2:19 10:11 12:2 notices 11:2 notifications 53:23 number 5:23 9:6 9:6 21:24 24:5 24:13,16 28:3 28:22 29:1,14 29:20 49:2 51:18 56:20 Numbers 8:1	78:3 79:3 80:13,17 82:21 83:11,21 84:3 objections 10:24 12:10 obligated 36:10 obligations 64:20 65:8 observations 29:16,17 observed 24:22 38:9 41:17 obstructions 36:2 obviously 81:8 occur 29:10 60:21 occurrence 56:9 ocean 84:2,3 Oceanic 61:2 October 53:17 odd 44:11 off-scale 66:7 office 2:18 4:11 4:14 10:16 49:16 53:8 78:20 85:20 officer 3:3 4:12 8:11 9:9 27:17 officials 32:13 offset 34:10 oh 17:10 57:18 70:1 okay 5:14 11:11 12:8 15:14 16:3,11 17:2,3 17:10,10,14,23 30:14 54:22 55:6 58:16,22 64:14 71:7 75:18 77:6,19 77:22 78:10 79:14,21 80:16 80:23 83:4 older 79:1 OMN 53:18 on-the-ground 29:2,5,15 once 39:6 42:14 76:15 79:5
	N		O	
	N 3:1 name 4:9 5:3,5 11:9 12:6 18:22 20:20		o'clock 2:10,11 Oakes 3:4 4:21 18:9,10 50:12 50:16,23 54:3 54:10,22 55:2	

80:6	29:12 34:8	parent 26:13	75:5	83:2 84:16,19
one-page 52:24	42:3 55:16	85:9	Peoria 11:7	85:10,21
one-time 43:10	65:8 69:6 79:5	Parkway 3:23	percent 67:7	permits 8:19,23
ones 15:4 72:6	79:12,15	part 7:21 9:16	perfectly 70:23	10:17 12:17
79:2,15	originally 4:16	12:14 14:6	70:24	13:5,14 15:23
ongoing 23:13	orphaned 37:14	27:13 28:5	perfluoro 32:3	15:24 16:3,7,9
23:24 26:10	Osibamowo 3:9	38:17 39:17	performance	16:10,16,17
29:18 35:20	4:21 8:3,7,12	46:1 54:17,24	13:20 24:7	21:19,21 23:18
39:4 48:18	11:11 12:8	72:3,19 77:5	40:12,15	27:7,11 28:24
online 7:1 26:20	15:14,17,21,24	78:3 79:11	performing	34:6 35:10
78:24	16:4,15 17:8	86:10	41:10	38:4,10 41:24
open 86:12	17:11,15,18	partially 67:5	period 12:11	48:11 52:8
operation 13:21	30:9 50:19	participants	13:22 80:7	56:22 57:8
33:22 34:8	55:8,10,14	11:18	87:1	65:19 67:24
49:4,7 68:13	ought 69:23	participation	periods 40:9	68:2 70:14
operations 7:15	out-of-state	87:5	permanent	75:19 76:8,18
13:8 34:5	71:17	particles 73:17	66:15	78:15 79:1,4
42:15 48:3	outcome 88:15	particular 79:24	permanently	82:18,19
65:13 76:7,13	outcomes 35:24	particularly	42:8 85:7	permittee 10:19
76:20 77:9,21	67:18	20:24	permit 1:11 2:5	permitting 7:14
78:2	outline 40:21	parties 88:11,14	2:8,22 3:14 8:1	16:9,16,20
operator 9:4	outlines 48:2	parts 60:19 61:5	8:5,21 9:1,6,6	43:23 71:3
13:15,19 41:9	outside 7:3	pass 45:11 54:14	9:14 11:14	person 11:24
66:19	overlies 43:1	61:1	12:14,16,18,20	18:5 20:17
operator's 13:12	overlord 31:15	passageways	12:20,23,24	personal 57:6
25:16	oversee 30:19	39:8	13:4 15:1,7	personally 44:5
operators 36:9	owned 58:9	passed 79:11	16:2,2,18 17:5	persons 14:16
37:12 64:17	owner 31:13	passing 62:6	17:6,8,11	pertaining 41:5
65:7	owners 29:21	Pasziewicz	18:19 22:2,14	petitioner 52:18
opinion 21:19	42:18	3:22	23:4 24:5,11	PFA's 32:4,20
Oplt 46:23 47:3	owners' 29:23	path 59:24	24:14,15,18	33:1,5,7,10
84:7,12		patience 64:9	25:18 29:7,13	phonetic 53:19
opponent 60:11	P	pattern 82:8	31:7 32:15	photo 81:23,24
opportunities	P 3:1,1	patterns 42:11	34:24 36:1	82:5
29:24	P-F-A-S 32:4	Patton 34:20	38:15 39:19,22	photographed
opportunity 6:4	p.m 4:7 6:7 87:8	pavement 39:3	42:3 46:19	32:7
43:11 59:6	page 80:3,5,8	pay 46:2 64:15	49:17 52:9	photos 29:4,16
76:16	paid 20:13,14	payments 63:16	53:3 54:13,16	81:1,12,13,15
opposed 9:1	63:8	Peabody 56:20	54:18,20 55:7	81:15,19 82:3
83:7,8,10	panel 19:3 41:23	65:1,5	55:8,16,22	physical 79:17
opposite 71:7	44:15,16 81:13	pearls 72:14	56:1,18 58:18	pieces 73:16
opposition 38:3	81:20,20	pending 7:24	62:14 63:2,12	74:2
oral 5:3 14:18	panels 19:2	15:7 53:14	65:21,23 66:3	pillar 65:23
organizations	22:24 34:12	79:2,4	66:3 67:8,9,9	place 44:24
47:10	38:20 39:7,11	pensions 64:20	67:15 69:7,15	46:15 47:13
organized 50:5	39:16 41:8,10	people 47:1	72:1,4,7 75:19	73:7 79:16
75:12	41:17,23 44:7	56:11 61:16	76:1,2,15,21	placement 35:7
organizing 59:7	44:8,15,17	63:9 70:16	76:24 77:1,6,9	places 36:13
original 21:8	48:22	71:8 73:21	77:16,20,21	plain 47:23
24:11,15,18	paperwork 52:6	people's 57:24	78:4,4,8,9,13	plan 24:8 29:7

34:19 40:13 44:2,6,11 46:1 46:11,14 47:23 48:2 49:13 67:14 75:11 77:9 planned 48:21 planning 24:21 40:21 84:8 plant 35:3 58:8 66:14 73:23 74:8,17 planting 36:4 plantings 85:2 plants 59:19 platform 36:18 65:17 67:13 played 60:5 please 5:3 6:10 6:14,14 7:5 9:14 12:15 15:6 20:18 43:15 53:19 86:8 plenty 70:12 PM 73:15 podium 6:13,15 20:19 30:13 49:23 point 54:7 71:20 pointed 43:6 68:15 policy 9:3 31:5 36:18,19 59:16 62:12 65:17 67:12 polluting 48:12 pollution 35:18 35:20 36:15 48:16 73:12 75:2 pond 31:17,19 31:20 33:11 ponded 22:13 25:5 ponding 22:18 24:23 29:8,10 45:18 pooled 39:15 42:9	pooling 85:5 popularity 59:23 population 72:20 portion 46:12 poses 32:21 position 50:14 positive 49:18 positives 71:2 possible 20:10 36:3 post-1977 37:4 power 47:12 58:8 59:19 73:23 powerful 66:19 ppm 60:23 practices 20:3 25:3,8 prairie 43:7 pre-mining 23:15 preparation 35:3 present 3:19 13:7 23:19 50:24 56:4 presentation 50:6 presented 26:7 35:24 presenters 50:4 Preserves 47:8 president 34:20 82:16 press 32:16 pretenses 56:16 pretty 70:24 previous 26:2 previously 43:20 primarily 9:21 primary 33:22 prime 85:3 print 50:8 printed 51:24 printer 50:8 prior 37:5 50:13 private 42:13 privilege 33:19	proactive 19:15 probably 50:7 58:13 62:24 problem 35:20 45:1 65:16 70:8 71:12 72:3 problems 22:17 22:23 55:17,23 56:1 68:14 70:2 85:1 procedure 8:23 procedures 63:22 proceed 52:7 54:21 proceeding 51:13 proceedings 6:24 process 8:5,21 9:17 12:14 14:23 17:20 21:23 36:9 43:23 44:22 56:18,24 57:13 71:3 76:7,9 80:3,14 processing 8:18 9:5 38:11,18 produce 38:19 producer 59:17 producing 65:5 production 34:14 45:15 46:16 48:5 85:8 productive 40:10 42:22 45:11 64:13 productivity 85:4,18 profit 48:20 profits 33:23 49:7 program 13:10 13:14 23:23 24:3 25:11,17 progress 60:13 60:14	project 27:3 promised 46:11 prompt 24:8 40:14 41:14,19 promulgated 2:15 7:19 proof 63:22 proper 63:21 property 19:8 29:21,23 42:13 56:10 57:24 59:4 proposed 13:22 protect 43:5 protected 21:12 40:17 protecting 55:21 protection 13:9 23:22 proudest 47:21 prove 51:17 71:19 provide 5:2 8:4 14:18 15:5 18:2 29:21 59:8 80:1 provided 7:1 10:2 13:15,19 14:4,22 83:11 86:24 87:1 provides 13:2 14:15 49:3 public 1:9 2:3,7 2:20 4:2,13 5:1 5:8 7:22 9:9 10:11,16 11:24 12:3,5,11,12 14:15 15:19 16:5 18:16 26:9 27:21 30:3 32:17,21 42:6,13 43:24 46:24 48:22 82:24 83:9,12 86:23 87:5 publication 10:20 11:2 published 10:18 pull 72:13 pulled 72:11	pump 46:5 pumping 45:20 81:17 pumps 81:17 pursuant 2:15 7:23 9:9 11:21 13:24,24 86:11 put 31:23 69:22 78:24 80:2 pyritic 34:10 <hr/> Q <hr/> quality 27:6 quarterly 24:9 24:17 40:20,22 question 11:22 16:12 25:7 46:2 54:14,16 75:17 78:11 questions 17:20 18:14,18 27:6 30:3 82:22 quick 27:15 quite 51:20 78:21 quote 22:10 47:24 60:10 quotes 22:6 24:6 28:9,14 <hr/> R <hr/> R 3:1 52:16 raise 27:9,24 raises 46:2 Raoul 32:17 rapidly 59:22 RDR 1:24 2:14 3:22 RDR/CRR 4:3 reach 72:13 read 14:5 71:23 84:10 ready 15:11 real 35:20 reality 56:17 71:8 realized 73:24 realizing 36:11 really 5:7 8:14 8:14 24:21
--	---	---	---	--

28:24 50:1 58:20 76:14 82:3 realtime 29:2 88:5 reason 8:18 reasonable 27:10 reasonably 40:4 reasons 27:19 recall 70:9 receive 87:2 received 11:3,17 11:19 33:2 52:2 53:13,20 53:21,22 86:18 receptacle 34:1 reclaim 36:12 65:20 reclaimed 20:10 64:14 67:5 reclamation 2:17,19 4:15 4:23 7:6,17 13:8 19:14,18 20:8,12 23:20 24:2 25:9,22 25:24 28:19 29:4 36:6,8,11 36:18 37:3,6 37:11 41:2 64:15 65:14,17 65:19 66:24 67:17 record 6:9 18:3 18:11 61:10 83:18 86:10,12 recorded 83:7,8 recordings 6:23 records 60:22 80:12 rectified 70:18 71:5 redesigned 72:4 reduce 60:11 reduced 39:2 88:8 reducing 47:18 48:2 reevaluate 67:17	refer 24:4 reference 43:2 referred 42:24 81:22 referring 27:22 50:12,20 reflect 21:8 regarding 2:7 7:10,14 8:4 11:14 16:6,24 29:3 31:1 32:23 52:3 55:22 84:16 87:3 regards 16:17 Regional 21:16 Registered 88:4 regulation 14:1 15:9 22:7 regulations 7:10 7:13,19,24 9:10,14,15 10:4 11:22 13:17 14:6 21:13 28:2 36:23 regulators 67:13 67:16 regulatory 13:10,13 23:23 24:3 25:10,17 30:18 reject 52:9 related 16:9 17:20 73:21 88:10 relation 7:24 14:24 relative 88:13 release 32:16 relentless 60:17 61:6 62:2 relevant 14:19 28:9 remain 38:22 86:12 remained 22:15 32:11 remind 18:12 renew 8:1 21:20	48:10 67:8 77:9 renewable 48:4 59:21 85:15 renewal 2:22 8:5 8:18,21 9:19 10:6,9,12 11:14 12:15,22 13:4,11,22 14:12 15:1,7 15:23 16:6,18 17:1,5,6,9 25:15 27:19 31:3,7 38:4 41:24 42:4,18 54:13,16,21 55:14 62:15 67:23 68:2 75:19 76:7,8 76:10,11,14,16 76:18 77:2,5,7 77:13,24 78:4 78:9 79:3,8,9 79:11,13 80:14 83:2 84:16 86:21 renewals 1:11 2:5,8 9:5,14 21:21 22:21 31:1 67:15 75:18 85:21 renewed 17:13 21:20 28:24 35:1 66:4 repeat 67:3 repeated 27:21 replacement 40:16 report 19:22 29:18 41:6 61:24 reported 32:12 reporter 3:21 4:4 6:9,11,16 6:23 83:12 88:2,4,4,5,23 reports 24:9,17 26:19 29:2,15 30:5 40:20,22 41:1,3,16	61:19 81:7 represent 51:10 51:11 54:12 representation 51:3 representative 15:2 50:24 51:4,7 representing 8:13 request 11:8,24 12:5 31:6 46:13 54:21 84:16,19 requested 5:8 12:3 13:11 25:15 requesting 6:18 53:10 requests 10:24 11:3 52:24 require 13:24 28:3 29:1 required 12:2,17 13:17,20 14:3 24:11,18 28:14 34:16 35:9 36:6 40:19 44:18 65:19,22 66:20,22 requirement 28:10 requirements 7:14 14:10 40:16,18 67:15 requires 47:16 47:17 60:2 69:14 requiring 20:9 28:17 rescheduling 21:6 30:16 research 72:18 74:7 reserved 6:6 resident 32:7 38:6 residents 21:2 23:2 26:16 30:21 35:8	38:24 49:1 resiliency 49:18 resilient 48:6 resolved 11:23 resources 2:18 3:2,5,6,11,11 3:15,16 4:11 4:22 37:1 42:21,23 48:5 52:15,19 66:11 85:19 respectfully 31:6 respiratory 58:4 respond 18:14 54:6 83:1 responded 82:23 82:23 response 11:10 12:7 17:22 53:4,5,5,7,10 86:4 responses 18:17 32:11 83:13 responsibilities 29:22 responsible 7:9 31:15 57:15 70:3 responsive 86:13 responsiveness 30:2 rest 49:9 restitution 70:7 restoration 25:2 36:3 restore 23:16 restored 22:7 36:3 40:7,8 restoring 40:2 restrictions 35:19 restroom 7:5 restrooms 7:2 restructuring 65:12 result 61:20 resulted 64:19 65:3
---	---	---	--	---

resulting 39:24 84:24 85:18	risk 32:21 36:12 36:13 74:10 85:17	78:1	73:6	Shoal 72:11,12 72:24 73:2,6
results 62:1	risking 33:3,23	says 52:22 53:1 69:2	sections 7:23 9:10 40:23	short 7:7 14:8 23:1 52:21 61:19,20,22
retention 31:19	rivers 72:22	scale 47:19	secure 65:9	shorter 78:7
retired 59:20	roadmap 47:24	scared 31:18	security 65:15	shorthand 4:2,3 88:4,23
retiree 64:24	roads 21:4 42:6 48:23 85:3	Schafer 3:14 4:21 9:21 75:23 76:4 77:13,17,20 78:19,24 79:19 79:22	see 8:8 18:5 22:1 23:21 25:20 27:19,21 28:21 45:18 47:23 48:7 50:11 51:14 52:12,23 53:11 54:20 64:18 71:24 72:9 75:23 78:20	show 20:12 69:20 70:6,17 70:18,24 71:5
retirement 59:20	role 60:5	scheduled 4:16	seeing 79:1 86:5	showed 19:19
return 23:14	room 47:1 65:23	Schram 38:12	seen 59:11 78:17	showing 82:5
returning 25:2	room-and-pillar 39:8	Schraut 5:9,12 5:15,19 11:4 12:3 18:7,20 18:22,23 20:16	self-insurance 13:17	shown 33:21
review 8:24 9:17 10:1,1,3,16,17 12:14 14:20 24:6 40:12 52:10 54:1,17 80:7 86:20	Route 39:1	Schraut's 59:12	selling 56:5	shows 19:21 69:18 70:1 74:7
reviewed 9:2,20 12:13 14:24 21:16 78:7 80:4	rubber-stamps 19:22	Schroeder 43:16 43:17	sending 80:19	shut 49:13 70:6
revised 14:2	rules 21:17	Schuering 52:3 54:5,5,24	sends 8:16 49:4	side 26:15
revision 16:1,2 17:5,6 24:5,13 34:24 39:19,22 41:24 66:3 67:9 75:21 76:12,13,19,20 77:1,4,5,7,11 77:14,17,21,23 78:2,3	ruling 54:11	Schuering's 53:8	sense 17:1 55:5 85:12	Sierra 47:5 59:8
revisions 12:18 75:20	rumor 26:23 27:1	Scientists 60:18	sent 53:10	signed 36:17 56:7
Revolution 60:12	run 1:10 2:4,8 2:22 8:2 10:11 22:14 27:23 31:13 34:6,8 34:13,17,18 36:7 38:4 41:6 41:22 59:11 61:21 62:13 68:2 69:3 84:16 85:9,21	Scott 49:22 50:2 50:15,17,21 51:2,6,9 52:16 52:23 53:14 54:3,8,15 55:1 55:3,9,12,16 58:11,16,23 68:12 69:4,6 82:11,21 83:4 83:11,14 84:1	September 10:7 10:14,21 32:1	significant 12:18 62:3
richest 43:7	Run's 41:24	Scott's 59:1	serious 32:21 34:7	signings 56:4
rid 56:22 65:7	Russell 11:6	scrubbers 74:8	seriously 48:24	similar 45:21
ridiculous 63:9	S	sealed 34:16	Services 3:22	sincerely 30:6
right 4:8 5:6 7:4 12:21 15:14 17:17,19 37:19 46:10 50:11 52:9 54:15 57:11 63:16 71:13 75:3 86:5	S 3:1	searching 26:19	set 7:13 15:1 30:1	sinkhole 56:9,14 74:14
rights 29:23 56:2,11	sacrifice 43:9 66:9	seasonal 29:18	seven 2:11 19:3 70:21	sinking 19:8
rise 60:17 61:6 62:2	safe 32:24	Seated 4:20	severe 39:3	sister 59:2
rising 74:2	safer 62:9	second 5:17,18 6:8 44:15 63:7	Services 3:22	sites 36:8,13 38:22
	safety 26:9 31:9 31:18 32:18 33:3,23,24 34:9 36:15 67:24	secret 32:11	sewer 45:22	sitting 19:6 64:13
	Sally 59:6	section 11:21 12:2,19 13:1 13:24 15:1 21:22 28:5,11 28:12 39:2 69:7 72:19	shadow 26:5 39:20 41:5,15 42:2 43:1 65:21 66:2 81:2	situation 9:22 10:5
	Sandy 84:13 85:24		sharks 83:21,22 84:1	six 16:20 18:5 19:2 50:1 81:20
	satisfactorily 13:6 22:3		shed 64:23	size 65:24
	save 47:10		sheds 19:9	slide 27:2 31:19
	saying 53:10		shipped 74:19	slope 26:15 27:1 31:19
			shipping 74:21 74:23 75:1	slopes 20:2 39:16 45:10
				slurry 26:10,12 26:15 35:5 38:13,19 73:1
				small 56:9 73:16

SMCRA 36:7	74:23 75:6	STIPULATED	subsidiaries	78:5
smoke 60:11	standing 51:17	4:1	65:10	synchronize
soil 23:12 63:12	54:11,14	stop 25:14 27:12	substances 32:3	8:21
63:15 68:10	start 4:24 8:3	storage 80:9	substantially	system 34:19
soils 23:11	15:18 17:21	storm 61:14	13:12 25:15	66:6,12
solar 59:22	18:4,20 42:15	strategies 48:2	succeed 22:4	systems 45:23
62:10	67:10 77:22	stream 23:5	successive 12:21	65:18
sold 56:3,11,12	86:6	streams 42:7	suffer 48:16	
57:8	started 10:20	72:22	suffered 30:22	T
solution 58:2	34:13	street 73:24	sufficient 10:2	take 44:24 46:15
Somebody 5:12	starting 4:7	stringent 67:15	65:20	53:2 54:23
63:10	21:23 81:14	structure 40:17	Sugar 27:2	57:2 61:12,17
someplace 75:1	state 1:2 2:2 7:8	structures 38:21	31:24 32:17	80:8 83:12
somewhat 48:9	7:11,15 21:12	85:2	34:2 35:16	85:20
sorry 9:24 27:8	32:18 38:3,24	struggle 66:18	sulfur 75:7	taken 4:2 28:1
33:2 37:10	52:13 59:13	stuff 63:4 74:18	sulfur's 34:10	38:18 45:14
58:5,11 80:7	62:10 65:2	subdivisions	summary 27:18	46:16 50:13
sort 77:1	67:20,22 69:14	45:22	summation	58:19,20 73:9
south 44:8,14,19	70:11 71:14,16	subject 12:16	36:20	88:7,12
46:8,8	71:18 88:6,23	subjects 43:20	sun 74:2	talk 49:2 77:6
space 6:6	state's 42:23	submission 2:20	supervisor	talked 81:1
sparkling 74:3	69:17	submissions	68:12	talking 16:8
speak 5:10,13	stated 9:8 32:17	27:10 84:21	supplies 40:17	75:10 78:13
6:4,10,15	32:19 39:23	submit 40:19	supply 35:8	task 30:17
20:18 21:17	40:11 41:6	68:5 69:1	85:19	taxpayers 37:3
30:12 43:12	82:24	75:11 80:23,24	support 36:17	team 59:9,10,14
47:9,11 48:15	statement 8:4	81:10,19 82:2	59:9	technical 10:3
62:20 64:4	9:12 84:9	82:9 84:15	supporting 22:8	Technically 16:4
speakers 5:23	statements 6:17	85:24	22:9 40:5	technologically
specialist 19:15	14:18 18:1	submittal 2:21	67:20	40:1
19:19 20:12	84:22 86:9,13	submitted 2:23	supposed 37:6	technologies
species 48:17	86:14	9:19,23 11:1	sure 5:3,24 6:10	59:22 60:2
specific 24:14	states 24:6 30:19	12:11 32:9	21:12 34:22	tell 46:10 73:21
specifically 13:2	70:10 71:15	68:11	55:2,18 58:15	81:4
specifics 29:11	72:17,22 73:7	subside 39:9	58:17 83:20	tells 72:19
spend 20:13	75:1,4	subsided 20:5	surface 2:16	temperature
spent 19:11	stations 45:20	39:6,12 40:7	7:17 13:7 20:5	61:8
spontaneous	45:21	42:9 81:10,13	22:4 23:19	ten 5:23 33:9
34:11	Statistical 61:24	81:23	32:6 39:24	61:5 86:14,18
spring's 61:13	status 35:14	subsidence 20:2	41:16,18 49:16	tendency 79:4
Springfield 3:6	37:14 54:7,9	22:14,18 23:10	56:8 81:24	tension 60:5
3:12,16 21:11	71:24	24:7 29:3,7	surface-water	term 12:23
78:20	statute 7:12,16	36:1 39:1,21	41:8	17:12,13 37:13
springs 33:10	statutes 7:19	39:24 40:5,13	surprised 51:12	76:17,21
Square 2:13	32:19	41:7,11,17	68:23 83:18	terms 13:5 22:1
staff 20:22 59:8	Steiner 50:20	42:10 57:7	surrounding	28:15 76:18
stand 49:22	step 9:18 10:8	66:2 81:24	32:5,5 33:7	terrible 63:5
standards 12:16	10:23 20:18	82:2 84:23,24	35:12 36:13	66:16
13:9 15:1	49:18	85:5,7	switched 34:18	testing 69:9,14
23:22 72:5,5	steps 49:12	subsides 22:23	synchronization	text 68:5

thank 4:19 8:5 11:11 12:8 15:10,16,17 17:17 20:15,22 20:24 21:5 27:16 30:6,9 30:10,16 37:21 43:11,13 46:20 46:22 49:20,21 53:15,19 58:22 58:23 59:5 62:15,17 63:24 64:1,9 68:4 75:14 77:3 82:10 84:12 85:22 86:2 87:4	thoughtful 50:6 thoughts 25:19 58:14 threat 35:4 threaten 48:23 threatens 47:15 three 16:13 22:16 29:14 36:5 38:23 39:5 61:20 69:9 threshold 47:14 73:14 time 4:7 5:5,24 6:2 8:19 9:7 18:5 20:9 25:13 27:12 28:16,17 29:9 30:7 34:21 37:16 40:9 44:12 58:12,13 62:12,16,20 64:4 66:24 68:9 71:1,11 75:13 78:7 79:11 85:13 time-consuming 20:4 36:9 time-relevant 29:16 timeline 41:19 timely 22:7,11 23:17 25:1,9 times 9:2 53:9 66:14 tired 75:10 tirelessly 43:4 Title 7:20 today 4:19 8:8 8:13 15:5 47:11 72:2 83:16 today's 4:17 6:24 72:4 86:15 told 55:1 56:5 ton 61:20 Toni 47:3 tonight 8:14 15:2 20:23	21:14,18 27:9 30:7 49:15 50:10 80:24 83:23 84:10 tonight's 6:9 17:24 18:17 86:17 tons 61:20,22 62:13 70:12 top 82:18 topography 23:15 topsoil 25:6 39:15 40:8 torn 38:21 touch 43:19 tough 60:11 toured 59:10 town 38:17 43:24 towns 38:11 Township 50:4 51:23 toxic 32:1 33:5 35:2 60:1 toxins 26:8 tragedy 33:19 Tragically 34:1 transcribe 6:9 6:16 transcribed 4:4 transcript 6:12 6:19,20,24 transition 30:23 67:10 transitioning 85:14 transportation 48:4 treated 21:4 trekked 21:10 21:11 tremendous 45:3 Tribune 32:10 tributary 32:8 trucks 74:16 true 26:24 51:18 truly 49:6 truth 47:11,17	49:9,10,15 truths 47:2 try 82:6 trying 51:16 58:4 tumors 33:10 turn 57:2 60:10 turned 44:7 turning 57:4 turnout 8:9 turns 45:2 twenty-four 2:10 twin 59:2 two 15:24 16:2,7 16:9,10,14,16 16:17 17:6 28:22 29:1 30:21 34:24 35:5 38:12 39:19 41:24 44:7,7,15 53:5 56:10 66:3 67:9 70:20 76:18,19 77:11 two-day 71:19 type 46:14 typewriting 4:5 88:9	unevenly 22:23 unforeseen 4:18 unfortunately 66:15 68:16 unit 8:24 United 30:19 72:17,22 73:7 74:24 75:4 units 8:22 University 58:9 74:17 unmined 44:18 unplanted 41:20 unsafe 21:1 unsuccessful 31:23 unusual 56:8 update 53:12,18 updated 14:2 53:12 upload 6:19 upstream 23:5 upwelling 33:9 urge 62:14 use 7:4 20:24 45:22 uses 22:8,10 40:4 usual 58:21 usually 9:18,21 70:19 80:2,8 Utah 71:16,20 Utilities 59:24 Utility 59:21
				U
				U-type 34:19 U.S 64:22 72:20 umbrella 42:20 unaware 73:19 undeniable 49:10 underground 22:5 23:21 49:4 understand 23:24 45:8 55:4 59:21 69:12 understanding 5:9 29:22 52:4 underwater 22:15 unequal 66:18 uneven 20:2
				V
				valid 12:20,20 71:17 valuable 42:24 85:18 value 40:3 various 68:19 varying 9:2 vehicles 48:24 61:15 ventilation 34:19 venue 14:15 viable 67:21 view 79:15

violated 32:18	watershed 23:8	woman 84:7	77:2 78:5,6	1970s 21:10
violations 27:21	way 3:6,11,16	won 60:14	yesterday's 61:4	1977 37:5 64:12
31:5 35:13	45:12 62:11	word 22:11 24:1	younger 73:20	1980s 60:18
42:16,17 48:18	68:13 71:16	wording 28:8		
85:10	78:17 80:1	work 20:8 23:13	<hr/> Z <hr/>	<hr/> 2 <hr/>
violators' 35:17	81:16	24:23 25:22	zero 48:1	2 19:9 24:5,13
Virginia 70:11	ways 20:4 47:19	27:7 29:4 46:6	zombie 37:13	2.5 73:15
voice 47:1	we'll 6:18,19	50:17,19 59:2	64:10	20 39:3
Voices 36:22	we're 16:5,15	70:20 71:8,13		2008 34:3 68:10
vulnerable	55:6 57:9,20	73:20 74:1	<hr/> 0 <hr/>	2012 34:14
31:22	57:20,21 59:17	workers 49:4	<hr/> 1 <hr/>	64:21
	75:4 76:9,10	working 36:20	1 2:12 21:24	2013 76:24 77:2
<hr/> W <hr/>	76:17 78:1	70:21	10 65:11	2014 34:15
Waggoner 84:18	we've 59:11	works 16:21	11 41:23 43:18	2015 34:15 72:7
walk 48:8	60:24 74:5	45:8 66:12	65:11	77:1,4,23
walking 48:7	78:17 81:1	world 43:8	12 10:7 19:9	2016 34:16 62:7
want 5:16 20:22	weather 4:18	72:21 74:14	12th 88:18	65:1
21:17 24:16,19	Web 80:3,5,8	worst 28:23	1300s 60:7	2017 64:21
27:24 38:3	website 6:20	wouldn't 44:10	14 10:14	2018 8:20 9:4
56:23 58:14,17	9:12 10:18	write 53:3,3,4,5	16.1 65:4	77:3
69:5 78:20	47:23 55:11,15	53:6	17 65:2	2018-1-04 9:4
79:15 80:23,24	60:8,16 61:4	writing 13:4	1700 7:21	2019 34:16
81:10,19 82:2	78:14,15,18	written 5:7	1773.13 7:23	2020 34:22
wanted 8:14	79:1,7,10	10:23 12:10	9:10	65:11 77:24
18:12 56:22	week 70:21,22	14:18 18:1	1773.13(a) 12:2	2021 32:1 41:24
57:6 58:24	73:13,14	30:8 53:22	1773.13(c) 2:15	62:8 77:12
68:6 75:11	weekends 70:22	75:12 86:8,13	1773.14 11:21	2022 41:1 61:22
wants 14:7	weeks 10:11,22	86:24	1773.14(d)(5)	61:24
warned 60:18,24	53:5,6	wrong 72:3	86:12	2023 9:24 10:7
wash-water 35:2	well-being 47:15		1773.19(d) 12:19	10:14,21 11:15
washed 25:6	wells 69:9,11,18	<hr/> X <hr/>	1774 21:23	31:20 41:1,6
washing 38:14	69:20	<hr/> Y <hr/>	1774.15 7:23	61:10 67:2,3
Washington	went 73:1,2	yard 51:21	9:10	84:22
21:11	82:15,15	Yeah 15:13 16:4	1774.15(a) 12:20	2024 1:13 2:8
wasn't 45:1	weren't 56:21	17:18 51:9	1774.15(c)(1)	4:17 36:17
83:16,18	58:18	55:9 68:23	13:1	65:16 67:12
waste 34:1 38:14	west 42:6 70:10	83:14	18 10:21	88:18
watching 19:8	whatsoever 56:8	year 41:21 61:5	1800 28:5	2050 48:1
water 24:23 35:8	70:14	61:10 63:8	1800.15 28:11	208.144 55:12
35:9,14,18	wildlife 33:6	81:18	28:12	21001 53:19
36:14 37:1	William 43:17	years 22:16,21	1800.4 28:5	217 3:7,12,17
39:15 40:17	Williamson	22:21 25:4,24	1800.60 13:18	22 4:17
42:9,22 46:18	31:18	29:10 36:5,21	1800s 56:3	225 7:18
60:3 63:15	wind 59:22	38:23 39:6	1817.121 24:11	23 53:17 81:14
66:11,21 68:10	62:10	48:11 49:5	185 39:1 59:13	24 68:9
69:7,8,11,13	wish 5:2,10 6:3	51:18 56:20	1850 7:21	24/7 48:17
69:16,18,18,19	18:2 47:13	61:6 68:17,22	19 56:20	242 51:15
69:20,21 81:18	witness 45:3	70:21 72:8	1900s 56:3	25 53:17
85:5	witnessed 39:4	73:16 74:6	1950 60:18	26 3:23
waters 32:6	Wolff 3:4		1960s 21:10	27 9:24

3	6,600 67:5			
3 27:8	60 74:6			
30 11:2 61:15	618 3:24			
70:21 80:5	62 2:15 7:20			
307-9320 3:24	21:22 24:10			
32,500 67:2,4	28:4 86:11			
35 73:15	62034 3:23			
350 60:19	62049 43:18			
39 16:2	62702 3:6,12,16			
398 61:6	68 67:7			
399 2:23 8:1,19	7			
9:6 16:2,2 17:5	7 23:2 39:7			
17:6 22:14	7-foot 20:2			
24:5,11,16,18	7,731.8 39:20			
27:7 29:7	42:2			
34:24 36:1	7,731.8-acre			
38:5 39:19	66:4			
43:23 51:14	7:24 87:8			
66:3 67:9,9	7:30 6:5,7			
68:13 69:15	72 61:15			
75:19,20 76:1	720 7:19			
76:9,15,19,22	785-5191 3:17			
77:6 79:5	785-9037 3:12			
4	8			
4 11:15 84:21	8 1:13 2:8 61:16			
4,469,223 61:22	80 12:1			
40 80:5	9			
400 35:13 42:17	9 73:15			
67:6	92.2 65:4			
419 67:6				
420 61:5				
424 2:23 8:1,19				
9:6 38:5,15				
55:7 67:10				
75:19 76:2,11				
76:15 78:13				
426 61:4				
434 27:8				
46,000 32:1				
5				
5.2 64:23				
5:35 4:7				
558-6622 3:7				
6				
6 23:2 39:6				
41:23				
6- 20:1				