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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

Date: December 4, 2023

Case: INFORMAL CONFERENCE - HILLSBORO ENERGY, DEER RUN MINE - RENEWAL APPLICATION

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CITY OF HILLSBORO
STATE OF ILLINOIS

INFORMAL CONFERENCE
HILLSBORO ENERGY, DEER RUN MINE
RENEWAL APPLICATION

DECEMBER 4, 2023

Ann Marie Hollo, CSR, RDR, CRR

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CITY OF HILLSBORO

2 STATE OF ILLINOIS

INFORMAL CONFERENCE

HILLSBORO ENERGY, DEER RUN MINE

RENEWAL APPLICATION

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INFORMAL CONFERENCE REGARDING HILLSBORO ENERGY, DEER RUN MINE, RENEWAL APPLICATION, on DECEMBER 4, 2023, between the hours of thirty-two minutes after five o'clock in the afternoon and twelve minutes after seven o'clock in the afternoon of that day, at the Montgomery County Courthouse Annex, 201 South Main Street, Hillsboro, Illinois, before Ann Marie Hollo, CSR, RDR, CRR, in a certain cause pursuant to 62 Ill. Adm. Code 1773.13(c) promulgated under the Surface Coal Mining Land Conservation and Reclamation Act, the Department of Natural Resources, Office of Mines and Minerals, Land Reclamation Division hereby gives notice that an informal conference for submission of comments will be conducted by the Department for the submittal of renewal application for the Deer Run mine permit Nos. 399 and 424, which was submitted by Hillsboro Energy.

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1	A P P E A R A N C E S
2	For the Illinois Department of Natural Resources:
3	Mr. Brian Navarrete, Hearing Officer
4	Ms. Amy Wolff Oakes, Legal Counsel
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10	Ms. Kemi Osibamowo Northern District Manager
11	ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
12	One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702
13	(217) 785-9037
14	Mr. James Schafer
15	Permit Coordinator ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
16	One Natural Resources Way
17	Springfield, Illinois 62702 (217) 785-5191
18	
19	ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Clayton Cross, Hillsboro Energy, LLC
20	
21	The Court Reporter:
22	Ann Marie Hollo, CSR, RDR, CRR
23	Paszkiewicz Litigation Services 26 Ginger Creek Parkway
24	Glen Carbon, Illinois 62034 (618) 307-9320

IT IS HEREBY STIPULATED AND AGREED that the 1 2 informal hearing may be taken in shorthand by Ann Marie Hollo, RDR/CRR, a Certified Shorthand 3 4 Reporter, and afterwards transcribed into 5 typewriting. 6 7 (Starting time of the hearing is: 5:32 p.m.) 8 MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you, everyone. 9 Good evening. 10 My name is Brian Navarrete. I'm an 11 attorney with the Illinois Department of Natural 12 Resources, Office of Legal Counsel. I'm the 13 appointed hearing officer for this informal 14 conference administered by the Office of Mines and 15 Minerals, Land Reclamation Division -- LRD -- which 16 is LRD -- short for LRD. 17 I'm going to take a moment to 18 introduce who's up here with me. 19 I have Clayton Cross who's here with 20 Hillsboro Energy. To my left, I have Kemi 21 Osibamowo. She is the Northern District Manager. Then next is Amy Oakes. She is an attorney for 22 23 Office of Mines and Minerals, and then Jim Schafer

at the end is the permit coordinator.

24

Before we start, I'd like to go over

2 a few logistics. First, I think everyone -- is

there anyone who didn't sign up who would like to?

4 Okay. If you'd like to speak --

5 MR. KRUSE: No. I just need to sign

6 in. I'll sign this.

3

7

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13

MR. NAVARRETE: Sir?

MR. KRUSE: Do you really want my

signature? I'm a carbonite from Glen Carbon.

That's what they call us.

MR. NAVARRETE: All right. So was

12 | there anyone who wanted to provide oral comments

today who has not signed up yet? Okay.

Based on the number of speakers, I'm

15 going to limit your initial talking to six minutes

16 per person, and then if people -- if we have time

17 left over, people can come up and keep speaking

18 | until we run out of -- or until 7:30, because that

19 is how long we have this space reserved for.

20 Second, the department has hired a

21 court reporter at the end over here. So to make

22 | sure that we have a clean transcript of today's

23 informal conference, please speak clearly. I mean,

24 | it's a small room, so you don't have to raise your

voice too much, but, you know, the court reporter
can't transcribe head nods or head shakes. So only
oral, spoken words will be transcribed.

Third, we will be requesting an expedited transcript, and we will upload a copy of today's transcript onto the department's website when that is available for you -- for the public to review.

LRD is one of several state and federal administrative agencies responsible for administering the enforcement of the regulations regarding the coal mining industry in the State of Illinois. Each has its own authorizing statute and set of regulations. Each has its own permitting and enforcement requirements regarding coal mining operations in the state.

LRD's authorization statutes:

Surface Coal Mining Land Conservation and

Reclamation Act found at Chapter 225 of the Illinois

Compiled Statutes Act 720. Its promulgated

regulations are found Title 62 of the Illinois

Administrative Codes, Parts 1700 to 1850.

This informal conference is being held pursuant to Sections 1773.13 and 1774.15 of

1 those rules, and it is related to the pending

renewal process.

2 application of the renewal permit for mines Number

3 | 399 and 424 of Hillsboro Energy, LLC, Deer Mine.

Before we continue, Kemi would like to provide a brief statement regarding the permit

7 MS. OSIBAMOWO: Hello, everybody.

I'm Kemi. I just wanted to say we do have copies of the statutes that we're going to be referring to today right here for your use.

Just as Brian introduced, I'm Kemi.

I'm the North District Manager of LRD. I'm

representing the department for Dan Barkley. He

couldn't be here today.

But I also would like to address the reason why we are renewing both permits at the same time. Some of you may already know this, but in 2018, LRD instituted an administrative process to synchronize the permit renewal process. Usually we would have a unit of -- for coal mining would have multiple permits in that unit. So just for convenience, we decided to synchronize everything so that we would have one renewal per unit, which would be, in this case, Permits 399 and 424.

And as stated by Brian here, who is the hearing officer, this informal conference is being held pursuant to Sections 1773.13 and 1774.15 of those regulations.

For brevity's sake, my statement will generally encompass the application of these regulations to the permit renewal at hand.

So please don't -- we will also refer to all the regulations as applicable, but those are the main sections of those regulations we've been referring to.

Now, during the renewal process, the first step is that an application is submitted to LRD and is reviewed for administrative completeness. In this situation, the application was submitted on the 27th of July 2023.

Now, a completeness review is a moderately detailed review to determine if sufficient information is provided for the department to conduct its technical review of the application for compliance with the regulations.

So in this situation, the application for renewal was deemed administratively complete on the 12th of September of 2023.

Now, subsequently, the applicant must file a copy of the renewal application with the county clerk in the county where the mine is located and public notice for four consecutive weeks. And, in this case, the administrative complete renewal application was filed with the Montgomery County Clerk on the 14th of September 2023.

So in addition to being available for public review at the county clerk's office, the Permits 399 and 424 renewal application has also been available for review on the department's website. I'm hoping you've had access to review this applications on the website. Everybody? No? Good, good, good.

So the news was first published by the permittee in the Hillsboro Journal-News, and that's a Montgomery County-wide publication. And this was on the 18th of September 2023, and that continued on for four weeks.

As you know, written comments or objections or requests for an informal conference may then be submitted to LRD within 30 days after the last publication notices.

In this case, the department received

1 requests for an informal conference from the -- we

2 | have Larry Schraut from Hillsboro; Mary Bates from

3 | Litchfield; Karyl Dressen from Coffeen; Alan Russell

4 of Alton; Joyce Blumenshine of Peoria; Mary Ellen

5 DeClue of Litchfield.

Did anybody else request an informal conference and didn't hear their name?

(No response.)

MS. OSIBAMOWO: Okay. Following that, written comments and objections submitted during the public comment period and at the informal conference such as this are usually compiled, reviewed, and considered as part of the permit review process.

Now, I'm highlighting this part because it's a very important part. That's why we're here today. We want to hear from you. We want to collect your comments because that is part of the permit process.

I also want to note that the renewal of the permit is subject to standards that are very different from those required for a new permit or for a significant revision to a permit.

Per Section 1773.19(d) and

1 1774.15(a), a valid permit shall carry with it the 2 right of successive renewal, within the approved 3 boundaries of the existing permit, and upon

expiration of the term of the permit.

Now, Section 1774.15(c)(1)

specifically provides that the department shall approve a complete and accurate application for permit renewal unless it finds in writing that the terms and conditions of the existing permits are not being satisfactorily met; the present surface coal mining and reclamation operations are not -- and sorry. This is -- so that was (A).

And then (B) is that the present coal mining and reclamation operations are not in compliance with the environmental protection standards of the Act and the regulatory body;

- (C) the requested renewal substantially jeopardizes the operator's continuing ability to comply with the Act and the regulatory program on existing permit areas;
- (D) The operator has not provided evidence of having liability insurance or self-insurance as required by 62 Illinois Administrative Code 1800.60;

(E) The operator has not provided evidence that any performance bond required to be in effect for the operation will continue in full force and effect for the proposed period of the renewal, as well as any additional bond the department might require pursuant to 62 Illinois Administrative Code 1800; or additional revised or updated information required by the department has not been provided by the applicant.

So in short, to be approved -- sorry -- to be approved, an application must meet every one of these requirements. If the application does, then the department shall approve the renewal application. If the application fails to meet any one of these criteria, then the department will deny the approval.

This informal conference provides a venue for persons having an interest, which is or may be adversely affected by the decision on the application, to provide oral and written statements, and any other relevant information for us to consider in our review as I've just described.

So what does this all mean? All comments provided through this process will be

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1
     compiled, reviewed, considered, and addressed in
 2.
     relation to the standards for permit renewals, set
     forth in 1774.15(c).
 3
                    So as it was presented tonight, I
 4
 5
     will do my best to answer your comments, to answer
     your questions within the time allotted, but please
 6
 7
     note that our decision on the pending permit renewal
     application is based on the criteria I just
 9
     described.
10
                    So, once again, please bear with us;
     bear with me. I'll try my best to answer the
11
12
     questions. I have Jim here; I have Amy here; and
13
     they should -- we should get to a good conclusion
     tonight.
14
15
                    Thank you. That's all I have.
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MR. NAVARRETE: All right. Yes?

17 | Sorry. Excuse me?

19

MS. DECLUE: Okay. You mentioned

Permit 399 and 424?

MS. OSIBAMOWO: Yes.

21 MS. DECLUE: That also includes

22 Revision 1 of 399 and Revision 2 of 399?

23 MS. OSIBAMOWO: Yeah. So that's

24 all -- those are all applications that are related

to permits. 1 2 MS. DECLUE: Thank you. MR. NAVARRETE: All right. Sir, you 3 came in later, in the purple hat. Did you want to 4 5 sign up to speak? UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER: 6 I'm sorry? 7 MR. NAVARRETE: Did you want to sign 8 up to speak? 9 UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER: No. 10 MR. NAVARRETE: Or to receive a transcript? 11 12 UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm just 13 here with -- thank you. 14 MR. NAVARRETE: So before we start 15 the conference, are there any other questions -- or 16 the oral comment period of this conference, are there any other questions? 17 18 MS. BLUMENSHINE: Sir, just to -- I 19 know it takes a while with the transcript, but is 20 there any estimate when it might be posted online, please? 21 22 MS. OAKES: We have it ordered as

expedited. We usually get it posted up within 24 hours after receipt of the transcript.

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1
                    MR. NAVARRETE: At the close of
 2
     tonight's conference, we'll collect any written
     comments that people have brought with them, and
 3
     then they'll also be part of the administrative
 4
 5
     record.
                    I will call in the people who
 6
 7
     requested this informal conference to speak first,
8
     and then I'll go down the list.
 9
                    So Larry Schraut?
10
                    MR. LARRY SCHRAUT:
                                        Here.
                    MR. NAVARRETE: Would you like to
11
12
     speak?
13
                    MR. LARRY SCHRAUT:
                                        I'll pass for
14
     right now. I'll let somebody else go first.
15
                    MR. NAVARRETE: Mary Ellen DeClue?
16
                    MS. DECLUE:
                                 Thanks, Larry.
17
                    MR. LARRY SCHRAUT: Well, you can
18
     pass, too.
19
                    MS. DECLUE: Where do I --
20
                    MR. NAVARRETE: Wherever you want.
21
     The court reporter is right here, so she'll be able
22
     to hear you.
23
                    MS. OAKES: Do you want us to move
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the tables so you'll be comfortable to stand behind?

24

1 Then you have a place to put your papers down.

2.

MS. DECLUE: Thank you.

First of all, it's nice seeing Amy again.

Thank you for arranging this important meeting.

Renewal of all Deer Run Mine permits must not happen. I have learned a lot about the process of getting a coal mine permit approved, especially a longwall mine permit. I have learned that a coal mining permit does not preserve the land, water, and quality of life in communities that host a longwall mine.

IDNR gave the right to Hillsboro Energy, LLC, or HEL, to extract coal from land that no longer had coal and subsidence rights.

I kind of stumbled over that.

To extract coal from land that no longer had coal and subsidence rights.

The landowners have lost control over their property and now have a new overlord. State and federal mining laws strongly favor the business plan of the longwall coal operator to make maximum profits while extracting as much coal as fast as

1 possible.

2.

Oversight by IDNR is supposedly to strike the balance between protection of the environment and agricultural productivity and the nation's need for coal as a source of energy.

The nation's need for coal is a question we must all consider. Currently,

20 percent of our energy comes from coal in the

United States according to the most recent estimate.

Coal has supplied most of our energy needs for the last two centuries using room and pillar mining.

Federal and state mining regulations for underground mining are based on room and pillar, and do not cover the impacts to communities from the supposed planned subsidence resulting from longwall mining.

I am perplexed that the State of
Illinois, with its oversight responsibilities, has
not addressed this unjust, inequitable mandate from
Montgomery County residents.

Believe me, the State of Illinois has been alerted to the disastrous impacts from Deer Run Mine. Reflecting on the past year's struggle with Deer Run Mine, it is apparent to me that the coal

industry has manipulated and established an aura of privilege that has dominated public policy and unduly influenced regulatory agencies.

2.

at the lowest cost possible, no financial constraints on requiring more bonding or monitoring of water and air. Compensation for all damage to structures must be negotiated with HEL. Why are the profits of HEL the primary consideration above the economic viability of residents?

If a farmer is subjected to HEL's longwall plan, the financial outcomes of the family is determined by HEL. The continuation of the family's livelihood is threatened. The family loses money and its land value will decrease. Why is this injustice acceptable for Montgomery County residents?

The right to subside property without the owner's approval must be based on a public need, not on a private industry profit margin. IDNR must shift the paradigm to what will promote farm communities, preserve farmland, maintain water resources, and establish rural economic development.

The 7,731.8-acre expansion of Deer

1 Run Mine in 2021 confirmed that IDNR did not care

2 | about preserving Montgomery County's farmland or

3 | water resources. It is difficult to comprehend why

4 | an expansion of 7,731.8 acres with subsidence

5 | planned in at least four areas of Coffeen Lake,

6 | Miller Creek, Bearcat Creek, and McDavid Branch

7 | Creek would not require additional planning to

8 preserve the hydrologic balance. The devastating

9 | impact of subsidence on ponds, streams, wells, and

10 | springs was not assessed in a comprehensive

11 analysis. Water in the air, water on land, and

water in the ground are connected, and the

13 hydrologic balance must be preserved.

14 The coal privilege in Montgomery

15 | County is well-documented in a handout, which I will

16 give all of you lovely people.

17 Please do what you can to convert the

18 attention from HEL's profits to preservation of a

19 | lovely rural county. I cannot imagine the

20 destruction and harm that will happen when all 17

21 panels are longwall mined. Preserve the community

22 | rather than the coal profits. Do not renew the Deer

23 Run Mine profits now or ever.

Thank you.

24

12

MS. OSIBAMOWO: Thank you. 1 2 MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you. MS. DECLUE: Do I pass these to you 3 4 now, or do you prefer later? 5 MS. OSIBAMOWO: If you want to, yeah. MR. NAVARRETE: Carl (sic) Dressen? 6 7 MS. DRESSEN: Karyl. 8 MR. NAVARRETE: Karyl Dressen. 9 MS. DRESSEN: And I know I got rather 10 long-winded over that. Do you want me to go maybe at the last, rather than splitting it up maybe, or 11 12 not? 13 MR. NAVARRETE: You'll have to argue 14 with Larry about that. 15 MS. DRESSEN: I argue with him all 16 the time. 17 MR. NAVARRETE: If you want to come. 18 MS. DRESSEN: Well, I'd have to split it up because mine is longer than the allotted time. 19 20 So if you want, I can go later. 21 MR. NAVARRETE: You can go. Okay. 22 We'll come back to you. 23 Jeff Schraut? 24 MR. JEFF SCHRAUT: I signed up just

1 for the findings.

2 MR. NAVARRETE: That's fine.

3 | Stacey Schraut?

4 MS. STACEY SCHRAUT: Just for the

5 transcript.

6 MR. NAVARRETE: Joyce Blumenshine?

MS. BLUMENSHINE: Thank you, Hearing

Officer.

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Good evening. I'm Joyce Blumenshine.

10 I want to thank IDNR for the opportunity to comment.

11 Your presence here tonight is very significant, and

12 please believe me we appreciate your time and

efforts. We know you have a long day; you have a

14 lot of work; and so this means a lot. And we just

15 encourage you to hear the local people. We know

Springfield is not that far away, but the offices,

17 | they are removed from what is happening here on the

18 | ground, and I'm here to address a couple of key

points as a citizen and a volunteer. A couple of

20 questions also, please.

So the first thing, I did want to

22 appreciate that the IDNR posted the full application

23 | for renewal on the website. That is most helpful,

24 and we certainly appreciate that.

Included there -- and also I brought a copy from the Hillsboro paper for the public notice for this permit renewal. I just want to refer and ask if perhaps whenever IDNR responds to this hearing.

In Section 1773.13 of the 62 Illinois Administrative Code, public participation and permit processing, letter (a), filing of public notice.

Under letter (b), it says regarding a renewal of a permit or revision, whatever, that that notice should include a map or description which clearly shows or describes the precise location and boundaries of the proposed permit area and shadow area, if applicable, and is sufficient to enable local residents to really identify the proposed permit area.

Now, the mine might assume and IDNR might assume that people who live here know where this is, but I think a lot of people might not.

And so this is my Exhibit 1, which has the details about this hearing, which we appreciate, but there's no information of a map or a location for the proposed renewal.

So I just call that to your attention

and ask IDNR why is the mine not required to do that
as was mentioned before? It seems like the mine is
allowed to save their money from a longer newspaper
ad. Maybe it was just an oversight. So that's just
a question. Thank you. I'll turn that in when I
finish.

Another point that I'd like to raise is that from the citizen point of view, these permit renewals, as our northern district leader here kindly referred to, has criteria for approval. And from the individuals on the ground, if you would wish to see or would consider the full picture, we don't understand how IDNR cannot see that this mine has failed on several counts to meet the statutory criteria in 62 Illinois Administrative Code 1774.15, at letter (c), approval process, beginning with Number 1.

So I just want to go through these quickly, and I have some exhibits in support of my comments. Thank you.

So letter (A). The terms and conditions of existing permit are not being satisfactorily met.

I can comment that from the view on

the ground, the fact is that timely reclamation has not been satisfactorily met. The review on the ground would say that promises made by the mine that one lane of Illinois Highway 185 would remain open at all times has not been completely met. And the fact that there are major concerns about ongoing damages to both Bearcat Creek and the conditions on the ground with erosion — although I realize many of your IDNR conditions and concerns on erosion no longer exist — that there are many conditions that are not fully reflected by the IDNR consideration.

2.

So I raise to you my -- you know, condemnation that the terms and conditions of the existing permit are not being satisfactorily met because, in fact, this mine and this company has a litany of pages of permit violations, exceedances of things that this mine in certainly two exhibits that I'll present toward the end of ongoing major problems that other mines controlled, operated, directed by the same company. To the regular citizens, that is an egregious situation in Illinois that our regulatory agency condones and permits the ongoing actions of mines that in other places are clearly a threat to people's health.

I'll just mention in passing the fires at this mine, the closures, and problems with a variety of reclamation.

Moving on. Letter (B) of the same statute says, "The present surface coal mining and reclamation operations are not in compliance with the environmental protection standards of the Act and regulatory program."

So I contend that that is not in compliance with the environmental program. The mine is not to damage the water or environment or risk public health and safety. I am referring now to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, ECHO, Environmental -- I'm sorry -- Enforcement and Compliance History Online, the detailed facility report, which I'll turn in as an exhibit.

Their data on heavy metals from this mine -- and I want to comment just in passing, which I have over many nears here -- that the full water permit data has never shown up for this mine, and I don't understand why that is not on the ECHO data, but that's not your problem.

But, anyway, going to what is called "TRI," Toxics Release Inventory, for the Deer Run

- 1 | Mine. That is an estimate annually of the heavy
- 2 | metal toxics pollution that this mine imposes on the
- 3 | environment, and by that, I would say the related
- 4 | health, safety, welfare impacts not only of the
- 5 | citizens here locally, but of the future water
- 6 quality, ability to use the water, and the
- 7 | conditions around this area that are safe for the
- 8 | public and the future here.
- 9 So two heavy metals are listed in
- 10 this TRI. One is lead, known to be a very toxic,
- 11 poisonous to infants, children, and many long-term
- 12 effects on adults, whether it's linked to
- 13 | Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. A lot of medical
- 14 research has to be done on that, but still toxic
- 15 | impacts of lead are really critical.
- And for that, I am looking for the
- 17 data here, which I hope to read in a moment, but if
- 18 | I don't find it in the interest of time, I will find
- 19 it here and hopefully have that for you, if not now,
- 20 later.
- 21 So the other -- and that is -- here
- 22 it is.
- 23 So 2022, the TRI releases estimated
- 24 by this mine from their production of coal, whether

- 1 it goes in the coal shipped out, or it goes in the
- 2 | coal slurry and the impoundment sitting over the
- 3 | watersheds for Old Lake Hillsboro and Hillsboro,
- 4 | whatever.
- 5 Lead in 2022, 15,764 tons. In 2021,
- 6 | 16,157 tons.
- 7 Now, how can that mean that this mine
- 8 is in compliance protecting the water quality and
- 9 | environment? I don't understand.
- 10 And regarding mercury. In 2022,
- 11 | 325 tons and 333 in 2021. Mercury is highly toxic.
- 12 An eyedropper in a pond is enough to make it toxic.
- 13 We know that mercury has horrible effects on
- 14 | wildlife and humans regarding infant development,
- 15 adults, your brain power, and many other things.
- So I'll turn this in from the ECHO
- 17 report.
- 18 My contention is that the mine is
- 19 | continually polluting this area leaving legacy
- 20 concerns that will be a blight and burden on the
- 21 | public here and for many generations.
- 22 | So letter (C) --
- 23 MR. NAVARRETE: You've run over time,
- 24 | but let's -- if you end at (C) and come back to that

24 background -- well, first of all, I'm from Glen

And, of course, my

23

1 | Carbon as I indicated earlier, and I'm happy to be

2 here. This is very serious, really serious, because

you're talking about a tremendous amount of impact

4 | not just on the surface of the earth, but underneath

the surface of the earth. So I'm really concerned,

6 and I'm very dedicated as a very healthy 83

year-old, okay? I will continue to promote

providing protection to this planet.

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So I will say -- and is it okay if I stand? Joyce was sitting.

In late summer of 2022, I attended a longwall mining tour of areas around the Deer Run Coal Mine. The tour was organized by CALM, which is Citizens Against Longwall Mining.

The tour was held for people like me.

I was once a seafarer, okay? I came to the Midwest
to see what is happening from longwall subsidence.

We traveled by van going slowly along public roads and along public roads, along mined areas. I had no idea how much area would be affected by the longwall subsidence. Considering the fact that these permit renewals will be -- will let more acres be subsided for the next five years, I don't think -- I don't think these permits should

Page 30

1 be renewed. They need to be really looked over

2 | very, very carefully and studied, and it needs a lot

3 of study from the wonderful presentation that

4 Mary -- and particularly Mary and Joyce made.

5 The damages done to farmland will

6 | last a long time. It's already happened, hasn't it?

7 It's clear that the ground subsidence includes

changes in the fields that have -- that make a

9 variety of problems from very uneven surfaces to

10 | varied topsoil conditions and loss of topsoil.

And I got to see that when I went on

12 this tour where we went in a truck across the

fields, and we could see the variations in the

14 | surface levels, okay?

13

No one is considering the emotional

16 stress farm families facing subsidence have to

17 | suffer. They will have years of not knowing how

18 | well or even if subsidence damages will be taken

19 | care of and actually fixed.

20 Again, I oppose renewing these

21 permits, okay?

22 And I can send you my email address,

23 and it will save paper that way, okay?

24 MR. NAVARRETE: Sure. I think you

1 | put your email down here, though.

MR. KRUSE: Okay. Well, you'll have to make copies. I didn't make a whole lot of copies.

MS. OAKES: It will become part of the administrative record, so we can all access copies of that.

MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you.

All right. And we can go back to the beginning of the list. Mr. Schraut? Larry?

MR. LARRY SCHRAUT: Larry Schraut.

And in the renewal, the people that's going to be affected, well, you're looking at one of the people that has been adversely affected by this mine. It has affected my life, and I see it every day, and it's not going to change.

So I've got a few comments. I'm not going to go in much detail. Now, I've had land that used to grow crops that now grows weeds when it isn't coming by water. I have highway ditches that used to drain my fields that now the water from the highway ditch drains in my field, and it hasn't been corrected.

I probably lost more topsoil in the

1 last four years after this mine started than my

2 previous 50 some years of farming. I've lost tons

3 of topsoil, but nobody seems to -- you know, we've

got it in Illinois where we're supposed to be saving

5 | topsoil. We've got the -- you know, but it

6 doesn't affect -- seem to affect this.

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I own land that hadn't had erosion that now has 7-foot slopes, and when you've got 7-foot slopes, you've got erosion, and if you want pictures, I've got plenty of them.

Here is one of my complaints, too.

There's not one land reclamation specialist here.

And I -- you know, in four years, I've had three

different ones, and none of them appeared to have

any agricultural background to know what they're

16 looking at, and I like to know what's the

17 qualifications for a land reclamation specialist?

I had one that -- and I've been at a lot of meetings. I had one that didn't even know what soil erosion was. So how was he going to tell me that I had it, you know?

I had one that was -- was nice enough or whatever. They put pictures of the gullies and things. I don't know how far it went.

And then I've had one that wasn't even sure he was over the reclamation area, but he was signing the paperwork, and that's another thing

that I've got a problem with.

In the monthly reports: "Deer Run Mine conducts subsidence mitigation to correct surface water drainage over the mined-out longwall panels. The operator is continuing to monitor all longwall panels that have been mined out and is performing longwall subsidence mitigation in an appropriate manner."

Every month it's the same thing. I don't know. I mean, Clayton is here or whatever. They go get Clayton to go around the mine.

Why don't they go around to a farmer or whatever, and: "Hey, you know, we're coming down this certain date. Let's go out and inspect something." But that never happens.

It's just for the farm -- or landowner that's taking the brunt of this whole thing, he's entirely out of the picture. And it's not only your department; IDOT is the same way.

They redid this highway. We've got a smooth highway in places, but my ditch that should

be taking water runs out in the field. I complain,
but it doesn't do any good.

In fact, he wasn't a reclamation specialist, but I had one IDNR employee come out and look at things. He was more concerned about the farmers farming too close to the road ditch than all the erosion I had and the 3-foot gully.

"Oh, these farmers are farming too close to the road ditch."

And that -- the main thing is on this inspection -- monthly inspection -- I think there should be times, or whatever -- a farmer contacted to say, "Hey, I'm here. Let's go out and look at what's happening." So because I don't see how they can -- and they're called "land reclamation specialists."

So, you know, I get frustrated at this because it's affecting me, and I don't think things are going as well as they could be.

And I don't know if you still publish this, the subsidence book, or have you done away with that since?

MS. OAKES: It's been a while.

MR. LARRY SCHRAUT: Well, you need to

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put a new picture in here about the road.
1
     picture in there with the road sure doesn't look
2.
     like what happened out there.
3
                    So that's all the comments I have.
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                    MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you for your
6
     comments.
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                    Ms. Dressen, would you like to speak?
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                    MS. DRESSEN: Is it down to me and
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     Joyce now?
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                    MR. NAVARRETE: Yeah. Or you can
     let --
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                    MS. DRESSEN: Or unless you want
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    to --
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MS. BLUMENSHINE: No. It doesn't

have a lot to say, but for some reason I'm really

to renewal of Hillsboro Energy's Deer Run Mine

MS. DRESSEN: Sorry. Usually I don't

My name is Karyl Dressen. K-A-R-Y-L,

I would like to state my opposition

I've opposed this longwall mining in

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matter to me.

D-R-E-S-S-E-N.

long-winded on this.

Permits 399 and 424.

my county since the very beginning when the county sold coal rights, which had been reverted back to them and Hillsboro Energy first filed for a permit in 2007.

2.

Besides my concerns about the overall effects of coal on climate change, I have concerns about the harmful effects on my community, including contamination of surface and groundwater from mining activities and coal slurry impoundments and air pollution from coal dust.

The longwall method of mining utilized by the Foresight-owned mines in Illinois, including Deer Run, can be particularly destructive to communities. The only benefit is the higher profit margin to the company since it is highly mechanized and thus needs fewer miners, thus fewer jobs created in the area, though, also.

The company can extract more coal from a seam. Again, more profit for them, but as they let the surface drop and what they term "planned subsidence," serious damage results.

Unfortunately, as a resident of Montgomery County, I have now witnessed the damages caused by longwall mining. Many of the concerns

voiced by residents prior to the approval of the original permit have now become reality.

2.

Concerns about damage to public roads due to mine subsidence, especially State Highway 185, were voiced early in the permitting period, but residents were assured that similar state roads were subsided by longwall mining, and traffic was not rerouted.

Appendix F in the permit program, significant revisions application number 2 to Permit 399, states that precautions must be in place to protect the public during and after subsidence impacts. An agreement between the mine and IDOT for panel 5 stated that they must provide a safe and passable roadway for the traveling public.

For greater than two and a half years now, this heavily trafficked state highway has been completely closed at one time for five and a half weeks reduced to one lane or had reduced speeds due to longwall damage.

Currently there is still a long section damaged by panel 6 with a 20-mile-per-hour speed limit due to, as the sign says, severe pavement distress.

An overnight rain event in late

August of this year resulted in water over part of
the highway, but no warnings were put out until late
morning. I travel this road regularly, and I'm
surprised that no one has been injured driving over
the damaged pavement.

will surveillance repairs be adequate once the panels are subsiding on rural county and township roads? Why is a private company even allowed to damage public roadways, inconvenience the public, and possibly affect their safety?

Early concerns about damage to homes, sheds, grain bins, and other structures on farms are now a reality. Most of the homes within the first mine panels are gone. So the county lost an entire farm community. Many more will be damaged with the additional 7,731.8 acres of shadow area approved in Revision 2 to 399.

On my family's farm, 12 grain storage bins and 2 farm sheds will be damaged by subsidence from panel 6 in about a month.

In the application for permit 399, Hillsboro Energy checked "yes" as their answer to the question: Within the proposed permit shadow or

adjacent areas, does the applicant intend to adopt
mining technologies which provide for planned

3 subsidence in a predictable and controlled manner?

This fallacy of longwall mining resulting in a planned predictable surface subsidence that occurs uniformly is repeated several times. Having witnessed the damage to my family's farm ground from longwall subsidence over the past few years, it is not predictable or uniform.

Within the 6 to 7 feet of subsidence occurring on top of the panel width, additional sections dropped another foot or more.

In the same application in reference to the change in surface elevation from planned subsidence, Hillsboro Energy stated that most of the subsidence will not be noticeable due to the general relief of the terrain over the shadow area.

In fact, the transformation of formerly flat farm ground to rolling terrain is quite noticeable. Early concerns of farmers about the impacts of longwall subsidence on the farmland are now a reality.

Formerly level fields with good drainage and minimal erosion now have pooled water

due to subsided areas being unable to drain over
higher, unsubsided ground, and topsoil erosion on
slopes created by longwall panels.

Appendix F to Revision Number 2 states that Hillsboro Energy must correct material damage resulting from subsidence caused to surface lands to the extent technologically and economically feasible by restoring the land to a condition capable of maintaining the value and reasonably foreseeable uses which it was capable of supporting before subsidence. Hillsboro Energy subsidence control plan, as modified, contains a description of measures to be taken in order to comply.

Level farm ground will never be restored to what it was before being subsided.

Ground that has been flooded for over a year will never be as productive. Topsoil lost to erosion cannot be restored.

What is this subsidence control plan?

And where can it be found? Is there an overall drainage plan? And if the subsidence is as planned and predictable as stated, can landowners see such plans before their land is subsided?

Appendix F also states that the

1 department will review the performance of Hillsboro

2 | Energy's subsidence control plan in the field

3 | concerning prompt and effective mitigation. The

4 | department will monitor Hillsboro Energy's

5 | performance in meeting land mitigation requirements,

6 replacement of protected water supplies, and

structure mitigation requirements.

Quarterly reports -- and this is my emphasis -- detailing the mitigation accomplished and outlining future mitigation planning to ensure compliance, as required in the original permit, shall continue for the areas approved in that Revision 2.

In looking at these reports, I am not finding -- excuse me -- many details under the sections for monitoring or mitigation. Reports from all four quarters from 2022 and the first three quarters of 2023 all contain the very same statements from the mine for monitoring.

Subsidence monitoring points were established prior to any subsidence occurring on the first panel. These points were then surveyed post-subsidence, and a model was generated from this data to aid in predicting future subsidence. Actual

surface subsidence was observed on a regular basis in order to mitigate drainage issues.

2.

Reports from all four quarters of 2022, and, again, the first three quarters of 2023, all contain the very same statements for mitigation.

Subsidence mitigation is an ongoing process to correct surface water drainage. This is accomplished by installing field drainage tile, along with cleaning and setting grade to surface ditches. Mine management is evaluating and coordinating with local landowners regarding the subsided areas that have not been mitigated due to the idled operations.

My question: How are these cut-and-paste comments in any way detailed as to the monitoring and mitigation? Why are there no details on what actual surface subsidence is being observed or actual mitigation to correct surface drainage?

Who determines that "met all applicable regulations" in one section of the report can be checked? The mine or the department?

Any model generated from the first longwall panel is probably not reflective of issues with subsequent panels. As previously mentioned,

the subsidence in later panels has not always been
predictable. The first two longwall panels drain to
the north, so these did not experience the same
drainage issues as subsequent panels in which the
natural drainage to the south was impeded by the

higher unsubsided ground.

The monthly land reclamation general inspection reports done by IDNR also often contain a cut-and-paste lack of detail, especially as it pertains to the shadow area. The January to October 2023 reports all stated under "comments" the same comments.

The Deer Run Mine conducts subsidence mitigation to correct surface water drainage over mined-out panels. The operators continue to monitor all longwall panels that have been mined out and is performing longwall subsidence mitigation in an appropriate manner.

Some observations under Number 6, revegetation, in early 2023, did seem to refer to fields along Route 185 requiring drainage work and revegetation of new ditches, but most issues of this inspection report with erosion and vegetation seem to refer only to permit areas.

My question: Is the land reclamation report to cover inspections of the permit area and the shadow area? If so, why isn't there more reporting on conditions in the shadow area?

Does the department actually monitor the subsidence within all of the panels? And how is it determined if the mitigation is adequate?

Is there adequate communication with affected landowners or mainly the mine and its contractors?

Observations on IBR Number 14 to
Permit 399 are cited in these general inspection
reports. This IBR was for construction including
concrete pads, vent fans, and roadway work, and was
approved in February of 2021. A silt fence was
required to be maintained as an IDNR-approved
construction plan to prevent the state-threatened
ornate box turtle from moving into the IBR area.
Reports in August, October, and November 2021
indicated that the silt fence was failing in some
areas, and the operator was required to repair and
monitor the silt fence on a regular basis.

The January 2022 report said the operator had to submit an inspection and maintenance

plan to IDNR and to keep a log. It wasn't until the
April 21, 2022, report, that any mention of the
condition of the fence was made again, and the
comment then was: The operator has repaired and
inspected the silt fence on a regularly scheduled

basis.

Then, in January of this year, the report states the silt fence is degrading to the point it will need maintenance. Reports from March, April, May, July, August, September, and October of this year all state that some fabric is down and some stakes are broken off.

My questions: Why is the mine not required to comply with maintenance of this silt fence as per the conservation plan?

Is the inspection maintenance log required as of March 31, 2022, being kept? And is it checked by the department?

The October 18, 2023, report states that IDNR did a field inspection on October 11th regarding a request by the mine for release of excess bond of the unaffected acreage. Was the fence inspected then? And if the mine is not complying with the conservation plan, would release

of bond still be granted?

In reviewing the Deer Run renewal application, Section 1.3, there are 22 listings for a 399 "dash" shadow area "dash" Revision 1, totaling 7,731 "point" acres. I contend that this is an error on the application.

In Table 1.5.2, the violations
history, there are over 400 violations listed for
applicant and owners, controllers of the applicant.
Most of the violations involve the Illinois mines,
which included Hillsboro Energy, Williamson Energy,
Sugar Camp Energy, and also Macoupin Energy. The
majority of the violations with a status not listed
as being abated were also Illinois mines.

My question is: Does the sheer volume of total violations ever influence the renewal of mine permits?

Someone once said to me: "Your brother is passionate about his land."

And in our mobile society now where people often don't stay in the same place or job for an extended time, this may be hard for some people to understand, but most farm families still have a deep history and attachment with their farms.

The farm that I live on now is a centennial farm, purchased by my grandfather over a hundred years ago and remaining in my family. The farm that I grew up on was purchased by my father in the 1940s and '50s. Family members still live there, and my brother still farms it.

How many of you still share this kind of attachment to where you grew up? How many have worked the same job at the same location for 40, 50, or 60 years? This is why farmers care so much about their land.

A government mining official once commented that longwall mining's planned subsidence was preferable to the unplanned subsidence from room and pillar mining that could have impacts 50 or a hundred years later. I doubt that anyone directly affected by the extensive subsidence from longwall mining would agree, but in the coming years, we can ask the families within the additional 7,731 "point" acres of shadow area approved in April of 2021, with Revision 2 to Permit 399.

How can private companies be allowed to damage private property for their own profit?

Why is longwall mining allowed?

From the longwall damage I've already witnessed, my opinion is that the permit renewal should be denied. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. Sorry I'm so long-winded.

MS. BLUMENSHINE: Can I finish? This is Joyce Blumenshine continuing my comment. I appreciate this opportunity.

So previously I was talking about the criteria under 62 Illinois Administrative Code 1774.15(c) where it has the approval process and then letter (1) criteria. I talked about my concerns that the terms and conditions of existing permit are not being satisfactorily met, and I just want to refer to a few things yet.

So the contention is that the present surface coal mining and reclamation are not in compliance with the environmental protection standards of the Act and regulatory program. I talked about the accumulation of heavy metals' toxicity being a legacy impact for generations to come here and concerns for the health impacts.

And referring to the earlier approvals for Permit 399, the IDNR findings in Appendix D to Permit 399 said that the plan of

restoration submitted by Hillsboro does not present
any actual or probable hazard to public health or
safety, nor does it pose any actual threat of water

diminution or pollution.

I contend that if IDNR really looked at the full picture of this situation, accumulative impacts of the coal slurry impoundments, and what the mine is doing to the area, that statement would be found to be false.

So in continuing with some concerns,

I mentioned that the letter "B," about the

reclamation operators are not in compliance is one,

and then the last part of that criteria is letter

"C," which states, "The requested renewal

substantially jeopardizes the operator's continuing

ability to comply with the Act and the regulatory

program on existing permit areas."

I think from what you've heard tonight, it is clear that there are grievous concerns about, A, timely reclamation of longwall damages of all kinds, whether it's drainage, whether it's the ability to farm on flooded areas, and multiple impacts of concerns of impacts.

You have also heard about the

- 1 | violations concern. I raise again the concerns that
- 2 | this company under Foresight Energy has a long
- 3 | history of permit violations of failures to comply.
- 4 And concerns for the safety for now and the public
- 5 | in the past: Mine underground fires, pumping of
- 6 significant amounts of nitrogen and other
- 7 substances.
- 8 And I raise before you tonight
- 9 | something that happened September 1st of 2023.
- 10 This was an appellate court decision reversing a
- 11 circuit court decision in the case titled,
- 12 "Clark" -- C-L-A-R-K -- "versus Foresight,"
- 13 F-O-R-E-S-I-G-H-T -- "Energy, LLC," multiple LLCs,
- 14 | where a farmer in the area of the Pond Creek
- 15 | Mine (sic) filed suit because his farm had multiple
- 16 effects from the PFAS chemical used at the Pond
- 17 | Creek Mine and the fire efforts of that mine to put
- 18 | it out with this highly, highly toxic, long-term,
- 19 | nonbiodegradable, known very toxic substance.
- 20 And so this farmer filed, because in
- 21 | September of 2021, he noticed an upwelling of water
- 22 on his farm where no such spring had previously
- 23 | existed. He further alleged that upwelled water
- 24 | contained a metallic sheen or film that did not

freeze during cold weather and was located in a livestock pasture area.

2.

In November of 2021, several animals pastured in the area of the upwelled water died, including one herd bull, four cows, one calf, and four sheep. Additionally, a dog that began to feed off one of the dead sheep subsequently became ill.

So this farmer filed because of loss of portions of his livestock after drinking this contaminated water or consuming the vegetation contaminated by this permanent pollutant, loss of portions of his livestock from chronic illness and that he could not sell them having to condemn portions of livestock, future losses of livestock because of the ground pollution and water pollution, and present and future loss to the value of his real property, and the enjoyment of his property and his waters, and the continuing cost.

These are some of the personal, very significant impacts. And I know that's not this mine, but it is the same company; it is the same operators; it is the same overall attitude.

And we have seen in the mine fires here: What will the next fire mean? Will it be

1 PFAS poisoning, or will it be the water drawdown

2 | that happened in the significant previous fire?

3 So that was September of this year.

The circuit court found that the farmer was entitled to justice, but the mine filed again -- and this company and its attitude toward the public pulled -- that it had a release from many years earlier that the farmer had accepted cash in lieu of

repair or replacement to structures or facilities damaged by the mine.

So the mine said, "Well, that means that the farmer couldn't sue."

Although this was totally different. And they lost in appellate court. These mines have deep pockets. They have legions of attorneys. The public individuals and innocent groups trying to fight for the land and water have to use their own resources.

So getting near closing.

The more recent event just happened five days ago. I would have called to your attention that the Pond Creek Mine -- again, the Foresight mine -- in Williamson County has significant concern because of a situation where

1 there is a slope, S-L-O-P-E; slide, S-L-I-D-E; 2. situation. They're huge, hazardous -- high-hazard dam, coal slurry retention pond. Many citizens 3 4 years and years, over years, tried to raise 5 attention to the agency to the hazards of this mine and its expansion. You can say maybe the agency 6 7 thought it was too big to fail. It is failing, and this is real concerns. It's serious enough that 9 this mine is even offering to pay hotel rooms for 10 people too afraid to stay in their homes for fear of 11 this mine bursting and the slurry escaping and

This is another exhibit. I'll turn these in as another part of the ongoing concerns for repeated, serious, overall, extensive violations of this mine.

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flooding the area.

And in closing, I just want to raise the fact we are here on December 4th of 2023.

Across the world -- almost halfway across -- ongoing are, again, annual climate negotiations to help preserve the temperature of this climate for future generations for their survival and life as we have been very fortunate to know it. The creatures, the plants, the well-being we have enjoyed are at risk.

This is 2023. The head of the UN has said we have until 2030 to cut down, stop carbon-based fuels.

2.

You, as state agency people, have the power to look at every one of these criteria for renewal and see where you can take your authority and perhaps do a little better, to require a higher standard from this company that has for years violated water permits and done all kinds of amazing things and gotten by with it. We ask your utmost attention to these renewals. We have no time to lose.

As a citizen of this nation, we appeal to what is happening in our state. Our governor has a very substantial plan to get Illinois off of carbon fuels, but without your help -- with renewing these permits another five years for all this extensive, more longwall mining, we are in big trouble.

And the daily decisions now by each of us regarding our responsibility to current and future generations and the well-being of this planet have to be made, and people have to be brave and bold because the proof is the glaciers are melting; the poles are melting. Water increase will wipe out

Miami, New York. We are looking at major, huge impacts from people trying to survive.

2.

If we think we have immigration problems now, think about 2030 when these effects will be multiplied and ongoing. If we are now the people that push the dice by allowing more carbon pollution with over 2 degrees of an increase in our temperature average, who are we now? And what will people in the future say?

So I appeal to you in the urgency of the moment, in the urgency of this hour, and in the urgency of what is before all of us: To speak truth to power, to speak truth to profits, and the legacy of mining, as it has been given every permit and leniency possible, please help us. Thank you.

MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you.

MS. OAKES: Joyce, do you know how many exhibits you submitted to be on the record?

MS. BLUMENSHINE: I had four

exhibits, and I do believe I'm counting them correctly.

MS. OAKES: Thank you.

MS. BLUMENSHINE: Thank you.

MR. NAVARRETE: All right. Would

1 anybody else like to speak? 2. MS. DECLUE: That's okay. MS. BLUMENSHINE: She does have 3 another comment if we have time, Hearing Officer, if 4 5 that's all right. MR. NAVARRETE: I think we have time. 6 7 MS. DECLUE: This is Mary Ellen 8 DeClue. 9 This is my -- this is what I presented earlier, and then this is what I gave you. 10 If you need to cut me off, it's fine. 11 12 I'm a bit long-winded also. 13 Basically I wrote this one evening 14 when I was just -- I couldn't sleep because 15 sometimes social issues get to you, and culture and 16 environmental issues. 17 Longwall mining failed promises; 18 realities of Deer Run Mine, a longwall mine owned by 19 Hillsboro Energy, HEL, in Montgomery County. 20 Foresight Energy is a corporate head overseeing 21 three other longwall mines in Illinois. 22 Citizens Against Longwall Mining is a 23 nonprofit organization that was established to

protect Montgomery County's farmland, water

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resources, and quality of life. Can we afford the real cost of allowing coal privilege in the form of

3 | inadequate regulatory practice and oversight?

The heading "coal privilege" demands that coal cannot be considered toxic. Number 1, the toxicity of coal is ignored until it settles in miners' lungs and destroys their body with black lungs.

Number 2. Coal dust in the air during Hillsboro High School football practice is ignored, but the intense heat further aggravates breathing problems for the athletes.

Number 3. Hillsboro Hospital is forced to use air filters that must be replaced often to trap coal dust to help patients breathe better.

Number 4. Children on the playground suffer more than coal dust -- more from coal dust due to their asthmatic conditions.

- 5. Residents with respiratory problems should not be exposed to harmful coal dust.
- 6. Carcinogenic chemicals like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, and heavy metals like lead, mercury, cadmium, cobalt exist in

1 coal dust. That prevails in communities surrounding 2 Deer Run Mine.

3 Bless you.

Number 7. Particulate coal dust, the size of 2.5 microns, is especially harmful for residents. There's no problem from exposure -- there is no protection from exposure since no restrictions or monitoring of coal particles is required. Remarkably, Illinois EPA does not enforce the Clean Air Act in coal field areas. It's kind of hard to believe, isn't it?

The next heading. Coal privilege means that the coal operator is not obligated to residents.

Number 1. Problems at a coal mine like a fire, leakage of coal slurry, or excursions of chemicals off the mine site do not require that HEL communicate with neighbors. The host community has no mandated source of valid mine information. The local newspapers publish the few letters to the editor, but do not interview or document what the coal company is doing.

In fact, if CALM wants the public to know about Deer Run Mine public meetings as we did

for this one, we placed an ad in the local paper to remind people to please show up because it is

3 important.

Deer Run -- Deer Run Mine's halo image is protected at the expense of the community. Excuse me.

Number 3. Likewise the regulatory agencies, like IDNR and Illinois EPA, do not communicate effectively with residents. They require a Freedom of Information request for specific information. The problem is that coal operators can make changes and additions to their public permits that are erroneously considered insignificant with no notices to the public. How do you write for a Freedom if you don't know it existed?

Number 4. One insignificant revision approved by IDNR involved the habitat of the threatened ornate box turtle. The habitat infringement and danger to the turtle happened with no consideration for the unknown consequences to the little creatures. IDNR was careless with this conservation area that was awarded to it by advocates in Montgomery County. HEL's longwall

mining self-interests and needs superseded the protective purpose of the conservation area.

The next topic. Coal privilege exists since state and federal mining regulations cater to the coal operator.

Number 1. Coal operators self-report outfall events and contamination occurrences. When a violation occurs, there is little pressure to fix it in a timely manner or prevent repeat offenses.

Reasonable deadlines for coal operators to mitigate violations do not exist. Instead, violations accumulate. Unresolved violations should be used to prevent renewals of permits or expansions, but that does not happen. Coal permits are rubber-stamped for approval, renewal, or temporary furlough to the detriment of our community.

Number 2. If a requirement is burdensome for the longwall mining operator, exemptions, exceptions, and qualifications are allowed by IDNR and Illinois EPA. HEL was exempt from monitoring groundwater in the 7,731.8-acre expansion with the erroneous assumption that most residents were not dependent on well water.

Number 3. Documentation of Deer Run

Mine's damage in the community comes mainly from residents in the community, not from the state or federal agencies tasked with oversight.

Number 4. The original Permit 399 application had many errors and inadequacies and misleading information that CALM members raised. However, the predicted drainage problems, threat to one's resources, and safety issues were ignored by IDNR.

Number 5. HEL did not submit how it would correct the ponding of water, drainage, and restoration of the sunken land in 399 Permit application for renewals. These impacts have not been corrected, and increase, as more longwall panels are mined.

Number 6. Approval of Permit 424 allowed a huge, high-hazard coal slurry impoundment to disastrously -- hard word -- to inundate several communities upon failure. The manager of the Office of Water Resources, a division at IDNR, admitted that a risk assessment was not done. I was there at that meeting. I could not believe -- I could not believe they would approve a coal slurry -- a high-hazard coal slurry impoundment, that upon

1 | failure, would doom many communities in Montgomery

2 | County. And they didn't even bother to do a risk

3 | assessment? This isn't West Virginia for God's

4 | sake. It's Illinois. It's Illinois.

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5 The next. Coal privilege allows

6 inadequate mining laws to continue without changes.

7 | Number 1. Subsidence impacts to land, water

8 resources or anything above the longwall mining

machine happened in the shadow area of Deer Run

10 Mine. The coal industry is not required by any

11 state or federal mining law to cover the costs of

subsidence mitigation. Amazingly, there is no more

13 | financial requirement for longwall mining than for

14 | room and pillar. The bonding requirements for room

and pillar mining are the same as the bonding

16 requirements for longwall mining despite the

substantially greater risk longwall mining poses to

18 | surface land and water resources.

The amount of bonding is determined by the estimated cost of reclamation of the mine

21 site, not subsidence damage in the shadow area.

22 Revision 2 of 399 expanded the shadow area of

Deer Run Mine by 7,700 acres with no additional

escrow money required by HEL. This lack of

1 financial guarantee to repair material damage to

2 | land and water resources is especially egregious

3 | since Foresight Energy has questionable economic

4 stability following a recent bankruptcy.

Current state, Number 3. Current state and federal mining laws do not require that HEL compensate landowners for loss or contamination of streams, wells, or springs unless the water is used for household drinking water.

Number 4. Mining laws do not require compensation for the permanent -- and I want to emphasize permanent damage to farmland -- long-term flooding increased erosion due to more slopes, compaction of soils, mixing of topsoils that negatively affect viability and productivity of cropland. If the soil can grow crops at all, even significantly less productive after longwall mining, the low standard is met, no harm done.

Number 5. Landowners of Montgomery

County that no longer have their coal and subsidence

rights have effectively lost control of their land

and property. HEL's coal extraction interest

supersedes the farmers' interests in planting crops.

Coal privilege also has perpetuated

1 | the myth that the national energy supply must

2 | include coal-fired utilities with a carbon-capture

3 | assembly attached. Currently, the energy supply

4 | from coal in the United States is around 20 percent.

5 | Coal proponents are eager to increase and stabilize

6 | coal use by luring the carbon dioxide emitted

7 through carbon capture and storage. The climate

8 crisis demands that fossil fuels stay in the ground,

9 but the coal legacy remains a lucrative and

10 protected industry.

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Number 2. Carbon capture and storage -- CCS -- is well-subsidized through federal funding, but CCS will not help to lower greenhouse gases or improve air quality. CCS is expensive, inefficient, and hazardous. Most captured CO2 has been used for enhanced oil recovery, which is counter to climate goals. The promise of wealth has encouraged several pipeline companies to get land easements in Montgomery County for transporting dangerous, high-pressure CO2 from ethanol plants to store in suitable geological areas. Several acres have already been acquired to be used for underground storage of CO2.

Number 5. Miles of CO2 pipelines

- 1 transporting a dangerous, potentially lethal,
- 2 | high-pressure asphyxiant near homes, businesses,
- 3 | farmland, and communities should be a non-starter.
- 4 The presumption that CO2 injected several hundred
- 5 | feet underground will stay in place forever with no
- 6 complications is wishful thinking and not
- 7 reasonable. Carbon capture and storage is a
- 8 | complete boondoggle.
- 9 In conclusion, coal's legacy has been
- 10 duly recognized and honored. Energy must come from
- 11 the above-ground clean resources such as sun, wind,
- 12 and water. It is time for our country to move on to
- 13 | the 21st Century. That's it.
- MR. NAVARRETE: Thank you.
- MS. OSIBAMOWO: Thank you, all, for
- 16 | those comments. If you have anything you want us to
- 17 regard as we review the permit, and you haven't
- 18 | submitted it, please make sure you include that in
- 19 the submission.
- The longer of -- these comments,
- 21 | we're going to address in detail in the findings
- 22 document. I made sure I've written down a couple of
- 23 them and highlighted them, so we'll address them.
- 24 Please, if you haven't provided your

email, please send us that so you can get a copy of the documents.

2.

As in regards to -- I was going to say the inspection specialist, the land reclamation specialist, we have had people leaving, and, you know, we have had turnover in our department. I just wanted to let you know that. This is not an excuse, but I just wanted you to know that.

MR. LARRY SCHRAUT: I know, you know, different ones that left. I've been at this. But that's no excuse for not having somebody qualified on the job.

MS. OSIBAMOWO: Exactly.

MS. OAKES: And you can find out those qualifications. There's Illinois job sites, and it has the full definition of what that land specialist and reclamation specialist --

MR. LARRY SCHRAUT: But when they're signing a document, and you call, and they don't even know that they're over that, something is wrong.

MS. OAKES: That is why we have a record tonight. Part of the fact that it's in the rules is that not only it's based on the notes that

we take and the listening that we did tonight -- and we very much appreciate you coming out -- but we do take the time to review the record and go through each and every comment that is given to us on many different levels.

2.

MS. BLUMENSHINE: I have a quick question.

Ms. Oakes, I apologize; I don't know the reference number to the Illinois admin code, but there's a comment in one of the regs that if the issues at the informal conference are not resolved, then the public can request a public hearing.

And so my thought was, you know, that these informal conferences are more, you know, discussion, but maybe I'm wrong about that. Could you please explain that? And can we have any discussion now?

MS. OAKES: Absolutely.

It's within the same codes that we've been talking about tonight, and there are people that have already requested a public hearing.

It's -- it is as much of a discussion as we can be prepared for. Some of the things that we're hearing are new; some of the things are not new.

And our main intention is truly not to argue with you over issues that we may from the regulatory and statutory discretion not necessarily disagree with you: Terrible effects, ecological, environmental effects. That's not an issue of disagreement here. It's whether we can through the permitting process enforce any of those or have a larger effect on those. So that's why we do come to attend and take notes and try to attend to as many of them as we can.

If we have some additional time, if there's -- if there's very specific questions -- Kemi has made copious notes -- that we can attend to small things right now, but it's on a larger scale of looking over tons of documentation. There are many things that were brought up tonight that I will be looking into as well.

Cut-and-paste language in quarterly reports have an effect -- and that does have an effect on the legal side because I don't do anything on the technical side, but when I look at -- when we're enforcing agreements with the mining companies when we're arguing over whether -- semiannual reports or quarterly reports, and then we're getting

cut and paste within those reports, that's a big concern to me. That doesn't help at all document what is being addressed and doesn't help articulate what is being addressed. So that is something that I will go back on.

2.

I certainly don't want you guys to feel like your efforts are going on deaf ears, but this is something that we can prepare as much as we can for all of these comments, and it is very nice to have your comments ahead of time, so those are things that we can look into ahead of time.

And if there's anything, Kemi, that you think you can specifically address tonight, but a lot of these are much larger issues.

MS. OSIBAMOWO: Yes, I do agree with you that there are much larger issues. I can highlight a few of them regarding the GIRs.

Now, as you know, you do have -- you have been receiving those -- those are reports by the land reclamation specialist, and just as you know, writing reports, everybody has their own different style. When you get them, I'm not sure -- did you get the ones for this year, or are they from last year?

1 MR. LARRY SCHRAUT: Both.

MS. OAKES: Three -- and four

3 | quarters from 2022, and three out of four from 2023.

There are a couple things that Kemi and I discussed before we opened the hearing today, and that was if there's discrepancy about subsidence, are there always state inspections requested through our website? And because we can't address things until we know about them -- so if they're not things that we know about, are they -- and I know you know this process and have attempted to address things -- so not specifically, but when things are pointed out to us through that process, then we have a documentation trail, and we can have more answers readily available to those people who know how to address that.

MR. LARRY SCHRAUT: So I mean, who -- I guess I'll get back to the expert that's supposed to know all this? I mean, somewhere along there, this expert that, you know, as yet I haven't seen him.

MS. OAKES: Well, the point that you made tonight and one other occasion that the agricultural background is not included as much in

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the land reclamation specialist, that rang very true, and to be honest with you, it's something that I looked into in the land reclamation description and the qualifications that we look for. Is that something that we need to address with the larger agricultural background? We were very, very lucky to have the same long-term individuals with the department for 30 and 30-plus years. Those people retired. And so then we're looking at a new generation of those qualifications and how we need to address that in our employment, as well as the balance with CMS and how they address the hiring process.

MS. OSIBAMOWO: With that being said, we do have on the staff a series of people that have background with soils, and these are -- you know, if you have issues, and you want expert advice on those issues, they're always a phone call away.

MR. LARRY SCHRAUT: Okay. I never have been able to be in touch with these people in the process.

I know -- I go back a long ways. Dar Barkley was -- he used to come to the meetings, and I understand he has health issues, which, you know,

I understand that, but whatever. We discussed things 15 years ago, and a lot of the things that I discussed have come true.

2.

MS. OSIBAMOWO: Something else that I had highlighted during the comments: Whether the sheer volume of violations affect permit renewal decisions?

Now, that's something that we actually regard and consider during the review processes, if there is a history of violations. We also examine who the regulatory agency is that is issuing those violations and what the company is doing, what the mine is doing to address those issues.

Now, that's a very, very important process, a very important part of the process in the review for renewals as well. So it's something that we do take into consideration. And we also let the mine know if they have violations, that they need to be addressing with whoever it is who issued those violations. That takes precedence. You know, they have to address those issues before we issue the approval.

If we do issue, we can conditionally

- 1 approve the renewal until -- sorry. We can
- 2 | conditionally approve the renewal if they are
- 3 | working with the regulatory body to address -- and
- 4 | they would let us know.
- Now, when we deem this application
- 6 | complete, the mine was required to let IEPA know
- 7 they submitted two copies of this renewal
- 8 application to IEPA. So we coordinate our review
- 9 with the IEPA for the renewal as well.
- MS. OAKES: And request comments from
- 11 IEPA and Department of Agriculture.
- MS. OSIBAMOWO: I just want to put
- 13 | that out there so that you do know.
- MR. LARRY SCHRAUT: I thank you for
- 15 answering the questions.
- 16 A couple of years ago I was at a
- 17 | meeting, and everybody just sat there and didn't
- 18 | answer anything.
- MS. OAKES: Well, and I hope you have
- 20 seen the difference over the years. At IDNR, we do
- 21 listen to you. We have to listen to both sides
- 22 | equally, too. So please understand everybody has
- 23 | their emotional pull in each direction, and we have
- 24 to create a balance between those two things within

the statute and the regulations, but there has been a change.

And I myself -- I can only speak for myself -- and I have worked with Jim this entire time, and Kemi has been here the entire time -- that we've worked very hard to try and open the lines of communication and listen and apply as much as we can to both sides, to the best of our abilities, within the guidelines that we have.

MR. LARRY SCHRAUT: And Jim has been very cooperative in furnishing material. We appreciate that.

MS. DRESSEN: So can you clarify between a public hearing and this informal conference? Is there really a big difference between the two, or are they basically conducted the same?

MS. OAKES: There's a difference.

For a public hearing, I would say
that it is within -- within the definitions that are
included in the regulations, that that is
more -- leans towards the airing of your grievances,
get it all out on the record. That is not a time
where we have response. It is further along in the

permitting process. We don't have a response on the spot; we have it within the confines of a decision.

2.

This one is an opportunity for us more to try and listen and communicate with you at the time to questions that we can identify.

The hard part for us is -- while we're listening to things that might fall in the category of complaint, we're also listening for things that can fall in the category of question and trying to respond to those within a timely manner.

It is very important to me that the informal comment is such a part of the consideration for renewal, and that's why we openly welcome that -- when we can, try and make it available.

I apologize for the elevator being broken in the other building, so it didn't make it accessible. So within these close confines, we try and address the questions that we can that we have a response to.

MS. DRESSEN: So the response will be sent out then, written responses to it, correct?

If someone did not make any comments, is there still the time period that they can write in comments yet?

MS. OAKES: Not within the informal conference, but within the confines of the public hearing, which I said has already been requested for it at the same time.

And I think the intent is that if we can get some questions answered within the informal conference, that gives us an opportunity to avoid the public hearing. When people request at the same time, we're not avoiding the public hearing.

So as much communication as we can to be -- to be fair to both the mining side and the advocate side, to respond to these things. We have tried to change the way that we do things with the informal conference, that we can have more of a communication with you, where the public hearing is beyond that communication time, and it is time to get in whatever final comments you have before any decision is made on the permit.

Would anyone else like to talk?

(No response.)

MR. NAVARRETE: All right. So anyone attending this informal conference who -- or who does provide written comments to the department during the comment period, which was up until today

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     to this, will receive a copy of the department's
1
     decision regarding the application. So anyone who
2
    put their email address on here.
3
                    And I want to thank you all for
4
    taking your time to come here and for participating.
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6
                    And I am going to now adjourn this
     informal conference. Thank you.
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                 (Conference ended 7:12 p.m.)
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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

2 I, Ann Marie Hollo, Certified Shorthand Reporter, Registered Diplomatic Reporter, 3 and a Certified Realtime Reporter within and for the 4 5 State of Illinois, do hereby certify that the foregoing informal conference was taken by me to the 6 7 best of my ability and thereafter reduced to 8 typewriting under my direction; that I am neither 9 counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this informal 10 conference was taken, and further that I am not a 11 12 relative or employee of any attorney or counsel 13 employed by the parties thereto, nor financially or 14 otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

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Dated this 6th day of December, 2023.

ann Marie Hollo

Certified Shorthand Reporter State of Illinois

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