



MEDIA RELEASE
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Pend Oreille County Commissioners Support Air Quality and Health Impact Studies in Economic Development

NEWPORT, WA- In response to community concerns over potential air quality and health impacts relating to a proposed smelter near Newport, WA the Pend Oreille County Board of Commissioners have requested additional scrutiny in the permitting process and is encouraging community involvement in economic development.

“I have full confidence in the Washington Department of Ecology to do a thorough review of the environmental impacts to our county, state and neighboring counties and states during the SEPA process. I have spoken with Grant Pfeifer, Eastern Regional Director for Ecology regarding the process and he assures me there are no shortcuts or special privileges being offered to HiTest. Grant will be enlisting Idaho and Montana Departments of Environmental Quality as a part of the SEPA process. I have lived in Pend Oreille County since 1995 and plan on being here the rest of my life. I want clean air and clean water. I also want jobs for our children and grandchildren.” - Mike Manus

With the support of Pend Oreille County Commissioners, Northeast Tri-County Health District (NETCHD) voted unanimously to request a Health Impact Assessment, which will be overseen by the Department of Health and conducted by a competent third party.

In a letter signed November 29th, 2017 by NETCHD chair, Pend Oreille County Commissioner Karen Skoog stated; “We request that this Health Impact Assessment (HIA) be conducted in an independent manner with Washington State Department of Health oversight. We believe that the results of the HIA will bring together the science, public input, and the expertise of health professionals to minimize risks and provide the necessary information to make appropriate decisions that benefit all parties involved.”

The county commissioners have also responded to public concerns related to air quality modeling in the permitting process, and have asked Department of Ecology to conduct site specific air pattern and weather evaluations, in conjunction with other evaluations when a permit application is processed.

“Due to the proposed location of the facility being very close to the state border with Idaho, I am sure that the State of Idaho along with Washington State and Federal regulators will be monitoring all the potential environmental impacts of any development.” – Steve Kiss

The board has responded favorably to a Kalispel Tribe request to work together with the community for more economic development. The board believes that the work of the Economic Development Council is crucial; and that a professional community survey, and a study of community impacts of Ponderay Newsprint and Tech American Mine will be very helpful for planning.

There are two review processes for a smelter to be approved. The Department of Ecology’s environmental review allows for concerns and questions to be addressed based on a submitted plan. The other review process, which is the county’s responsibility, involves land use and building permits. The board stated, “We must follow the law and legal process on land use and cannot use opinion to make our determinations.”

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