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## Andrews council likely to oppose quarry in neighboring Williamsburg County

By Chris csokoloski@southstrandnews.com May 23, 2018



Nancy Cave of the Coastal Conservation League, left, and Jessie White of the South Carolina Environmental Law Project talk about a proposed limestone mine that would be located in Williamsburg County during the Andrews Town Council meeting on May 17.

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By Chris Sokoloski

Andrews Town Council heard from two groups opposed to plans for a limestone quarry in Williamsburg County that faces fierce resistance from people who live near the proposed site.

“I have not been convinced that it’s in the best interests of this area,” Mayor Frank McClary said during a council meeting on May 17. He added the town would seek input from the Coastal Conservation League and the South Carolina Environmental Law Project on crafting a resolution. Both groups had representatives speak before council at the meeting.

The quarry would be located in the Earles community between Seaboard Road and U.S. Highway 521. The state Department of Health and Environmental Control is currently reviewing permit applications associated with the quarry.

Jessie White of SCELPA said if the mine becomes operational up to 7.5 million gallons of water a day would be pumped out of the ground and into Murray Swamp. That water would eventually flow into the Black River. Adding that amount of water would alter the natural flow of river, White said, which is “concerning” because of past flooding problems in the area.

White said extracting that much water would also affect nearby wells, including in Andrews, and introduce groundwater into surface water, which would change the quality of water, including exposing it to contaminants.

“We are very concerned that (Andrews) would be directly, indirectly and cumulatively impacted as a result of this mine,” White said.

Nancy Cave of the Coastal Conservation League said the Black River is a spawning ground for the endangered Atlantic sturgeon. If the mine runoff raises the pH level of the river, she said, and deposits particulate matter into the sediment, the sturgeon won’t spawn.

White pointed out that a dewatered project in Georgetown caused sinkholes, and a dry limestone mine in Jamestown caused “catastrophic” sinkholes. The operator of the Jamestown mine was forced to switch to wet mining and the sinkholes stopped, White added.

“The impact on drinking water, the lowering of people’s drinking water and well water, and contamination issues were also alleviated,” she said.

Cave said if this mine is approved, other mines might follow, which would make the dewatering worse. “I think that’s something that we all have to be worried about because to have multiple limestone mines in an area, and the dewatering would take place, would really have even more significant effects,” she added.

McClary said he's followed the issue very closely and opposes the mine because it offers very low economic impact as compared to its potential impact on homes and the community. One of his concerns, he said, is the town's infrastructure.

"It will have an impact," McClary said. "We have some internal challenges with our infrastructure, and I'm not sure we're going to get everything resolved before we get these roads reinforced and they start with all this traffic."

White said about 150 heavy trucks would travel to and from the mine each day using the Andrews Bypass or other nearby roads. Cave said it would cause "significant" damage to roads.

"The impacts are not going to be over in a year or anything like that. It could even be longer," Cave said. "When you think about this over a 20-year period or more, it is truly going to have an impact on roads and your water."

McClary said he would like to get help from the Coastal Conservation League and the South Carolina Environmental Law Project to craft a resolution opposing the mine.

"We would be more than happy to work with you on that resolution," Cave said. "Your voice would be a very important voice to have to help support us to oppose this mine."

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