

May 16, 2022

When I moved to the town of Rutland nearly 10 years ago, I naively thought it would be quiet, tranquil and above all, peaceful. My new neighbors were friendly, welcoming and respectful and to this day, most of them still are.

The dynamics of this town have changed dramatically over the past few years including the restart of an old gravel pit on Center Road – a pit which many of us thought was expired and out of material to mine.

As we all know, there are advantages and disadvantages to mining for gravel. The biggest question is, can we live with the burden of having another large pit knowing that there will be increased hazards including possible water contamination? There are 8 standards that the applicant of this CUP must fulfill. I'd like to address Standard #1. Based on research done by the The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Waters, they reported that mining alters the landscape and its natural hydrologic system, essentially altering the ground-water flow path. It presented a project which showed results from a study in which quarries were shown to lower local ground-water and surface-water levels, change levels of ground water due to blasting, interrupt ground-water conduit flow paths by the removal of rock AND change temperatures within surrounding aquifers or natural springs. Research amongst a variety of major gravel pit mines found that many of them were reported to have altered ground-water flows and paths dramatically as a result of mining activities. Quarries can act as huge wells, lowering the water table in an aquifer. The operation of blasting in quarries can actually shake the limestone and the ground water which can release sediment into surrounding water wells. It only seems fair to come to the conclusion that quarry owners could not only be endangering a rural community's aquifer, but they could also be putting themselves at risk of contaminating their own source of drinking water if they upset the aquifer that sits beneath their feet.

Was an expert able to properly assess the hydrology of the Center Road pit to assure surrounding neighbors, that the new quarry would not affect underground springs and aquifers? The CUP does not appear to indicate this. An experienced karst hydrologist or geologist would conduct an inventory and survey of springs, sinkholes, stream sinks, and other karst features in the area. The plan should detail what reclamation activities will be done during mining, reclamation methods, shape and slope of open water areas, and a solid plan for the future use of the site.

The CUP also did not address mine operations and dewatering schedules that may need to be altered to minimize impacts on underground aquifers and springs.

What about the drawdown of groundwater? Quarrying operations can progressively remove one or more benches of rock. Depending on the cumulative height of the benches, pits can act as dug wells, which will draw down the water from surrounding hills (or land) near the pit. The extent of drawdown depends on the rate of advance of a quarry face, the level of the water table in reference to elevation of the bottom of a pit, and the hydraulic conductivity of the rock. Conductivity would be more pronounced by the effect of blasting. The drawdown of water can adversely affect the level of water tables and the use of aquifers by neighbors. The wells in the vicinity of the quarry could potentially run dry and the base flow in the regional aquifers could also be reduced. In addition, dust from blasting and grinding as well as the siltation carried by the drainage through the blasted rock could also affect the quality of the groundwater.

There are nine other active quarries within a 4-mile radius of the Town Center. I think we should all be asking ourselves: Does Rutland really need another quarry?

In conclusion, I ask that the Dane County board members come together as a unit and vote on this CUP according to the legal standards and do what's right for the town as a whole. Consider people's feelings, YES, but also, consider the FACTS, the FIGURES and the EVIDENCE that each person in opposition has presented.

Thank you for your time.

-Sharon Seffrood