

La Bajada Mesa Strip Mine Opposition Talking Points

PRESERVATION

- La Bajada Mesa, listed by the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance as a Most Endangered Place by The arts, including paintings, drawings, pottery, photographs and films attest to the profound significance of La Bajada Mesa to New Mexico's culture and economy.
- The current owners have no protected rights to demand a rezoning as they purchased the property with the current agricultural/residential zoning in place. The County has no obligation to enhance the value of the property (which is also for sale) to the detriment of the County and State as a whole.

IMPACTS

- Mining the Mesa would ruin the geological integrity -- the grandeur of this oceanic Gateway along I-25 into Santa Fe & Waldo Canyon Road, the road leads into the Galisteo basin park lands, a sustainable and growing economic resource.
- Mining in this site would result in environmental and cultural degradation of a landscape that has been historically, culturally and environmentally significant to New Mexico for hundreds of years.
- Development of such an industry poorly sited on an otherwise open landscape would result in impacts including increased pollution from carbon emissions and fugitive dust from multiple crushers, conveyors and heavy industrial traffic, along with blasting and night lighting.
- Mining in this location would not only negatively impact the Gateway vista from I-25 and Waldo Canyon Road -- the western access to the Cerrillos Hills State Park -- but would be a blight from the higher elevations of the trails that lead from the Cerrillos Hills State Park on BLM lands up Grand Central Mt. and from other recognized scenic vistas from the south and east.
- No visual impact report has been done for views from I-25, Waldo Canyon Road, the higher trails above the Cerrillos Hills State park, NM 14, and residential areas.
- The New Mexico State Parks, through the "Cerrillos Hills/Galisteo Basin State Park Feasibility Study" in 2006 concluded that the best access to the future state park would be from the I-25 corridor. An intensive expanding mine in this location along Waldo Canyon Road would have a discouraging impact upon a significant number of park visitors encountering unanticipated industrial activities, including the trucks on the road and the visual impacts of the mine itself.
- There is no need for another basalt gravel mine in the County or another gravel mining operation off of I-25 as there are several existing gravel mines within reasonable proximity that can provide these materials to Rockology itself, an Albuquerque based company.
- Reclamation would be next to impossible after stripping some 20 feet of basalt. There is little surface topsoil to set aside for reclamation. There are no strong standards to insure that reclamation would be a success and there is the likelihood that what would be left behind would be an endless source of dust.

WATER

- Hauled water should not be considered adequate for long term mining operations. Santa Fe County should develop a policy that does not by default provide water to all Developments of Countywide Impact including oil and gas, mining, CAFO's etc. and not allow them to evade needed acquisition of commercial / industrial water rights. When a proposed mine is sited well (which the Buena Vista / Rockology isn't) it should have its own long-term water supply on site so as to eliminate the impacts of water hauling that includes traffic hazards as well as additional carbonization and infrastructure impacts from heavy trucks.

- Precedence? With a precedent set for mining the Mesa, if a mining company were to buy any or all of the remaining thousands of acres that are for sale on the international market, what then would become the county's obligations in 1) allowing further mining to the new corporate owners and, 2) supplying precious water resources for the extractions?
- Because hauling water for needed dust control is expensive, and because the company may be underestimating the amount needed, it may be they simply will not keep the dust contained, and especially if state air quality enforcement resources prove inadequate in providing oversight.
- Can Buena Vista / Rockology be trusted to spend money on sufficient dust control? Contrary to Rockology's application of 2008 which claimed that the mined materials were needed for the Railrunner construction project, it was revealed by the press that NMDOT already had secured all the materials they would need. Their true intention appeared to be to start a 50 acre operation until at least 2020. Why should we trust them now in 2014 to go to the extra expense needed to haul sufficient water for dust control?
- The acre feet of water suggested by Buena Vista (2.19) is woefully insufficient to accomplish the intended uses, which in their application does not include reclamation.
- The amount of water needed is not clear. The application claims a total of 710,000 gallons a year or 2.19 acre feet, which we think would be woefully insufficient to accomplish the suppression of dust. Even this amount would generate thousands of heavy water haul truck passes a year and contribute to deterioration of our state and county roads, the repair of which the taxpayer would have to subsidize.
- In keeping with the county strategy to allow growth only where it is wanted and timely, this is also not a good location.
- It is not in the public welfare to use County water to open up an unsustainable relatively short-term operation that would degrade a long recognized historic and cultural landscape – a landscape that can otherwise contribute sustainably to the county's economic welfare through the tourist industry.

SPECULATION

- The current owners have no protected rights to demand a rezoning for the extractive industry as they purchased the property with the current agricultural/residential zoning in place. The County has no obligation to enhance the value of the property by shifting its economic worth from the value of an acre to the cubic yard.
- The property is for sale on the international market. Buena Vista is marketing the entire property of approximately 5217 acres and is including in the purpose the mining of basalt and other minerals.
- The applicant is seeking to rezone a portion of La Bajada Mesa from agriculture/residential to mining for its narrowly focused economic interests. Any such mining zone would likely be subject to expansion. The whole mesa is capped by basalt. Example: in 2002 JR Hale Contracting proposed a 500 acre strip-mine there that overlaps the current 50 acres as [diagramed](#).
- County staff in the past (2005 & 2008) recommend denial of the permit based on a "cadre" of reasons including the threat to historical and archeological resources and because they did not want to create a new mining zone. Has anything changed since 2008 that would make gravel mining in this location any more or less suitable? Less, YES! Since then, a State Park has become a reality offering a sustainable resource just east and downwind from the proposed mine site which is incompatible.