

May 2014

John Henry Mine

by Peter Rimbos, Corresponding Secretary

On Monday, May 5, the Area Council held its monthly meeting. The main topic discussed was the potential reopening of the John Henry Mine. Also, a new member joined the Area Council.

John Henry Mine

The John Henry Mine closed down some years ago, when the price of coal dropped and higher quality coal with less contained pollutants was preferred by end-use customers. While for all intents and purposes the mine has been closed, and a large part of it is flooded with water forming a lake, the company has maintained mining has just "paused."

Recently the company has requested its permit be revised and renewed to again continue mining. The Area Council's Natural Resources/Parks Committee has reviewed the Environmental Assessment (EA) and believes the primary reason for this request relates to its Bureau of Mines Reclamation Plan, where, should it call it a "closure," the company would then be required to implement expensive reclamation immediately.

It appears the company's request has more to do with continuing to avoid implementation of required reclamation, than any real interest in, or significant change in, economic conditions for relatively low-grade coal.

Nevertheless, the Area Council identified, researched, and documented several key concerns including: lake, stream, and surface runoff water quality; impacts to local private wells; traffic impacts to the Issaquah-Hobart-Ravensdale-Black Diamond Rd and the planned Roundabout at its intersection with SR-169; and final site reclamation. In addition, the Area Council has delineated many new items not even considered in the EA.

The Area Council voted to submit a set of detailed comments to the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) by its May 13 deadline which recommend both a denial of the company's request to resume mining and an immediate implementation of the required reclamation plan for the site.

New Member

Hendrick ("Hank") Haynes, who resides near Spring Lake in our River Heights Community Area, joined the Area Council. Mr. Haines has lived in the local area for 25 years. He has been instrumental in the establishment of Lake Desire/Spring Lake Park.

Mr. Haynes' community interests include local government, promoting small business opportunities in the Rural Area, and striving for a balanced ecosystem and economy.

Next Area Council Meeting

The Area Council's next monthly meeting will held Monday, June 2, from 7:00 - 9:00 PM at the Fire Station at SE corner of 231st St & SR-169. Meetings are held the first non-holiday Monday of each month. A Public Comment period at the beginning of each meeting provides citizens an opportunity to voice issues of concern to Area Council members and government officials in attendance.

Your Area Council serves as an all-volunteer, locally elected advisory body to King County on behalf of all rural unincorporated area residents living in the Tahoma School District. Please visit: www.greatermaplevalleyareacouncil.org.

*** NOTE: There currently are two positions open on the 16-member Area Council. If you live in the Tahoma School District outside the City of Maple Valley, you are eligible to apply to become a member of the Area Council. Interested Rural Area citizens can send a brief letter of interest to GMVUAC, P.O. Box 101, Maple Valley, WA 98038 or an e-mail to gmvac_chair@hotmail.com. ***

