

Joint Rural Team

EPCA, FoSV, GMVUAC, GRC, GV/LHA, HHA, SCAR, UBCUAC

April 3, 2025

To: Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU) Board (% cservice@cityoftacoma.org)

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Subject: Water Service to Proposed Segale Mine Project Along Green River in King County

Summary

The Joint Rural Team (JRT) of citizen-led King County Rural Area organizations (*) has researched the subject proposed mine and asphalt plant identifying many concerns that will impact the people in King County's Rural Area. We call on Tacoma Water to be a good neighbor, support a healthy environment, and walk the talk of being a responsible government, by not providing water to the subject project.

Introduction

We congratulate Tacoma water for not pursuing a direct pipeline to the mine site. Approvals for which would be required from several utility boards in Pierce and King County, Council approvals, revisions to Tacoma's Water Comprehensive Plan, and could result in development of the property for residential uses in violation of current King County zoning and the State Growth Management Act. However, by allowing ~250,000 gallons/day of water to be trucked to the site, Tacoma is enabling the project to proceed. The risks of the project from the mining operations are significant to the Green River including the potential of massive landslides blocking parts of the river. Also, there are concerns with contamination of water quality, water truck trips 24/7, and fire risk.

Segale needs water to move forward with the subject project. We ask you to please consider your accountability and potential liability in supporting the subject project, knowing the likely impacts. In fact, in so doing you would, in effect, move Segale past a major hurdle in seeking to secure its project permits.

Issues

The proposed gravel mine is on a 1000-ac forested site along the Green River Gorge, that has historically been used by the community for recreation such as fishing, hiking, and picnics. The views from the top of Lizard Mountain on the site have made it an important destination for ~100 years, before Segale Properties fenced it off. This forest is the most important part of a unique uplands-connected habitat corridor and is an important migration corridor, as well recognized by the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. Further, It is the last wild place with access and the last Chinook habitat on the Green River, as down river has been channelized.

Putting a massive mine complex there would highly degrade the habitat corridor of the Middle Green River, change the river's hydrology, and forever change the last wild place in Rural King County. The wildlife living here would be forever harmed and the people, especially the people of Cumberland, Enumclaw, Maple Valley and Black Diamond, do not want this.

The subject project would negatively impact our communities, destroy the sanctity of one of our state's most prestigious campground and fishing area, place commuting residents in danger with large trucks carrying water to the site 24/7, severely damage our already delicate Rural Area road infrastructure and bridges, and do irreparable harm to the biodiversity and ecosystem that is the Green River.

Water would be used to wash rock and equipment, and also will be used in the asphalt plant. This water must be treated correctly and carefully to minimize surface water and ground water pollution. In fact, the chemicals and pollutants in the water from the asphalt plant alone make it hazardous and difficult to treat properly on site. Further, the soils on site are very permeable and the whole site is an important area to recharge the groundwater for all the springs along the Green River Gorge, which the fish as well as the city of Black Diamond use as a critical resource.

Planning

King County Comprehensive Plan Policy **R-338** prohibits new industrial uses on land zoned Rural Area (RA) or Forest (F) that produce substantial wastewater or require substantial investments in infrastructure (e.g., water). In fact, serving a forest zone with public water is not consistent with the State's Growth Management Act.

It appears likely Segale may sell or lease the site of the Cumberland Mines and Asphalt Plant to one of the major national aggregate mining companies, as it has done with its operation in the City of Auburn. Segale Properties main business is a *master plan developer*, such as at that site in Auburn (as well as in Tukwila). That is why we are very concerned that after the 30 yr end-of-life, an in-place water-supply infrastructure would put enormous pressure to expand the King County Urban Growth Area to and include this site—again the tenets of the State's Growth Management Act.

A project this massive size, length of operation, and this close to the ecosystem of the Green River cannot *plan* for all circumstances. In fact, Segale simply would indiscriminately clear the land, push out all wildlife, and destroy vital vegetation which soaks up groundwater and decreases slope saturation during our wet winters. This in turn increases ground failure which could lead to massive landslides impacting the Gorge. We all saw this happen with the *2014 Oso Landslide*, the largest and deadliest in US history, caused in part by over timber harvesting and over saturation due to precipitation.

The 2018 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife *Hatchery Improvement Master Plan* called for improvement efforts and led to funds to preserve and improve our rivers, and more recently the Green River Rearing Ponds into a full hatchery just two miles downstream from this proposed site. One of the purposes is to support the southern resident killer whale by increasing the salmon population that inhabits the Green River.

Conclusions and Recommendation

The King County Rural Area community, along with the cities of Maple Valley, Black Diamond, and Enumclaw, all have opposed to this project. Over 600 comment letters were sent to King County in opposition to this project during the SEPA checklist comment period expressing many concerns about community and environmental impacts. Twenty-two agencies and two tribal governments sent letters of concern. Again, we call on Tacoma Water to not provide water to this project. Thank you for giving due consideration to our concerns.

() Joint Rural Area Team: Enumclaw Plateau Community Association (EPCA), Friends of Sammamish Valley (FoSV), Greater Maple Valley Unincorporated Area Council (GMVUAC), Green River Coalition (GRC), Green Valley/Lake Holm Association (GV/LHA), Hollywood Hill Association (HHA), Soos Creek Area Response (SCAR), Upper Bear Creek Unincorporated Area Council (UBCUAC), and Rural Technical Consultants—Mike Birdsall (Transportation Focal), Ken Konigsmark (Growth Management Focal), and Terry Lavender (Environmental Focal).*

Submitted by (on behalf of the JRT):

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