



Sravasti Abbey



692 Country Lane Newport WA, 99156-9658, USA

February 27, 2018
Glen Nenema Tribal Chair
Kalispel Tribe of Indians

Dear Chairman Nenema,

I write today on behalf of all the monastics of Sravasti Abbey, a Buddhist center of learning and practice located near Newport, Washington and in close proximity to the many communities in eastern Washington and northern Idaho affected by the HiTestSand silicon smelter proposed for Pend Oreille County.

After months of attending meetings, reading, researching, and asking questions, we are joining with the many voices in Newport, Pend Oreille County, Bonners' County, the Kalispel Tribe of Indians and others who are opposed to the proposed HiTestSand silicon smelter.

We who live in Pend Oreille County live in a place of beauty. Families with deep roots and families who are newcomers live here seeking harmony with nature and with their neighbors. A 40-acre industrial plant with its pollution, noise, lighting, and traffic is an affront to the values we hold most dear.

We understand the allure of creating 150 jobs in a county with 6.4 percent unemployment. However, the reports about the kinds of jobs that will be created by the proposed smelter are not that high on the pay scale and the small number of high paying jobs will be gained by professionals who will move here from elsewhere, as the local Newport population does not yet have people with that kind of training and experience. In our view, the attractiveness of expanded employment does not outweigh the long-term impacts of the silicon smelter on our environment and culture.

Effect on local environment and culture

From a local perspective, we are gravely concerned about the impact of the smelter on the health of our neighbors and on the culture of our land. The smelter will emit carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, and silica dust. These are substances that contribute to acid rain and associated human health issues and have done so in other places. Likewise, we are concerned about the smelter's impact on indigenous culture. Long marginalized by dominant society, our neighbor, the Kalispel Tribe, is renewing itself following decades of disenfranchisement. The smelter poses a direct threat to the health of their children and to their future generations.

Impact on air quality

From a global perspective, the silicon smelter will become one more contributor to greenhouse gases accelerating the onset of climate change. Emissions data recently disclosed in HiTestSand's Draft PSD Modeling state that the smelter would generate 320,000 tons of greenhouse gases, 760 tons of sulfur dioxide, and 700 tons of nitrogen

Founder and Abbess

Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron

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Sera Monastery

Geshe Kalsang Damdul
Drepung Monastery

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oxides each year. This is roughly equivalent to the amount of greenhouse gases produced by 65,000 cars driving 11,000 miles each through the streets of Newport per year, and the amount of sulfur dioxide generated by burning 165,000 woodstoves continuously for 365 days per year on one acre.

The Kalispel Tribe in their letter dated November 28, 2017 explains the following: “Even if HiTestSand’s air quality modeling suggests that its emissions will meet applicable regulations, there is a possibility that its actual emissions will not. By that time, the \$300 million facility will have been built and be, for all intents and purposes, too big to fail. HiTestSand will be given time and leeway to fix any emission violations. Monitoring corrective actions will take even more time. In short, our community may have to endure elevated levels of air pollution for years before the smelter’s actual emissions are adequately controlled or the facility is shut down.”

Concerns about water

We are deeply concerned about the amount of water that will be needed for this kind of industry. Where is it going to come from and how will this impact the City of Newport and its watersheds? At a meeting held at the Camus Centre sponsored by the Kalispel Tribe of Indians and “Responsible Growth – WA” January 23, 2018, we learned that the City of Newport had just denied HiTestSand the water that they need for the plant because they requested 240,000 gallons of water daily for the project. This amount of water is quite a contrast from the previous number of 9,000 gallons per day that was expressed by HiTestSand at one of the meetings in the fall of 2017. If the water does not come from the municipal supply, it has to come from the ground, meaning they will have to drill wells. The property that HiTestSand has purchased for the proposed smelter straddles two watersheds, the Little Spokane watershed and the Pend Oreille water shed. The Little Spokane watershed is already an over-allocated water system that has to go on water rationing at certain times of the year. The source of the water needed for this project and the daily amount required continues to be a mystery.

Transportation of raw materials

Truck transportation of raw materials is also an area of concern, even though the actual number of delivery vehicles per day has come under dispute. One of HiTestSand’s owners, Jason Tymko said he stands by the 37 trucks a day estimate if all the material were trucked. What that means is a minimum of 37 trucks driving to the proposed smelter and 37 trucks leaving the proposed smelter, all in the same day. An increase in truck traffic will have an impact on the City of Newport in the form of noise and fossil fuel pollution, and wear and tear on the highways and Newport’s roads.

Blue gem coal needed for the smelting process will be brought in by rail either from Kentucky or shipped from Columbia and then by rail to Newport. The transport of coal continues to be hazardous and accidents are well documented. An Assessment of the Health and Safety Implications of Coal Transport that was published in June 2016 by Public Health Advisory Panel on Coal in Oakland, California identifies numerous serious risks:

“Coal trains significantly increase concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in the local community due to emissions of both coal dust and diesel exhaust.

Coal dust typically contains toxics such as mercury, lead, arsenic, cadmium, and crystalline silica. These substances are of high health concern if inhaled or ingested and are known to cause cancer, fetal defects and neurological damage, even at very low doses. There are no known safe levels of exposure to these toxics.

Since coal is inherently combustible, each step in its handling creates hazards for workers and nearby communities”

Bob Burton, Editor of CoalWire, a weekly bulletin on global coal developments described a number of coal train accidents that took place within a few weeks of each other in the summer of 2017 here in America.

“The derailment of 30 coal wagons on the banks of the Clark Fork River in Montana is just the latest in a long list of coal transport accidents which highlight the risks from shipping fossil fuels long distances to markets. In late July, 30 coal wagons in a Kansas City Southern train derailed in Vivian, spilling coal onto Louisiana Highway 1, forcing the road to be closed while it could be cleaned up. Some residents were also warned to boil water before consuming it after the train damaged local water infrastructure. A few days earlier, 21 cars in a 150 wagon coal train derailed in San Antonio in Texas spilling some of their contents. A Union Pacific spokesman suggested that heatwave conditions may have caused the rail line to buckle, triggering the derailment. A little over a week earlier, 27 cars in a Union Pacific coal train derailed in Okay, Oklahoma, spilling coal onto the highway and tearing up over 450 meters of track. A few days earlier, 20 coal wagons in a 145 car train derailed in West Allis, Wisconsin.”

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, spiritual leader and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, reminds us, “I am wholly convinced that, if all of us do not make a concerted effort with a sense of universal responsibility, we will see the progressive breakdown of the fragile ecosystems that support us, resulting in irreversible and irrevocable degradation of our planet Earth.”

In summary, as strong supporters of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, we oppose industrial expansion which adds to the misery of living beings. Everyone at Sravasti Abbey cares about the future of Pend Oreille County and the future of all beings on our planet. We raise our voices in strong opposition to the HiTestSand silicon smelter proposal.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Greene		Janet Howell	
Nancy Nesbitt		Barbara McDaniel	
Dianne Pratt		Dallas Becker	
Marguerite Robert		Terri Chambers	
Xuequn Pan		Thao Phan	
Lynn Gebetsberger		Brian Lawson	
Hsiao Yin Low		Rebecca Bradley	