

Originating Committee: Public/Private Lands

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Intended Recipients: Missouri Department of Natural Resources; Divisions of Environmental Quality and Missouri Geological Survey, Missouri Department of Natural Resources; Missouri Air Conservation Commission; Missouri Clean Water Commission; Missouri Mining Commission; Director, Missouri Department of Conservation; Conservation Commission; Ste. Genevieve County Commission; Ste. Genevieve Health Commission; L-A-D Foundation

Oppose the Proposed Nexgen Silica Sand Mine in Ste. Genevieve County

WHEREAS, Ste. Genevieve County contains the historically significant town of Ste. Genevieve, the oldest incorporated community in Missouri, which was founded around 1735 and became a National Historical Park in 2020, as well as Hawn State Park, Hickory Canyons Natural Area, Pickle Springs Natural Area, and Horton Farms Conservation area; and

WHEREAS, Hawn State Park contains four natural features of statewide significance: Botkins Pine Woods Natural Area, LaMotte Sandstone Barrens Natural Area, Pickle Creek Natural Area, and Whispering Pines Wild Area that comprises over 40% of the park; and

WHEREAS, Pickle Creek Natural Area contains Pickle Creek, a designated Outstanding State Resource Water, with two miles of sandstone valleys with granite outcrops and shut-ins; and

WHEREAS, over 100,000 visitors annually camp, enjoy nature, picnic, watch birds, hike, and explore the geological features at Hawn State Park; and

WHEREAS, Hawn State Park minimizes unnecessary artificial light at night, meeting the Sky Quality Meter measurement required for International Dark-Sky Park designation, according to the Missouri Chapter of the International Dark-Sky Association; and

WHEREAS, Hickory Canyons Natural Area, 1.37 miles upstream, contains 280 acres owned by the L-A-D Foundation and managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), featuring box canyons, waterfalls, sandstone cliffs, and unique plant communities; and

WHEREAS, Horton Farm Conservation Area, located approximately 0.2 miles from the proposed site, contains 640-acres managed by MDC for fishing, hunting, birding, bicycling, and hiking; and

WHEREAS, Whispering Pines Wild Area, located 2.1 miles from the proposed mine, contains 2,080 acres and is one of only twelve designated Wild Areas in the entire state for its combination of natural and wilderness characteristics, and the serious impact of mining and increased traffic could put that designation at risk or severely compromise the meaning of Wild Area; and

WHEREAS, the silica mining operation proposed by Nexgen Silica, LLC for a 149-acre site opposite the entrance road to Hawn State Park from Highway 32 has the potential to negatively impact the visitor experience of Hawn State Park and its Natural Areas and Outstanding State Resource Water, as well as Hickory Canyons and Horton Conservation Area, by creating light pollution, noise from blasting, and increased local heavy truck and train traffic during the proposed 24/7 sand mining, processing, and truck or rail shipping operations; and

WHEREAS, silica mining and processing operations like those proposed by Nexgen Silica affect air and water quality by creating air pollution from the crushing and breaking apart of sandstone into fine silica dust, by contaminating the water supply and disrupting the hydrologic systems, and by contaminating surface water from the washing of the silica during processing; and

WHEREAS, silica dust released into the air in the form of crystalline silica during sand mining, processing, and transport can, according to cancer.org, lead to silicosis, cancer, kidney disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), long-term exposure can result in chronic silicosis which can appear up to 10 years after exposure; and

WHEREAS, park visitors, nearby homeowners, families with children, farmers, crops, and livestock will be exposed to silica dust and increased heavy truck traffic (estimated by company representatives at 100 per day); and

WHEREAS, the Ste. Genevieve County Commission and County Health Commission passed a restrictive ordinance that will not allow the proposed mine in this location due to proximity to water sources and occupied residences, the land reclamation mining permit issued by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MoDNR) was rescinded by the Missouri Mining Commission for non-compliance with application requirements, and MoDNR has received a complaint by three parties on issued surface water and land disturbance permit MOG491545 that will be heard by the Administrative Hearing Commission on April 19, 2023; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Conservation Federation of Missouri assembled in Osage Beach, Missouri, this 25th day of February, 2023 opposes the construction and operation of a silica sand mine and processing facility opposite the entrance road to Hawn State Park from Highway 32 in Ste. Genevieve County, Missouri, as proposed by Nexgen Silica, LLC, and requests the Missouri Department of Conservation oppose the construction of the mine; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Conservation Federation of Missouri requests that the Missouri Department of Natural Resources consider all potential environmental damage during the air pollution, land reclamation, and water pollution permitting processes and deny construction and operating permits for the proposed mine.

Searchable Keywords: silica, mining, Nexgen, Hawn State Park, park, Pickle Spring, sand, sandstone, mine, Ste. Genevieve, water, air, and light pollution, permit, dust, environmental, health, waste, noise, traffic, Hickory Canyon, Horton, LaMotte, shortleaf pine forest, Whispering Pines, Wild Area, natural area.

Expires: February 25, 2028