

**CITIZENS' COMMENTS**

At 9:15 a.m. or as soon thereafter as possible

Do your comments refer to an item  
on today's agenda  not on today's agenda

The Board of County Commissioners welcomes your comments. Your presentation will be limited to two (2) minutes. If appropriate, the matter(s) you present will be placed on a future commission agenda.

It is requested that you complete this form and return it to the receptionist prior to the beginning of the Citizens' Comments portion of the agenda.

Name: FRANENE SLACK  
Address: 6200 HOTILLA Holmes BECKET  
Phone:(Home) 778-3444 (Work)     

Brief description of problem or concern:  
Change in Pristine 81-82 (Phosphate mining)

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Name: Sarah Payer  
Address: 621 Woodlawn Drive Boulder  
Phone:(Home) 735 1667 (Work) \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description of problem or concern:

Phosphate mining complications

PHOSPHATE MINING IN BONE VALLEY

# Sierra Club organizes foes

By Dale White  
STAFF WRITER

Most of the people in a 1.25-million-acre strip of inland Florida may not think of themselves as residents of "Bone Valley." Most of them have probably never heard of the geological nickname for the area east south of the Green Swamp and north of Charlotte Harbor.

Yet several environmentalists and political watchdogs are trying to make them aware that Bone Valley exists and that it's a political battleground.

Bone Valley is a region rich with phosphate, a deep-

PLEASE SEE SIERRA CLUB ON 2B

# Sierra Club organizes anti-mining campaign

SIERRA CLUB FROM 1B

ly buried ore formed from fossils and mined as an ingredient for fertilizer. And a loose coalition of environmental interests wants the people of Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte and neighboring counties to join them in actively opposing the opening or expansion of more mines and to get involved in efforts to toughen regulations for existing ones.

"To me, allowing phosphate mining in Florida is the equivalent of allowing drilling in the Arctic wildlife refuge," Marian Ryan, a Sierra Club member from Polk County, told a group gathered Monday night in Bradenton.

"You've got to decide whether you really want it here or not," said her husband, John.

The Sierra Club and the Manatee County League of Women Voters sponsored the forum, which attracted more than 60 people.

Sierra Club members gave a slide-show presentation about the mining process. Environmental management officials from Manatee and Charlotte counties shared their opinions about mining's possible side effects.

No spokespeople from the phosphate industry had a turn at the podium. Representatives from IMC Phosphates attended and took notes but did not interrupt.

The overall message was anti-phosphate.

The employment and tax benefits Southwest Florida may get from phosphate mining are outweighed by the longer-lasting environmental impacts, the Ryans and others said.

Bill Byle, director of Charlotte County's Natural Resources Department, compared Florida's wetlands, rivers and bays with the organs of "a living organism." What happens at phosphate mines along the tributar-

ies of the Peace River in Manatee, Hardee and Desoto counties will ultimately affect wildlife and water quality in Charlotte Harbor, he said.

"It's a system. ... I don't think you can strip-mine the headwaters of this estuary without drastically altering the plumbing."

Speakers objected to mining companies' destruction of natural habitat, the heavy use of water during mining and ore processing, the release of radioactive radon gases during mining and the companies' attempts to recreate ecosystems on lands that have been stripped of all vegetation.

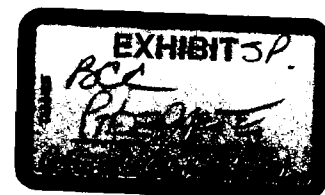
The forum's organizers urged residents to write:

■ U.S. Rep. Dan Miller, R-Bradenton, to ask him to try to get Congress to require the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct an environmental impact study of phosphate mining's impacts on Southwest Florida.

■ The Manatee County Commission to encourage it to enact tougher restrictions when it updates its 1981 mining ordinance.

■ Florida legislators to encourage them to vote in favor of pending legislation that will require phosphate companies to pay into a new trust fund. State environmental authorities could tap into that fund to pay for maintenance of a bankrupt phosphate company's phosphogypsum stack, a mound of radioactive waste that is a byproduct of phosphate processing.

The trust fund legislation is a result of a recent problem that the state and Manatee County had with a phosphogypsum stack at Mulberry Corp.'s closed processing plant at Piney Point. Mulberry is in bankruptcy proceedings. The state is having to pay for daily maintenance of the phosphogypsum stack to ensure it does not leak.



## Phosphate Mining Impacts on the Charlotte Harbor Watershed

The phosphate industry is proposing to add 100 square miles of new mines entirely within the Charlotte Harbor watershed, in the western portions of Hardee and DeSoto County. These mines have great potential to adversely impact the hydrology of the entire region, especially Horse Creek, the largest tributary of the Peace River. Freshwater from these streams are the lifeblood of Charlotte Harbor, the second largest and most productive estuary in Florida. Although required to do so by state and federal regulations, the permitting agencies have done little research to understand the secondary and cumulative impacts of past, existing, and proposed mines on our public water supplies, ecology, health and economy. As these agencies prepare to issue permits for new mines, Charlotte County remains unconvinced that the Peace River and Charlotte Harbor will be protected from these impacts and believes that the following concerns have not yet been adequately addressed:

### **1. Impacts to Public Water Supplies:**

- a. Loss of Surface Water Resources – The Intermediate Aquifer, Horse Creek and the Peace River provide drinking water to over 150,000 citizens of Charlotte, Sarasota, and DeSoto counties. The average flow of the Peace River during the past 30 years is 37% less than the average flow of the river during the previous 30 years. The U.S. Geological Survey indicates that mining may be responsible for much of the lowered water tables and reduced flows in the Peace River. Charlotte County questions the logic of granting permission to a new mine proposing to take an additional average of 6.5 million gallons per day (up to 14 million gallons per day) directly out of the Peace River for corporate profits while past mining is partly responsible for area residents being on water restrictions.
- b. Contamination of Surface Waters - By redistributing phosphates, metals, salts, lead and radiological materials formerly contained in the phosphate matrix, mining activities degrade aquifer, stream, and estuary water quality. Increased levels of these materials have been linked to harmful algal blooms in fresh and saltwater bodies, agronomic and potable water quality problems, and serious health problems.
- c. Loss of Groundwater Storage – Proposed and future mines will create about eighty (80) square miles of waste clay areas, 80 to 100 feet thick. These waste clays are virtually impermeable and eliminate two to three million gallons of surficial aquifer water storage per acre that maintains ground water levels, recharges the aquifers and supplies potable water to over 150,000 residents.
- d. Contamination of Ground Water Supplies - Phosphate mining removes 20 to 50 feet of the semi-confining layer that separates the surficial aquifer from the intermediate aquifer, which is the backbone of the area's hydrology. Degradation of this confining layer increases the potential for water exchange between the aquifers and for one to pollute the other.

### **2. Impacts to Environmental Resources:**

- a. Additional Loss of Important Wildlife Habitats: Proposed and future mines will directly and indirectly destroy many thousands of acres of valuable native uplands, wetlands, aquatic and marine habitats needed to maintain healthy wildlife populations throughout the basin.
- b. Alteration of Surface Hydrology - Mining operations and reclamation practices dramatically alter natural soils, topography and surface-drainage patterns of the area mined, which in turn, adversely impacts natural freshwater flows which are critical to maintaining valuable on-site wetlands, streams and the estuary.

**3. Economic Impacts:**

- a. Estuary Productivity - The berms and water control structures of operating mines, as well as the vastly different soils and contours of 'reclaimed' mines, alter the ground and surface water recharge and discharge characteristics of the area, which in turn, adversely impacts the natural timing of the flow of freshwater needed to maintain wetlands, rivers, and Charlotte Harbor, an estuary of national significance that is the economic cornerstone of Lee and Charlotte Counties that provides over \$3 billion per year to the local economies.
- b. Property values and jobs - Clay settling areas offer very limited post-mining development potential and are used primarily for low grade pastures which have very low property tax value and which lower adjacent land values, as well. Clay settling areas have already eliminated over 120,000 acres (over 187 square miles) of more productive native soils that would have generated more jobs, much higher property values, and economic benefits if the settling areas had not been created.
- c. Threat to Sustainability of US Food Production - The phosphate industry has projected that current mining levels (needed largely to meet export demands) will exhaust the country's highest grade, most available phosphate reserves in the next 30-40 years. Attempting to satisfy the global demand will accelerate depletion of these 'reserves', which will ultimately make U.S. farmers more (if not entirely) dependent upon foreign suppliers of fertilizer which will inevitably result in higher food prices to Americans.

**4. Health Impacts:**

- a. Human Health Impacts - Scientific studies have documented that sixty percent (60%) of the radioactivity associated with phosphate is concentrated in clays and sand tailings created by phosphate mining operations. These radiological materials can accumulate in plants, animals and humans. Studies have indicated that phosphate mining may be related to an increased risk of leukemia, lung cancer and colon cancer observed in Florida's mining regions. Many pollutants spread throughout the surficial aquifer are then transported throughout the basin, where they enter the food chains of many species, including humans.