

Jenna LeBlanc, MEnvSc

June 28, 2021

Re: Gravel extraction development plan (permit #PRDP20211744)

To whom it may concern,

I write today to express my opposition to the development of the Mountain Ash gravel pit, to be constructed less than 3 kilometres from Big Hill Springs Provincial Park.

The details of this planned development are short-sighted at best and ignorantly destructive at worse, as the developers have not only failed in their duty to consult with local Indigenous groups about this significant cultural and natural area, but are also blatantly ignoring the 80% of county residents who oppose this development. Considering this project will not provide a new or limited resource, nor will it create significant revenue for the local economy, it is exceptionally foolish to approve the development of this redundant and damaging gravel pit.

As a former vegetation manager with Alberta Parks, I worked in Big Hill Springs Park for several seasons and witnessed its value as an ecological refuge and cultural resource for Alberta citizens. Now, as a PhD student conducting research in Alberta's threatened natural areas, I am highly concerned for the long-lasting damage this project could have on the park and surrounding area. The proposed development site sits at the confluence of Alberta's Foothills, Grassland, and Parkland Natural regions, which have a combined protected area of less than 4%. The Parkland region in particular has less than 1% protection in the province of Alberta, and destructive developments near Big Hill Springs will threaten what little remains of this unique ecosystem.

Big Hill Springs Provincial Park and surrounding area hosts over 175 species of local and migratory birds, which rely on this small pocket of protected land in an otherwise overdeveloped agricultural landscape. Species sighted in this park include the Prairie Falcon and Sprague's Pipit, which are species of Special Concern in the province. To introduce further development nearby, including water and air pollution, will have long-term negative impacts on the quality of habitat for many rare and sensitive species.

For the reasons stated above—and many others addressed by the Save Big Hill Springs team—I urge you to reconsider this decision, to listen to the concerns of over 7,000 signatories of the petition dedicated to this cause, and to cancel this short-sighted project. Please, consider these very real consequences of development, and instead make the choice to preserve this cultural and natural resource for generations to come.

Regards,



Jenna LeBlanc