

University of Montevallo Environmental Club

c/o Station 6480
University of Montevallo
Montevallo, AL 35115

Re: Shepherd Bend Mine Proposal

Dear Dr. Witt,

Firstly, I would like to express thanks for the time you have taken to address the concerns of our organization on this very important issue. Throughout this very long, very dry, and very devastating summer, the world has watched as Alabamians from communities all across the state united to assist the cities of Tuscaloosa, Cordova, Pratt, Pleasant Grove, and countless others in the wake of the April tornados. I am proud to say that I and many of my fellow students here at the University of Montevallo were able to, and will continue to be, a part of that long arduous recovery. Though our own community remained virtually undamaged, the terrifying knowledge that our own homes and loved ones could just as easily have been taken from us was very real, and was not accepted lightly.

It is in this same sense of unity, pride, and devotion that members of our organization and community have felt the need to express our concerns over the planned industrial development at Shepherd's Bend. Though our community is not one of the closest to the Black Warrior watershed, we firmly believe that the consequences of this controversial undertaking by the Drummond Coal organization is one that will result in far-reaching and profoundly negative effects for the health and well-being of all the citizens of our state. It is certainly true that the University of Alabama finds itself presently involved in a situation whereby whatever decision made is one which will make a powerful impression not only upon the residents of their state, but indeed to all decision-makers across our country. The extreme drought conditions felt nationwide have placed a new emphasis on the important role and responsibility we must all take on when it comes to conserving the purity of our water supply.

A threat to the water supply of the city of Birmingham is a threat to the water supply of all Central Alabama residents, and beyond. This interconnectedness forms the basis of our ecological understanding of the world, and the most potent risk we accept when allowing the contamination of our neighboring communities is only that one which endangers our own communities, our own loved ones, our own lives.

Make no mistake, our community respects and understands the very difficult circumstances faced by yourself and your administration when confronting this decision. Indeed, the University of Montevallo faced a somewhat similar set of circumstances when its own personal water supply was threatened by the Middle Tennessee Land Development Company's efforts to secure a mining site on UM's Ebenezer Swamp. The trial which followed united both sides of our community, campus and township, against irresponsible and careless industrial development, and ultimately resulted in the lawful preservation of a vital watershed. The Ebenezer Swamp Ecological Preserve now exists as a vital educational and tourism asset to our community, and is possessed of a highly marketable value that extends far beyond its own primary ecological significance.

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That being said, we believe that you and your fellow administrators will accept the same level of foresight when making the decision on whether or not to allow UA land to be used for mining coal. Should you choose to take the route which will support our water supply for generations to come, you will have our support, respect, and gratitude.

Respectfully,
Aaron James Traywick
UM Environmental Club