

Alabama Surface Mining Commission  
Attention: Ann Miles  
P.O. Box 2390  
Jasper AL 35502

RE: Black Warrior Riverkeeper's Petition to designate Lands Unsuitable for Mining (LUM)  
upstream of the Birmingham Water Works Board's Mulberry Fork water intake

Dear ASMC,

As the Conservation Land Manager at Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve in Birmingham, AL and a consumer of the municipal water supplied by the Birmingham Water Works, I am in support of the Black Warrior Riverkeeper's petition to designate Lands Unsuitable for Mining (LUM) at the proposed Shepherd Bend Mine site. Forests and herbaceous plant cover are extremely important to reducing runoff and improving water quality. Recently Ruffner conducted an ecosystem services analysis of its forests using the US Forest Services tool iTree. Ecological services are the services provided by the natural functions of an ecosystem and include the cleaning of air and water.

Even small changes in forest and herbaceous cover can have dramatic impacts on water quality which can be compounded by their proximity to the disturbance. While Ruffner's forests only comprise about 5.7% of the total area of both the upper Village and upper Shades Creek watersheds it contributes 34.4% of its forest cover. The forest helps prevent 95 million gallons of storm runoff from flowing into the Shades Creek watershed and 232 million gallons into the Village Creek watershed annually. It also reduces stormwater pollution (Lead, Zinc, etc.) by 1.54 lbs a year.

These values are based on the 1,000 acre footprint of the nature preserve in the Birmingham metropolitan area while the entire proposed Shepherd Bend Mine site has a total acreage of 1,773 acres which is nearly double the size of Ruffner Mountain. Another confounding factor is that the site is surrounded on three sides by the Mulberry Fork of the Black Warrior River and the topography of the site would send sediment and pollutants unearthed during the mining process directly into the Mulberry Fork. This would happen directly across from the Birmingham Water Works Board's Mulberry Fork water intake which provides in part the municipal drinking water for some 200,000 people. Protection of the proposed 58,544 acre LUM area upstream of the Mulberry intake will help secure cleaner drinking water for future generations.

The relatively short term gains of creating a few local jobs and increasing the profits of the mining company do not out way the clean, safe drinking water for the Birmingham metropolitan area. Drinking water is not the only concern. Alabama has some of the most scenic and highly diverse waterways in the country. Some organisms are found nowhere else on earth. Allowing this site to be mined will have detrimental effects on the river's biodiversity and the health and enjoyment that local citizens gain from the Black Warrior River.

Thank You for Your Consideration,

Nick Bieser  
Conservation Land Manager  
Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve  
Concerned Citizen