

Episcopal Diocese of Alabama
Task Force for Stewardship of Creation

April 5, 2012

Dr. Judy Bonner
Interim President
The University of Alabama
Box 897100
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487

Dear Dr. Bonner,

I am writing on behalf of the Diocese of Alabama's Task Force for Stewardship of Creation. The Task Force exists to educate the people of the diocese, to advocate for wise and just environmental policy, and to provide opportunities for service in stewardship of earth.

Diocesan membership includes about 30,000 Episcopalians in churches stretching from Lowndesboro to Florence, including the major cities of Auburn, Montgomery, Tuscaloosa, Huntsville, Anniston, and Birmingham. Our members care deeply about the health of their communities and especially the environmental richness and diversity we have been given and on which we depend. One of our concerns at this time is a potential threat to the quality and safety of Birmingham's water supply.

You are aware no doubt of the strip mining operation proposed by Shepherd Bend LLC using land and mineral rights owned by the University of Alabama. The property is located in the Shepherd Bend of Mulberry Fork, much of it upstream from an intake of the Birmingham Water Works. This intake provides drinking water to some 200,000 customers of the Birmingham Water Works Board.

You are also no doubt aware of the widespread opposition to the mining of this site that is proposed by Shepherd Bend LLC. The opposed organizations are of remarkable significance to the Task Force, including the Birmingham City Council, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, the League of Women Voters of Alabama, and the Student Government Associations of both UAB and the University of Alabama, among others.

Opposition is based on solid assessments of irreparable damage to the land, illegal levels of water pollution that will result from sulfates, chlorides, iron, and other heavy metals that will be discharged into the river, and damage to the river and its wildlife from massive increases in sedimentation. In addition the cost of making the water safe for human consumption is expected to escalate steeply.

The University of Alabama, as we understand it, is in a position to prevent this mining operation from gaining a profitable foothold by refusing to make the property available to

Shepherd Bend LLC. We respectfully urge you and the University Board of Trustees to take a stance now, indicating that the property will not be available for mining.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Faithfully yours,

The Rev. Canon J. Thompson Brown
Canon Emeritus
Cathedral Church of the Advent
Birmingham, AL 35213

cc: Dr. Robert Witt