

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears above any article. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

## UA mining plans upset Cordova residents

By Lucinda Coulter  
Staff Writer

Published: Friday, May 25, 2007 at 3:30 a.m.

Coal companies have until 2 p.m. today to submit proposals to strip mine land in Walker County that the University of Alabama has owned for more than a century.

Drummond Coal Co., which owns land adjacent to UA's tract, is buying leases nearby, and the decision to send out proposals to mine UA's 1,300 acres was market-driven, said UA spokeswoman Cathy Andreen.

But nearby residents in Cordova hope that university officials will consider other uses for the land.

The acreage is about six miles south of Cordova. The southeast and northeast corners of the land border the Black Warrior River. Residents said the lush forest there is considered to be some of the most beautiful in south Walker County.

But the land is also known to have high quality, metallurgical-grade coal used to make steel.

Cordova townspeople and others in the nearby community of Barney met Tuesday evening to voice concerns over the proposed strip mining in the county.

Residents are worried that mining the land will result in runoff and poor air quality.

They said they also fear that mining will decrease property values and thwart possible development when Interstate 22 from Birmingham to Memphis, is completed.

UA's land is only one mile from the interstate's future route.

Randy Palmer, a Cordova native and Tuscaloosa resident, said he and others would like UA to preserve the land a natural state.

Palmer, who has been on the Cordova Improvement and Preservation Association since it started five years ago, said the Greater Birmingham Regional Commission, Alabama Power Co. and other organizations have helped Cordova city officials develop a plan for growth.

Palmer said he and Cordova city administrator Randall Gammon met with UA officials prior to Tuesday's meeting.

"What we're looking for is a win-win situation for both the large landowners and for the community to be positively impacted by long-term sustainable growth," Palmer said. "The citizens feel left out of the decisions, and they want to find out why the strip mining alternative is better than other uses."



Staff graphic | Anthony Bratina

The secret to world-class health care:  
**World-class people.**

**Click Here For ...**  
Job Opportunities  
Health Information  
Health Services

[www.dchsystem.com](http://www.dchsystem.com)



Palmer is a musician with the Tuscaloosa Irish band Henri's Notions who said he learned his craft from generations of family musicians who lived near Cordova.

Other residents with family lineage in the community said they will continue to petition the university to reconsider mining the area.

Nineteen-year-old Barney resident Todd Hyché said his great-grandfather lived there. Hyché said possible development of the land from the future interstate could benefit the state's taxpayers without destroying it.

"It's just a beautiful forest, and a creek runs through it," said Hyché, who is majoring in biomedical engineering at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Andreen said UA officials will evaluate the proposals, which will be made available to the public, before a decision is made on the lease.

Palmer and Gammon said that UA officials told them that Drummond officials had encouraged the university to open its land to strip mining. Andreen said UA officials were aware that Drummond Coal is buying leases near UA's tract.

"That makes it an appropriate time for us to take a hard look at the best use of our property," Andreen said.

UA officials were invited to Tuesday's meeting but were unable to attend because of scheduling conflicts, Andreen said. But she said UA officials would be willing to hear the concerns of Cordova residents.

"The RFP includes rigorous standards for reclamation," Andreen said, noting that the proposal is available on the UA land management Web site.

In UA's proposal, the standards for reclamation include planting pine trees in the mined area to prevent erosion.

But Cordova resident Dennis Cooper remembers when reclamation was not legally required in the state, and points to some land north of Cordova that he said remains scarred and looks like a moonscape.

Cooper hopes that mining on the 1,300-acre tract can be prevented.

"I'd like to see the land in that area developed residentially," Cooper said. "We want to attract people, not turn them away."

Reach Lucinda Coulter at [lucinda.coulter@tuscaloosaneews.com](mailto:lucinda.coulter@tuscaloosaneews.com) or 205-722-206.

Copyright © 2011 TuscaloosaNews.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.