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LOCAL GROUP URGES CITIZENS TO ATTEND PUBLIC HEARING TO SAVE TOM'S CREEK FROM HAZARDOUS MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL

Public Hearing to Consider Impact of Specialty Granules, Inc.'s Application for Permit to Mine Pine Hill

Fairfield, PA – January 21– Members of [Friends of Tom's Creek](#) and [Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services](#), their legal representation, are urging local residents to attend the second public hearing on the expansion of operations by Specialty Granules Inc. (SGI). The hearing will be held on Wednesday, January 30th at 6:30 pm in the Fairfield Fire and EMS Hall, 106 Steelman St., Fairfield PA 17320. Attendance at this meeting is likely the last chance for the public to make comments and ask questions to oppose this looming irreversible damage to a high-quality trout stream (Toms Creek) and a segment of “one of the most biologically diverse temperate broadleaf forests in the world” (The Nature Conservancy, May 2010).

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) is in the final stages of reviewing a permit for SGI to mine and process greenstone, which is then crushed, dyed, treated with chemical algacides and fungicides and used in the production of asphalt roofing shingles. Greenstone is known to contain naturally occurring asbestos, a carcinogenic material hazardous to human health. The greenstone crushing process introduces hazardous contaminants into the air and water.

“We are at the tipping point at which PA DEP must give meaning to the laws that protect a ‘specially protected watershed’ from the destructive environmental impacts and economic burdens caused by greenstone removal and processing,” said Hazel Keahey, board member of Friends of Toms Creek. “It is up to us, a small rural community, to stand up and fight to preserve fresh clean water, critical habitat, and for the economic and environmental health of our community.”

The proposed mining site is Pine Hill, 112 acres of land, which is the site of the Confederates’ 1863 retreat following the Battle of Gettysburg. If permitted, the project will blast and excavate right next to residential properties, within 100 feet of scenic historic roads, and within 300 feet of Toms Creek and four ecologically-diverse wetlands containing unique and endangered species. The new permit would also allow storm water from the mining site to be discharged into these sensitive ecological sites under certain circumstances.

SGI's expansion (now more than 800 acres) poses myriad threats to Toms Creek and local residents. Blasting has and will damage septic tanks and the water quality and quantity in drinking water wells. Digging deep into the earth so close to Toms Creek has already altered its hydrology. This has also happened along the southern border of SGI's property – where Miney Branch has been degraded by the mining of greenstone and discharge into the creek. Over the years, greenstone has buried the cobble stream bed needed for fish habitat and has decreased the stream capacity during rain events, increasing flooding of residents' properties downstream.

Increased truck traffic and other operations will continue to release unknown airborne contaminants which affect residents' health, and the discharge of storm water to Toms Creek will damage the natural ecosystems of the creek and will permanently negatively affect one of Pennsylvania's most pristine river systems.

About Friends of Tom's Creek

Friends of Tom's Creek is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, working to protect, preserve, enhance, and restore the natural and historic resources within the Tom's Creek watershed.

For more information, visit [our website](#)

About Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services

Fair Shake is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit environmental law firm fostering equal access to environmental justice by providing income-based services to modest means clients, equipping citizens with the tools they need to master their own environmental fate, and incubating young entrepreneurial attorneys who will one day do the same.

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