

November 5, 2024

Director of Land Use and Planning
Planning and development Department
741 Colonel Ledyard Hwy
Ledyard, CT 06335

Dear Elizabeth Burdick,

I would like to submit a letter of concern into the record regarding Cashman Dredging and Marine Contracting Company's proposed quarry on route 12 in Gales Ferry.

We moved to Gales Ferry from Michigan with Pfizer just over twenty years ago. We chose this area because of its rural setting and freedom from cities and noise. We hike, garden, volunteer in town and are often outside. The proposal to create a gravel pit is contrary to everything Gales Ferry and Ledyard represent. The idea that a gravel pit will not create noise pollution, excess heavy traffic, dust, and an overall unhealthy environment for the citizens of our town is unrealistic. The dangers of silica dust (particles 100 times smaller than a grain of sand) is well documented, including the lasting effects of lung damage and cancer. "Hazardous levels of respirable dust can be released into the air when working with materials that contain silica. Silicosis, an irreversible but preventable lung disease, is caused by inhalation of RCS."

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/silica/about/index.html#:~:text=Hazardous%20levels%20of%20respirable%20dust,serious%20diseases%2C%20including%20lung%20cancer>.

Are we willing to risk the lives of the children in the nearby school? What about the citizens who already have pulmonary issues?

Recently, we were headed for a campground in Pennsylvania and took a wrong turn, driving by an operating quarry. It was not as large as the proposed Mt Decatur site, but visibility on the road was decreased due to the dust in the air. Everywhere we looked, trees, bushes, houses were covered in dust. If we could see all the dust, what about the respirable silica particles that are too small to see? The noise made it hard to hear each other and fortunately our campground turned out to be far away. This is what can be expected in Gales Ferry as well.

I understand that these concerns have already been raised, but I would also like to add another. I am referring to the wildlife that lives around Mt. Decatur. Although all the wildlife that will be driven from their homes are a concern, I am specifically addressing the eagles. The presence of bald eagles around Mt. Decatur is well known and documented by local photographers, bird watchers, citizens, as well as the DEEP. They have been seen as individuals and in pairs, hunting and feeding on the Thames. Fish carcasses have been found at the base of a feeding tree along the river at Allyn's Point. Bald Eagles mate for life and have a territory of about one square mile when food is abundant, larger if food is scarce. With the abundance of fish on the Thames, we have a year-round population in the area of Mount Decatur and Allyn's Point. Eagles are shy by nature and easily disturbed by human activity.

In Michigan I owned and operated White Wind Raptor Care, a state and federally licensed wildlife rehabilitation center. As such, I was required to follow federal regulations for threatened and endangered birds of prey and am familiar with the requirements. Along with the golden eagle, the bald eagle is protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C 668-668d) as well as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This act “prohibits anyone without a permit issued by the secretary of the interior, from taking bald or golden eagles, including their parts (including feathers), nests, or eggs.

The Act defines “take” as pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb.” Regulations further define “disturb” as to “agitate or bother a bald or golden eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, based on the best scientific information available, 1) injury to an eagle, 2) a decrease in its productivity, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior. 3) Nest abandonment by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior.” (50 CFR 22.6)

“A violation of the Act can result in a fine of \$100,000 (\$200,000 for organizations), imprisonment for one year, or both, for a first offense. Penalties increase substantially for additional offenses and a second violation of this Act is a felony.” <https://www.fws.gov/law/bald-and-golden-eagle-protection-act>

Based on the above information, allowing a stone quarry on Mt. Decatur along with the noise and dust of constant blasting will drive the eagles off their territory, in violation of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Additionally, damage to the river and their food source from run-off will likely force the eagles to change their territory and abandon any nest sites.

There are many reasons why this quarry is inappropriate for the route 12 location in Gales Ferry, and I would like to add the protection of our national bird to this exhaustive list.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Marcek
711 Long Cove Rd
Gales Ferry, CT, 06335