



POTOMAC
RIVERKEEPER®
NETWORK

For Immediate Release
January 23, 2019

3070 M Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20007

Contact: Fritz Schneider, 301.728.4811
fritz@prknetwork.org

CITIZENS URGE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION 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

Washington, D.C. – January 23– Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Brent Walls will be joined by members of [Friends of Tom's Creek \(FOTC\)](#) and other local residents for the second public hearing on the expansion of operations for Specialty Granules, Inc (SGI). The public hearing will be on January 30 at 6:30 p.m. at the Fire and EMS Hall in Fairfield, PA.

“Our goal is to convince Pennsylvania’s Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to deny the permit, a permit that would allow stormwater from the mining expansion to impact Tom’s Creek,” said Walls. “SGI is using a weak social and economic justification for DEP to allow discharges into a state designated High Quality stream.”

DEP is in the final stages of reviewing an expansion permit for SGI to mine and process Greenstone, which is crushed into a fine grit for the production of asphalt shingles. Greenstone is known to contain naturally occurring asbestos, a carcinogenic material hazardous to human health, in which the crushing process introduces 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 FOTC. “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.”

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 Tom’s Creek and four ecologically-diverse wetlands containing unique and endangered species.

The proposed mining site is Pine Hill, 112 acres of land with important scenic and historical attributes. Formerly part of the Michaux State Forest, SGI continues to hide the land's historic value by failing to identify Pine Hill as the site of 1863 Civil War Retreat following the Battle of Gettysburg. Pine Hill is also located in a specially protected watershed flowing into the Chesapeake Bay. These area attributes along with high ranking water quality data places Tom's creek into a State designated category called Exceptional Value.

The new permit would allow mining stormwater into Tom's Creek despite the claims of SGI pumping the stormwater to an existing under capacity settling pond that discharges to Miney Branch. Miney Branch merges with Tom's creek to the east and south of Fairfield, which flows into the Monocacy River and then into the Potomac River. Over the years, the mining of Greenstone by SGI has already degraded Miney Branch impacting downstream residents use and enjoyment of the water resources. Greenstone has buried the cobble stream bed needed for fish habitat and has decreased the stream capacity during rain events, increasing residential flooding downstream.

The SGI expansion poses several other threats to Tom's creek and local residents. Blasting will impact septic tanks and the water quality of water wells. Deep excavation so close to Tom's Creek may alter the hydrology like it has for residents near Miney Branch. The increased truck traffic and other operations will continue to release unknown airborne contaminants impacting residential health, and the discharge of stormwater to Tom's Creek will damage the natural ecosystems of the river and will permanently impact one of Pennsylvania's highest quality river systems.

The hearing will be held January 30, 2019 at 6:30 p.m., at the Fairfield Fire and EMS Hall, Fairfield PA 17320. There is no cost or registration required for participation at the event.

About Potomac Riverkeeper Network

Potomac Riverkeeper Network is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization with three regional Waterkeeper branches: Potomac Riverkeeper, Upper Potomac Riverkeeper, and Shenandoah Riverkeeper. Our mission is to protect the public's right to clean water in our rivers and streams. We stop pollution to promote safe drinking water, protect healthy habitats, and enhance public use and enjoyment.

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

#