

To Whom it May Concern

My name is Randy Crosby and I live at 4292 S. Parks Highway located on the west side of the Parks Highway at mile 128.5. I am responding to the application for a Conditional Use Permit for Earth Materials Extraction - MSB 17.30 on the east side of the Parks Highway at mile 128. I oppose this application and my comments will focus on the lack of information, the use of misinformation and the misuse of public resources in pursuing this permit.

The very first item on page 1 of the permit is incorrectly identifying this as an Administrative Permit. The time frame and CY limits clearly are requiring a Conditional Use Permit. Also on page 1, the Borough is presented as the applicant when in fact a private contractor is seeking to mine gravel and sands and also depositing unwanted materials from a State DOT project currently under construction from mile 128 -128.5 of the Parks Highway. The Borough should not be applying for a permit on the contractors behalf. All fees should be at the contractors expense NOT the taxpayers and residents of the Borough.

On page 3, the the permit is the first indication of a contractor's needs, but nowhere in the permit is the existing contractor named or any contact information or credentials provided.

On page 4, Borough staff signs the permit taking full responsibility for the execution of the permit but neither Borough employee provide a job title and how they relate to this permit application.

Detailed Project Description

Page 1, the initial purpose of this permit is described as to "Prepare the parcel for future development" The future development is never disclosed and appears to misinform the public to the actual purpose of the permit.

The third paragraph does indicate the current plan includes a future borrow source, however, still does not disclose the current plan to provide a gravel source for a State DOT road improvement project at mile 128 already under construction.

This paragraph also suggests there is no development on the surrounding Borough lands which could not be further from the truth. The winter trail easement called the Chulitna Bluff Trail (CBT) is an extremely important asset of not only the surrounding lands, but goes directly through the middle of this subject parcel. While it may not be very important to the current Borough Land Managers or a contractor doing work on a State project for a short two years, the CBT is very important to the communities of Trapper Creek and Petersville as well as visitors from all over the world. It took many years to plan, build and to this day is maintained largely impart by volunteers and members of the community. It certainly was very important to past Borough land managers and elected officials in the recent past.

An additional description of surrounding lands is a description of a DNR material site at mile 128 as an "old gravel pit" used to build and maintain the Parks Highway. This site, however, is actually an active gravel source of contractors and land owners alike and is used for gravel extraction, camping and is a summer trailhead for landowners on the west side of the highway. I have on many occasions received permits to extract gravel and a considerable quantity of gravel remains, especially if the State were to properly survey and manage the site.

According to the permit, the goal is to develop a long term material source but the Borough already has two other existing sources in their gravel pits at mile 126 and mile 131 of the Parks Highway. The management of these two sites is all but nonexistent with no reclamation plans. Both gravel pits are in close proximity to this State road project and have large amounts of

gravel resources while at the same time could stand to have reclamation work done to them. Developing a new gravel pit at the subject parcel only benefits the contractor and there is no clear benefit to the Borough, residents, visitors or taxpayers. The detailed description starts out implying there is future development planning but by the end of page 1 shifts and describes the real reason for this permit which is a "Material Sale Contract".

There is no description/information of the contractor, nor any description of the dollar amount per yard of material removed from the site. No responsibility is put on the contractors shoulders, and the public paying for and being responsible for the application and management of the permit and it's activities.

Page 2 indicates the Borough will access this parcel through the "old state pit" but provides no permission from the State to allow this activity. The Borough continues describing activities that will take place on State lands but has no jurisdiction nor is providing an agreement or discussion with the State DNR assuring their cooperation and agreement specifically to this permit's described activities. Any other entity wanting to access their parcel through State land in this manner would require a State issued Land Use Permit or an Easement with associated fees and restrictions for review by the public. The Borough has not provided the application or issuance of such access across State lands.

Page 3 starts off by describing a test pit and ground water assessment by a geotechnical firm in 2023. Where is the data confirming this activity? Please provide the purpose and chain of command approving this work. I live within 1/2 mile of this parcel and keep a keen eye out for any activity in this somewhat remote area and saw no equipment enter this parcel and dig a test hole. Please provide the data.

The permit at no time describes the 35' wide X 750' long gravel road entering this parcel that was constructed sometime before mid March of 2025. Where was the permit to do this work and why is that not discussed in the permit application?

The parcel description doesn't accurately describe the property and glosses over the fact that the 120 acres is a bowl shaped area with the center being a large wetland the drains to the Chulitna River 1/2 mile to the east.

The Borough, in addition to its two nearby existing gavel pits, has thousands of acres of land in the Northern Susitna Valley that have much better sources of gravel containing NO wetlands. Again, the only purpose for choosing this site is to benefit the contractor that was awarded the State DOT road project.

As I previously stated, the contractor has already entered the subject parcel and constructed a 35' x 750' long gravel road with a large turnaround area at the end. This was constructed by removing and stacking snow, trees and overburden along the perimeter of the excavation until gravel was exposed and graded. There should have been a permit to do this work as well as a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) in place already as over 3' of snow is rapidly melting and the turnaround area is on the edge of the upper most bench that drains to both Railroad Creek and the Chulitna River. While I don't feel there will be any sediment reaching the water bodies, a SWPPP is ultimately what guides the activity to assure NO negative impacts result. Allowing construction of this magnitude on the subject parcel without a permit is unacceptable and not disclosing this activity is unconscionable at best.

One is left to assume the Borough Land Managers consider their actions exempt from the very same permitting processes they were hired to oversee by the residents of the Borough. I have a hard time seeing the public benefit outweighing the public's burden to process this permit on the behalf to the contractor. It certainly is not clear as to the public's benefit.

The permit touts the idea of providing “open space” as if gravel pits surrounded by earthen berms blocking access to a world class trail system is somehow an improvement to the intrinsic value the subject parcels already provides to the public. Here is the actual definition of open space:

In land management, "open space" refers to undeveloped areas, encompassing various types like parks, forests, agricultural lands, and natural habitats, which are preserved for their environmental, recreational, and aesthetic benefits.

Based on the management of the two nearby Borough owned gravel pits at mile 126 and 131, I have little confidence in this reclamation plan or any of the other plans in this permit application. Both existing pits have large holes, mounds and trash scattered throughout. Both pits could benefit from the imported materials described in this permit application to help with a reclamation of these lands.

In a conversation I had with Joe Metzger, Borough Land and Resource Manager in January 2025, he indicated that some of this material from the State road project would be used to lift and level the parking area in the gravel pit that serves as a trailhead at mile 131. This permit, however, fails to mention that benefit, so I can only conclude that will not take place and might require an entirely different permit.

Also, in that same January conversation with Mr. Metzger I asked what benefit to the public is this new gravel pit and he replied it would keep the cost down of the State DOT road project. The only costs that are reduced are the contractors overhead. The project costs to the public remain the same no matter where the contractor gets his gravel or deposits waste material. This is a State bid and the contract was awarded to the contractor for a fixed price. There is no financial benefit to the Borough taxpayers to provide a gravel pit next to the road project especially when all the permitting costs are placed on the taxpayer shoulders and no sale terms of gravel are provided.

This permit description concludes with a long term plan that, again, describes activities not covered under an administrative permit but instead, the long term planning describes activities exceeding the “less than 2 years and less than 7000 CY” limits and require a conditional use permit. The short term and long term activities clearly describe the need for a conditional use permit application. The rest of the permit contains much information that is either irrelevant or incomplete. The 1999 cooperative agreement between the State DNR and the Mat Su Borough for mining reclamation on Borough land is of little value especially when you see the lack of reclamation at the mile 126 and mile 131 Borough owned pits.

The 10 maps included all show basically the same thing but interestingly enough do not show:

The Winter Trail Easement for the Chulitna Bluff Trail

The newly constructed 35' x 750' long gravel road

The test holes dug in 2023

The State of Alaska DNR Material Sale Contract #234621 is in draft form, is unsigned and doesn't include any of the access or activities the Borough describes in its permit application. There is no mention of the Borough in the DNR permit application at all and it seems odd for the Borough to provide it as a supporting document to the Borough permit application.

The Chulitna Bluff Trail (CBT)

Starting in 1994, I provided input to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Recreational Trail Planning process and in 1998 the Trapper Creek Community Council elected me as the Trapper Creek Trail Committee Chairman. Meetings in conjunction with the Petersville Community were held for two winters, twice a month, to hash out the needs and locations of a main backbone winter trail system that would serve the needs of residents and visitors alike. After this difficult task, our trail plan was included in the newly adopted Mat-Su Recreation Trail Plan 2000 and the trails including the CBT can be found on Map#5 in the George Parks Highway Region.

As the founding President of the local snowmachine organization called the Curry Ridge Riders(CRRs), I lead many volunteers over many years to help build and maintaining these trails including the CBT. This trail was new and originally followed old logging trails and the old "Tractor Trail" used by pioneers before the construction of the Parks Highway where feasible. In 2006, with the approval of the Mat-Su Borough land managers, the CBT was relocated to the bluffs edge as much as practical, then surveyed and an easement was established.

In 2007-2009 the CBT was reconstructed and refined with a grant and proper permits to allow my company, Alaska Snow Cat, to enter the land during the winter months and construct the trail by removing trees and other obstacles and provide a surface that could be groomed with large snowcats and have safe, two way snowmachine traffic, with good sight distances. This allows a safe, fun and beautiful trail used by both motorized and non-motorized users during the winter.

From 2003-2019, again with all the proper permits, Alaska Snow Cat received grants and donations to groom and maintain 125+ miles of trails in the communities of Trapper Creek, Petersville and Denali State Park, including the CBT. Alaska Snow Cat was part of the MSB Trail Care Crew and worked closely with the Borough, CRRs and the community at large to insure success of this world class trail system. In the fall of 2019, due to declining grant money and increasing cost I handed over the grooming tasks to the CRRs and the Petersville Non-Profit organizations. I still provide advice, volunteer work and other services to the trail efforts, and was responsive to the Borough's informational needs as recent as the fall of 2023.

I heard after the fact, that the Borough had a representative out at the proposed gravel pit discussing the CBT with others but did not include me in the invitation. This was after discussing my position with Borough Manager Mike Brown and Joe Metzger on the phone. That is very disappointing from my perspective as I have hundreds of hours of work into the CBT spanning 30+ years and know the history and lay of the land better than anyone else.

Actually there is a key part of the CBT that still needs completion, starting in this subject parcel That need is the long term goal of rerouting the trail out of the two State pits at mile 128 and 129. The surveyed easement in this section remains East of the pits on Borough land but has not yet been constructed. Right now there is a long standing agreement with the State to allow passage through the gravel pits until other uses prevent safe passage. It appears to be time to consider constructing this reroute.

All the above information is outlined in documents, emails and comprehensive planning processes. Its up to land managers to review and uphold the public's desires in these matters.

In conclusion, I want to point out a very interesting situation that is directly related to the DOT road project, the contractor hired to do the work, the Borough and myself that took place in the later part of November 2024. I was in communication and negotiating with the State DOT contractor on a variety of services and needs that might benefit us both in depositing materials and purchasing gravel on my property at mile 128.5 as well as some rental of buildings.

One key issue that would need to be resolved was obtaining an easement across Borough land to get to a parcel of land I had purchased from the Borough with long term plans of subdividing. I would get the construction of an easement, built to Borough specs, and the contractor would have a location to waste Type A and B materials next to his work site.

I contacted the Borough Land and Resource Management Department and submitted the requested description of what I wanted for a preliminary review. Four Borough managers responded with objections, primarily not wanting the easement, because they felt it encumbered the public land. Fair enough and I told the contractor that the Borough's initial decision and the other terms being discussed was not something I wanted to pursue at that time.

However, within 45 days I was slowly learning the same Borough managers were pursuing encumbering 121 acres of Public Land directly across the Parks Highway from my proposed easement to provide access to gravel extraction and receive waste material from the same contractor working on the DOT road project! I feel the Borough is directly competing against me, controls key elements of my economy and is hypocritical in it's decisions of denying me of good access to land. My development proposal would eventually provide homes or cabins that then create community growth and provide a increased tax base.

Instead the Borough's land managers turn right around and allow themselves to enter into a business arrangement with the same contractor, on basically adjacent land, with no perceivable benefits to the public, which encumbers and actually removes open space. All while the Borough taxes the land owners and then uses our tax monies to apply for this permit on the contractor's behalf! Unbelievable.

I will be following up with information requests and will be attending the meeting regarding this gravel pit on May 15th at the Borough building at 9am. In the meantime I encourage the Borough managers and elected officials to carefully consider denying themselves this permit application.

Sincerely,

Randy Crosby
(907) 355-1572