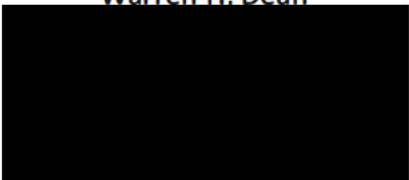


Warren H. Dean



January. 23, 2023

Carl Bauer
District Ranger
Pikes Peak Ranger District
c/o Jenn De Woody
601 South Weber St.
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Re File Code 1950; 2850

Dear Ranger Bauer,

My name is Warren Deans and I am a recipient of your letter dated January 5, 2023 regarding the "final reclamation of the Pikeview Quarry". I am a longtime resident of Colorado and live just south of Colorado Springs – and I have a keen interest in the management of our public lands for the public benefit.

I am quite familiar with the history of the Pikeview Quarry, its many rock slides and multiple revised reclamation plans. I and the rest of the City view the immense scar that has provided a "scenic" back drop to the City of Colorado Springs for decades. Thus, I am encouraged that efforts now seem to have begun in earnest to reclaim this dangerous eye sore. I must admit that I was initially excited upon receiving your letter and the hope for reclaiming the quarry. I had hoped things would proceed as planned but my excitement waned significantly when I saw just what this proposed project entailed. Instead of using onsite material for reclamation as outlined its reclamation permit, the quarry owner wants to destroy an additional 24 natural acres above and around the quarry to generate fill material. As you know this means the removal of all trees and vegetation to allow deep digging deep into the hillside. This in turn will create steep, non-native slopes and new, bare highwalls which will extend over 200 feet above the existing quarry.

It is hard to imagine that the proposal includes the destruction of an *additional* 24.0 acres of the Pike National Forest – to simply add significantly to the size and scale of this quarry. And for what? To make rock and bulldoze it to fill the quarry below – ultimately actually adding to the total size of the area to be reclaimed. It is hard to conceive a worse use of our public lands, at least in my opinion.

Reading further from your letter gave me even more concern as the Forest Service is proposing waiving all environmental analysis, public discourse, and public decision-making in an effort to push this through. I am curious what kind of pressure the City of Colorado Springs must be exerting on the Forest Service to create this idea? Why would the Forest Service abdicate it's land management responsibilities, and it's legal responsibilities under NEPA, to expedite such a wrong-headed and destructive proposal?

I am not an attorney, but for the Forest Service to propose that this project falls under a category under NEPA that waives the entire environmental review process seems preposterous. The Category you cite in your letter to those of us in the public (the owners of the national forests) is completely inappropriate for this project – and likely is illegal. You state that *"this project falls within the following category of actions:*

Forest and grassland management activities with a primary purpose of meeting restoration objectives or increasing resilience. Activities to improve ecosystem health, resilience, and other watershed and habitat may not exceed 2,800 acres. 36 CFR 220.6(e)(25).

Ranger Bauer, how does the Forest Service justify attempting to use a restoration and resilience category for a project that turns 24.0 acres of the Pike National Forest into a rock pile? There is nothing about this project that is intended to restore or create a resilient landscape. In looking at the regulatory history of this category it is clear that it is NOT intended to be used for the reclamation of a rock quarry. Nowhere in the public responses, or Forest Service proposal for the new regulations that created this category is there even a mention of such a project as an example. This category was intended primarily, as I read the history, to address forest health issues and is intended to promote projects that actually do create resilient ecosystems.

This project is purely a quarry reclamation project and that is why the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety have been involved. Your letter discusses "ongoing reclamation activities" – this is not about ecosystem restoration or resilience at all.

I am really disappointed that the U.S. Forest Service would attempt to mislead the public by inappropriately using a regulation that is unrelated to the project proposal. I urge the agency to abandon it's attempt to bypass stringent and comprehensive environmental review and restart this process as an environmental impact statement (EIS) which is a much more honest and appropriated analysis for destroying 24 acres of our national forest public lands.

I am willing to discuss this at your earliest convenience. You can reach me at 719-440-1722 or warren@whd22.com

Sincerely



Warren Dean

Concerned Citizen

CC: Regional Forest Frank Beum, frank.beum@usda.gov
Deputy Regional Forester Steven Lohr, steven.lohr@usda.gov
Forest Supervisor Diana Trujillo, diana.m.trujillo@usda.gov