

Could a bald eagle and a winery block a proposed rock quarry along the Boise River?

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A nesting bald eagle, a beloved local winery and over 30 neighbors may jeopardize a proposal to open a 260-acre surface mine along the Boise River.

Emmett developer Evan Buchert of Premier LLC wants to build the mine at 25706 Boise River Road off U.S. 95 in Parma in eastern Canyon County, Idaho. The Pintail Long Term Mineral Extraction Mine would include [mineral extraction](#) on 160 acres and sand and gravel extraction, rock crushing and equipment storage on the other 100 acres.

The application stalled after Canyon County Development Services received complaints from neighbors concerned about [wildlife habitat](#), groundwater contamination and roadway impacts.

The mine would be around 500 feet from the southeast side of the river. The land is now being used for farming, the application said.

"(Development Services) staff recommends denial of the request," a staff report said. "Due to a lack of information regarding compatibility, access, traffic, floodplains, and wetlands, impacts are unknown."

The county staff said Premier LLC should first detail its location and building plans to address noise complaints, dust and groundwater contamination. The staff also requested a flood study and evacuation plan and information from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game on the possible impacts on species and habitat.

In a news release April 4, Canyon County, announced that an April 4 public hearing on the mining application was tabled to "a date uncertain due to a request from the applicant for a continuance of the public hearing to address agency and staff comments and questions."

Buchert did not immediately respond to an email and phone call Friday requesting comment.

Birders worry about bald eagles 'abandoning' nests

Two local birding groups, the Golden Eagle Audubon Society and the Southwestern Idaho Birders Association, wrote letters in opposition to Pintail Mineral Extraction Mine. They each said there is at least one known bald eagle nest next to the Boise River where the mine would be located.

"Bald eagles are sensitive to human activity in the vicinity of their nest throughout the [breeding season](#), and such activity may lead to nest abandonment or decrease the chances of successfully raising chicks," wrote Golden Eagle Audubon Society President Daniel Salemi.

Salemi also said [bald eagles](#) are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which prohibits anyone without a permit from "taking a Bald or Golden Eagle." The protection act defines "take" as "pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb." Salemi suggests the mining operation would "disturb" the nesting bald eagle.

The bird groups also said there is a heron rookery, which is an area used by groups of herons for nesting and raising young, downstream from the project and that yellow-billed cuckoos, which are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, have been found downstream.

The Southwestern Idaho Birders Association also wrote that it is "concerned about (bird) habitat, including food sources. Bald eagles, osprey, herons, egrets, and mergansers are fish-eating birds. Fish habitat in the Boise River is already degraded from irrigation withdrawals, agricultural runoff, development, and other sand and gravel operations upriver from this location."

Possible negative impacts to local winery and neighborhood

Stephanie Hodge is the nearly 10-year owner of Parma Ridge Winery and Bistro. She and her husband, Storm, operate the vineyard and winery, which she said was planted in 1998.

The Pintail mine would operate "just down the hill" from the winery, Hodge wrote in her opposition letter to Canyon County.

"This would destroy this picturesque view that our customers come for and instead be replaced with mounds of dirt and rock," Hodge said.

"Additionally, the level of dust in the air is of concern for our vines and their ability to ripen and produce the best fruit possible."

Parma Ridge Winery customers also wrote to the county to express concern with the mine, which would be located less than a mile from the restaurant.

Tim and Cindy Petrucci, of Wilder, are members of the Parma Ridge Winery and wrote that the mine would "disrupt the peacefulness of this entire business."

"This is a beautiful place to sit and over look the Parma valley below," the couple wrote. "The folks that own the winery work extremely hard, and this would definitely affect the ambiance they are entitled to have."

Other area homeowners worried about dust, the 45 trucks that are expected to enter the mine per day, and the fact that the operation would run 12 hours a day, six days a week.

Chad Thompson, spokesperson for Canyon County, said the Planning and Zoning Commission has not yet set a new date for the hearing.

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