

Yannone, Lyndsay

From: Pereira, Ana on behalf of Santiago, Martha
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 1:42 PM
To: White, Margo; Yannone, Lyndsay
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL]: Opposition to Mammoth Grove Mine, Case Number LDCU-2025-29

Thanks,
Ana



Ana C. Pereira

Executive Assistant to the Board
Polk County Board of County Commissioners
330 West Church St. , P.O. Box 9005, Drawer BC01
Bartow, FL 33831-9005
863.534.6422; 863.534.6049
AnaPereira@PolkFL.gov www.PolkFL.gov

Please Note: Florida has a very broad Public Records Law. Most written communications to or from state and local officials regarding state or local business are public records available to the public and media upon request. Your email communications may therefore be subject to public disclosure.

From: Grant Powell <grant0414@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 1:10 PM
To: Call, Planner On <PlannerOnCall@polk-county.net>; Troutman, Becky <beckytroutman@polkfl.gov>; Wilson, Rick <RickWilson@polkfl.gov>; Braswell, Bill <BillBraswell@polkfl.gov>; Santiago, Martha <MarthaSantiago@polkfl.gov>; Scott, Michael <michaelscott@polkfl.gov>; rgibson@lakewalesfl.gov; jhilligoss@lakewalesfl.gov; Grohowski, Andrew <andrewgrohowski@polkfl.gov>; mike@hickmanhomes.net; lmschultz21@gmail.com; olecowpoke@gmail.com; Yannone, Lyndsay <LyndsayRathke@polkfl.gov>; White, Margo <MargoWhite@polkfl.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]: Opposition to Mammoth Grove Mine, Case Number LDCU-2025-29

You don't often get email from grant0414@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Grant Powell, and I am a resident and homeowner of two properties in Saddlebag Lake Resort, a 55+ retirement community in Lake Wales. I'm writing to strongly oppose the Conditional Use request for a large Non-Phosphate Mining (Borrow Pit) operation on approximately 855 acres immediately next to our neighborhood.

We were given notice on November 26 2025, (one day before Thanksgiving) on this matter. This case is going to council to be decided on Dec 3 2025. This is a very urgent matter, with the welfare of 800 residential homeowners at stake.

Saddlebag Lake Resort includes nearly 800 homes, and unlike many retirement communities, we each own the land our homes sit on. We are a peaceful, residential community built around a lake. This proposed borrow pit threatens the safety, health, property value, and environment of our residents.

1. Major Error in the Application: Our Community Is Residential, NOT “Leisure Recreation”

One of the most serious problems with the applicant’s submission is the incorrect description of our community’s zoning. The Conditional Use application refers to Saddlebag Lake Resort as “Leisure Recreation.” This is factually incorrect.

Our properties — including my own two properties— are classified as Residential on our Polk County property tax records. Saddlebag Lake Resort is not a campground, a part-time leisure park, or a transient recreational area. It is a fully established, permanent residential neighborhood where seniors live year-round.

Mislabeling our community as “Leisure Recreation” minimizes the fact that the proposed mining operation would be placed directly beside hundreds of full-time residential homes, not a recreational park. This misclassification has a direct impact on land-use compatibility assessments and should be considered a serious flaw in the application.

We ask that the County recognize this mistake and evaluate the proposal using the correct and legally accurate zoning classification: Residential.

2. Air Quality and Health Concerns for Seniors

Many residents are older adults living with COPD, asthma, emphysema, and other breathing issues. Dust and fine particulate matter from a borrow pit — even with controls — can drift directly into our community.

For seniors, this is not a small inconvenience; it is a serious health threat. Poor air quality can trigger respiratory distress, worsen chronic illnesses, and lead to emergency medical situations.

3. Our Lake and Outdoor Lifestyle Will Be Harmed

Our homes and social life revolve around Saddlebag Lake. Dust, noise, and vibration from mining will disrupt:

- Fishing and boating
- Water quality
- Wildlife and bird habitat
- Outdoor activities
- Peaceful enjoyment of our lakefront environment

We moved here for quiet, clean outdoor living — not industrial activity.

4. Noise, Vibration, and Industrial Disturbance

A major borrow pit would bring:

- Constant heavy machinery
- Backup alarms
- Engines and digging equipment
- Ground vibration
- Early morning and long-hour operations

This is completely incompatible with a senior retirement community.

5. Highway 60 Safety — 536 Trucks a Day Will Increase Accidents and Fatalities

Highway 60 just east of Lake Wales is already known by residents as a dangerous, high-accident stretch of road. Many of us have witnessed serious crashes, emergency responses, and multi-vehicle accidents along this corridor for years.

The proposed mining operation plans to add approximately 268 heavy trucks per day entering and exiting Highway 60. These trucks will be pulling out onto a fast-moving highway where vehicles often travel over 60 mph.

Heavy trucks:

- Accelerate slowly
- Restrict visibility
- Create dangerous merging points
- Require long stopping distances

For a senior community where many drivers are cautious, slower, or have mobility or vision limitations, this presents an unacceptable risk. Adding hundreds of industrial trucks daily will almost certainly lead to more crashes — and potentially more fatalities.

Highway 60 is not designed for this level of industrial traffic near residential zones.

6. Serious Threats to Our Private Well-Water Supply

This issue is critical.

Saddlebag Lake Resort operates its own private well-water and sewer systems. We do not have access to city water. A borrow pit of this size adjacent to our homes risks:

- Lowering the water table, reducing or cutting off well-water availability
- Contaminating the aquifer with fuel, oils, sediment, or subsurface materials
- Altering underground water flow, pulling contaminants toward our community wells
- Permanent damage to our drinking-water supply

If our well water becomes unsafe or depleted, all 800 homes lose safe drinking water — with no alternative source. For seniors, this could quickly become a life-threatening crisis.

7. Loss of Property Value for Land-Ownning Seniors

Since we own our homes and the land beneath them, any decrease in property value directly harms us.

A borrow pit next door will significantly reduce home values. Many residents here live on fixed incomes and cannot afford to lose the equity they worked decades to build. If home values drop, many of us will be trapped financially, unable to relocate or recover.

8. Borrow Pit is Not Compatible With Our Area

Even considering the mix of Agricultural/Residential Rural and Industrial zoning surrounding us, approving this Conditional Use directly beside a large, permanent 55+ residential neighborhood is simply not appropriate.

No set of conditions can make a massive industrial mining operation compatible with a senior lakeside community.

We are also home of many endangered plants and animals, including the scrub pigeon-wing.

What We Are Asking

We respectfully request that the County:

1. Deny the Conditional Use request
2. Recognize the application's zoning misclassification
3. Protect the health and safety of elderly residents
4. Safeguard our well-water supply and lake environment
5. Prevent dangerous increases in truck traffic on Highway 60
6. Protect the property values and financial stability of our community
7. Ensure Saddlebag residents have opportunity for input at public hearings

In Closing

Saddlebag Lake Resort is our home. We worked our whole lives to retire in a safe, peaceful place. A borrow pit of this size, in this location, poses serious risks to our health, safety, water supply, property values, and way of life.

We respectfully ask that you protect our community by denying this Conditional Use request.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Grant Powell
Resident, Saddlebag Lake Resort
13 Blue Quill Circle and 8 Blue Quill Circle
Lake Wales, Florida 33898

Sent from my iPad

Yannone, Lyndsay

From: Barbara Sherman <bardar42@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 1:31 PM
To: Yannone, Lyndsay
Subject: [EXTERNAL]: Mine pit concerns

You don't often get email from bardar42@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Attention Lyndsay Yannone

Darwin Sherman, and I his wife, Barbara have serious reservations on the proposed non phosphate mining operation. We are extremely concerned , and opposed to the conditional use request for this mining operation on about 855 acres of our immediate neighbouring land. We are residents of Saddlebag Lake Resort, which is a Seniors residential Community, where we own our own land for the past 34 years , and on which we pay taxes. Our community is classified as Residential, and has 800 homes within.

The proposal of a “borrow pit” so close to our community threatens our safety, our health, our environment, the value of our property , and the lifestyle of our residents . We also are concerned about a sink hole developing ,and the quality and quantity of our water supply.

Thank you for your attention to this serious and unwanted proposal.

**Respectfully submitted, Darwin & Barbara Sherman
51 Royal Coachman
Saddlebag Lake Resort
Lake Wales, FL
33898**

Sent from my iPhone

Yannone, Lyndsay

From: Pereira, Ana on behalf of Santiago, Martha
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 12:30 PM
To: White, Margo; Yannone, Lyndsay
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL]: Opposition to Mammoth Grove Mine, Case Number LDCU-2025-29

Received on behalf of the Chair.

Thanks,
Ana



Ana C. Pereira
Executive Assistant to the Board
Polk County Board of County Commissioners
330 West Church St. , P.O. Box 9005, Drawer BC01
Bartow, FL 33831-9005
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From: Becky Powell <becky0527@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 11:48 AM
To: Santiago, Martha <MarthaSantiago@polkfl.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]: Opposition to Mammoth Grove Mine, Case Number LDCU-2025-29

You don't often get email from becky0527@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Rebecca Powell, and I am a resident and homeowner of two properties in Saddlebag Lake Resort, a 55+ retirement community in Lake Wales. I'm writing to strongly oppose the Conditional Use request for a large Non-Phosphate Mining (Borrow Pit) operation on approximately 855 acres immediately next to our neighborhood.

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6. Serious Threats to Our Private Well-Water Supply

This issue is critical.

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8. Borrow Pit is Not Compatible With Our Area

Even considering the mix of Agricultural/Residential Rural and Industrial zoning surrounding us, approving this Conditional Use directly beside a large, permanent 55+ residential neighborhood is simply not appropriate.

No set of conditions can make a massive industrial mining operation compatible with a senior lakeside community.

We are also home of many endangered plants and animals, including the scrub pigeon-wing.

What We Are Asking

We respectfully request that the County:

1. Deny the Conditional Use request
2. Recognize the application's zoning misclassification
3. Protect the health and safety of elderly residents

Yannone, Lyndsay

From: Ann Mullen <ann.c.mullen@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 10:56 AM
To: White, Margo; Yannone, Lyndsay
Subject: [EXTERNAL]: FW: Letter Opposing Approval of Sand Mine (Case# LDCU-2025-29)

You don't often get email from ann.c.mullen@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Margo White and Lyndsay Yannone:

Attached is a letter I sent to the Planning Commission of Polk County urging them to deny final approval of the proposed sand mining project that will be adjacent to our community.

Thank you for listening.

Ann Mullen

From: Ann Mullen <ann.c.mullen@gmail.com>
Date: Sunday, November 30, 2025 at 1:50 PM
To: mike@hickmanhomes.com <mike@hickmanhomes.com>, lmschultz21@gmail.com <lmschultz21@gmail.com>, olecowpoke@gmail.com <olecowpoke@gmail.com>, RobertBeltran@polk-county.net <RobertBeltran@polk-county.net>, andrewgrohowski@polk-county.net <andrewgrohowski@polk-county.net>
Cc: MarthaSantiago@polk-county.net <MarthaSantiago@polk-county.net>, ann.c.mullen@gmail.com <ann.c.mullen@gmail.com>
Subject: Letter Opposing Approval of Sand Mine (Case# LDCU-2025-29)

To: Mike Hickman (mike@hickmanhomes.com), Linda Schultz (lmschultz21@gmail.com), Mike Schmidt (olecowpoke@gmail.com), Members of the Polk County Planning Commission and Development Review Commissions)
Robert Beltran (RobertBeltran@polk-county.net) Chair of the Polk County Planning and Development Review Commissions
Andrew Grohowski, Planner II, Polk County (andrewgrohowski@polk-county.net)
CC: Martha Santiago, Ed.D. (MarthaSantiago@polk-county.net), Chair of the Polk County Board of Commissioners
Re: Case#LDCU-2025-29; Conditional Approval of Proposed Sand Mining Operation

I am the owner of a home in Saddlebag Lake Resort, and I am writing to express my strong disagreement with the Planning and Development Review Commission's "Conditional Approval" of the proposed sand mine that will abut our Resort's property and to ask the Planning Commission to reverse their decision.

First of all, the Commission states in its review packet that all activities at the mine "shall be conducted in a manner that will minimize adverse effects on water quality, fish and wildlife and adjacent sites."

Further, "the decision to permit the activity shall be based on an evaluation of compatibility of use with surrounding land uses and the ability to mitigate adverse impacts, including noise, airborne and water pollutants and traffic impacts."

“Compatibility” (as defined in Section 4.400 of the Polk County Land Development Code) with surrounding land uses means “land uses can coexist in relative proximity to each other in a stable fashion.”

Production facts in the approval documents:

1. The mine will operate seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Product will be shipped six days a week (312 days per year), 14 hours per day by an average of 536 trucks per day.
2. An estimate of 1,000,000 TONS of product will be produced each year, an average of 2,740 TONS per day.
3. Each TON of product will contain 10 gallons of water, a total of 27,400 gallons of water per day and 10,001,000 gallons per year which will need to be replenished by the Floridian aquifer.

My reasons for opposing the final approval of this application are:

1. By definition, it is not “compatible” with our Resort’s “coexistence” in a “stable fashion” with the mine operation. Our property values will plummet in an already rough economy. No one will want to either rent or buy in our community if we are adjacent to clouds of silica dust, intense noise pollution, soil contamination, threats to flora and fauna, endangered or not, and the disruption of a harmonious ecosystem.
2. Water table depletion: why should every resident that relies on the area's lake/water/aquifer system suffer the pollution and depletion that is bound to be a consequence of removing 10+million gallons of water each year?
3. The application cites as support a similar approval in 1991 for a similar operation. 36 years have passed since then, with a sharpened awareness of the environment and our responsibility to maintain it. In addition, our Resort has changed during that time from an RV-type “park” to a community in which most residents are either full-time residents or six-months-plus residents.
4. Endangered species: The project has identified one endangered plant species, but apparently has not investigated further, since the document states that “Prior to the commencement of mining activities, the applicant shall hire a qualified professional to conduct a site survey/walkover to ensure that no threatened or endangered plant or animal species exist on the site.” Please note that this “site survey/walkover” will occur **after** approval.
5. Our Board and some residents received less than a week’s notice about this approval and the final hearing.
6. With 800 homes in our Resort, and over 1,000 residents, I wonder how the Commissioners could state that “residential density is very sparse.”
7. As a Commissioner, elected or appointed, I doubt very much you would want this operation next door to where you live.

I urge you to deny final approval for this project. Thank you for listening.

Ann Mullen

121 Saddlebag Trail

Saddlebag Lake Resort

Yannone, Lyndsay

From: Leslie <qtrhorse@execulink.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 10:33 AM
To: Yannone, Lyndsay
Subject: [EXTERNAL]: Mining pit

[You don't often get email from qtrhorse@execulink.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

Attention Lyndsay Yannone:

I am a resident and homeowner in Saddlebag Lake Resort, a 55+ retirement community in Lake Wales. I'm writing to strongly oppose the Conditional Use request for a large Non-Phosphate Mining (Borrow Pit) next to our neighborhood. I do believe that there are a number of health concerns that need to be considered with this type of mining. I am concerned about the noise and the increase in the number of trucks on hwy 60. There are already a great number of accidents.

Saddlebag Lake Resort operates its own private well-water and sewer systems. A borrow pit of this size adjacent to our homes risks lowering the water table, reducing or cutting off well-water availability. Our family owns five properties and we are concerned that this will decrease our property values.

How will we be compensated for lower property values, lack of water supply, and medical conditions that may occur?

I do hope that you will oppose the application for the mine and protect our community by denying this Conditional Use request.

Steve & Leslie Wilson
55 Royal Coachman
Saddlebag Lake Resort
Sent from my iPhone

Sent from my iPhone

Yannone, Lyndsay

From: Call, Planner On
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 10:10 AM
To: Yannone, Lyndsay
Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL]: Opposition to Mammoth Grove Mine CaseNumber LDCU-2025-29

From: don greulich <greulichauto@yahoo.ca>
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 8:50 AM
To: Call, Planner On <PlannerOnCall@polk-county.net>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]: Opposition to Mammoth Grove Mine CaseNumber LDCU-2025-29

You don't often get email from greulichauto@yahoo.ca. [Learn why this is important](#)

December 3, 2025

Land Development Division
Drawer GM03, P.O. Box 9005
Bartow, Florida

Re: Opposition to Mammoth Grove Mine, Case Number LDCU-2025-29

My name is Susan Greulich, and I am a resident and homeowner in Saddlebag Lake Resort, a 55+ retirement community in Lake Wales. I'm writing to strongly oppose the Conditional Use request for a large Non-Phosphate Mining (Borrow Pit) operation on approximately 855 acres immediately next to our neighborhood.

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No set of conditions can make a massive industrial mining operation compatible with a senior lakeside community.

December 1, 2025

Polk County Planning Commission

330 W. Church Street

Bartow, FL 33830

RE: Opposition to Conditional Use Application LDCU-2025-29 (Mammoth Grove Mine)

Submitted by: Greg Pratt, Saddlebag Lake Resort

Dear Commissioners,

This letter provides a clear, factual, and policy-based explanation of why this application is inconsistent with the Polk County Comprehensive Plan, violates essential elements of the Land Development Code, and poses unacceptable risks to public health, safety, and environmental quality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Saddlebag Lake Resort is one of Polk County's longest-established 55+ residential communities. For more than fifty years, our community has relied on the quiet, safe, recreational environment surrounding Saddlebag Lake—an environment now threatened by the proposed Mammoth Grove Mine.

The mine would operate for up to 65 years, within a few hundred feet of our homes and only 200 feet from our lake shoreline. The scale, duration, and intensity of this operation are fundamentally incompatible with the character and function of our community.

II. THE PROPOSED MINE IS FUNDAMENTALLY INCOMPATIBLE WITH A HIGH-DENSITY SENIOR COMMUNITY

Saddlebag Lake Resort is a 50-year-old, established 55+ residential community with 1,267 residents and 787 homes. This is not a “sparsely populated rural area,” as described in the staff report—it is one of the largest senior communities in eastern Polk County.

Our density is equivalent to Polk County’s Residential-Medium category, which permits up to 10 dwelling units per acre. The Leisure/Recreation (L/R) designation allows similar intensities, especially for Type B/C L/R communities like ours.

Placing an 855-acre industrial mining operation directly beside a high-density retirement community violates the Comprehensive Plan’s core policies on compatibility, including:

- Policy 2.102-A10: Nearness to incompatible land uses
- Policy 2.115-A5: Adjacent development to L/R must be Residential, Institutional, or Open Space

An industrial mine is none of these. It is categorically incompatible.

III. PROPOSED MINE HEALTH IMPACTS ON SENIOR COMMUNITY

Our senior population has elevated vulnerability to:

- COPD
- Asthma
- Chronic bronchitis
- Cardiovascular disease
- Heat and air-quality sensitivity

Diesel exhaust, particulate matter, and airborne silica dust pose serious documented health risks to aging populations. No health impact assessment was submitted.

IV. MAJOR TRAFFIC SAFETY RISKS TO SENIORS

Our community has a single entrance/exit that connects directly to U.S. Highway 60—a location already dangerous because of a bend and a hill crest that severely limit visibility.

The mine would add heavy truck traffic (536 daily truck trips) to this already hazardous point. Seniors would face increased conflict with haul trucks, turning movements, and dust-reduced visibility; all compounded by seniors' slower reaction times.

No traffic safety assessment was submitted.

V. THREATS TO OUR TWO COMMUNITY DRINKING-WATER WELLS

Saddlebag Lake Resort is served by two potable water wells. The mine's wet excavation area lies approximately 4,000 feet away.

Yet the application provides:

- No groundwater modeling
- No drawdown analysis
- No hydrogeologic cross-sections
- No turbidity migration modeling
- No wellhead protection plan

The claim that "all water will be retained on-site" is unsupported and scientifically implausible for a saturated-sand excavation pit adjacent to residential wells. Another portion of the report contradicts this statement and suggests 30,000 GPD will be removed from the site as moisture in the final product.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ON SADDLEBAG LAKE

Saddlebag Lake is one of the cleanest freshwater bodies in the State of Florida.

Our community participates in the University of Florida's LAKEWATCH Program, a statewide water-quality monitoring initiative. Years of LAKEWATCH data show that Saddlebag Lake maintains exceptionally low nutrient levels, high clarity, and stable ecological health. This pristine condition makes the lake uniquely vulnerable to external disturbance.

Saddlebag Lake is a closed-basin freshwater system. Unlike flowing rivers, a closed-basin lake has no natural flushing mechanism. Any introduced contaminant—sediment, turbidity,

nutrient loading, diesel residue, hydraulic fluids, or chemical runoff—accumulates over time.

Industrial mining within 200 feet of such a sensitive lake poses extraordinary risks:

- Turbidity plumes migrating through connected sandy soils into the lake
- Sediment deposition damaging fish-spawning grounds and aquatic vegetation
- Fuel, hydraulic fluid, and diesel leaks infiltrating groundwater and entering the lake
- Groundwater gradient shifts destabilizing lake levels
- Shoreline collapse risks from excavation near unconsolidated sand lake edges
- Wildlife and habitat disruption over 65 years of noise, lighting, and vibration

The applicant submitted no lake-protection plan, no hydrologic modeling, no spill-prevention analysis, no turbidity migration study, and no environmental risk assessment.

For a mine directly beside a closed, high-quality freshwater system—documented through UF LAKEWATCH to be one of the cleanest in Florida—this omission is scientifically indefensible.

Additionally, a change in lake level, turbidity, or shoreline stability would irreversibly damage the environmental and recreational heart of our community.

VII. PROTECTED WILDLIFE & ENDANGERED SPECIES IMPACTS

Saddlebag Lake Resort and its surrounding habitat support multiple **state and federally protected species**, several of which have been **photographically documented by residents** on and adjacent to the proposed mining boundary.

1. Federally Threatened Species Observed

Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*) — Federally Threatened

Wood Storks have been photographed feeding along the Saddlebag Lake shoreline and foraging in wetland areas adjacent to the mine property. Wood Storks depend on **stable water levels** and **undisturbed shallow foraging habitat**. Hydrologic disruption from wet excavation mining—including groundwater drawdown, turbidity, or water-level fluctuations—would directly impair this species' survival functions.

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) — State Threatened

Little Blue Herons, also documented at Saddlebag Lake, rely on clear, shallow waters for hunting. Mining adjacent to a closed-basin lake risks increasing turbidity and sedimentation, degrading essential feeding habitat.

2. Raptors: Bald Eagles and Owls Observed at the Property Line

Residents have repeatedly documented **Bald Eagles, Great Horned Owls, and Barred Owls** roosting and nesting in the tall trees along the Saddlebag–Mammoth Grove property line. Raptors are highly sensitive to prolonged noise, vibration, nighttime lighting, and tree disturbance.

Federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) guidance requires maintaining buffer zones from nesting and roosting sites — yet **no raptor survey or mitigation plan** was included in the application.

3. Long-Term Habitat Disruption from a 65-Year Industrial Operation

A 65-year industrial mining operation will introduce:

- Persistent noise
- Continuous vibration from excavation equipment
- Floodlighting during early morning or late operations
- Habitat removal and fragmentation
- Decline in water clarity affecting aquatic food sources

- Increased human disturbance and traffic

These impacts would make the Saddlebag Lake shoreline **inhospitable for foraging wading birds, raptors, and other wildlife** that have used this area for generations.

4. The Applicant Submitted No Required Wildlife Surveys or Mitigation Plans

Despite documented presence of:

- Wood Stork (federally threatened)
- Little Blue Heron (state threatened)
- Bald Eagle
- Great Horned Owl
- Barred Owl
- A wide range of wading birds and migratory species

The application includes no species survey, no habitat mapping, no avoidance plan, and no mitigation plan.

This is a substantial omission in violation of both **County environmental protection policies** and **state/federal guidance** for development adjacent to the habitat of threatened species.

5. The Comprehensive Plan Requires Protection of Existing Wildlife Resources

Under multiple environmental policies, Polk County is obligated to:

- Protect wildlife habitat
- Preserve water bodies supporting threatened species
- Prevent developments that jeopardize ecological integrity

The mine application does not satisfy these standards.

Additionally, the federally threatened Scrub Pigeon-wing has been documented within the project area. No mitigation plan, relocation plan, or habitat evaluation was submitted.

Given the scale of land disturbance, this is a significant violation of environmental protection requirements.

VIII. SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE IMPACTS TO PROPERTY VALUES

Borrow pit mining has been repeatedly shown to cause **substantial declines in surrounding residential property values**, with the most severe losses occurring closest to the mining operation. Independent research confirms:

- Homes less than one mile from a borrow pit can lose up to 30% of their market value
- At one mile, homes experience an average 14.5% reduction
- At two miles, an 8.9% reduction
- At three miles, a 4.9% reduction

Saddlebag Lake Resort is **directly adjacent** to the proposed mine boundary—meaning our 787 homes fall into the **highest-impact zone** where property value losses are most severe. The decline is also **non-linear**, with values dropping sharply as distance decreases. Many Saddlebag properties could see **equity erased entirely**, placing seniors at financial risk.

Factors driving these reductions include:

- Heavy truck traffic
- Dust and airborne particulates
- Noise and vibration
- Environmental stigma associated with large-scale mining
- Increased road hazard conditions
- Perceived long-term decline in neighborhood quality

Local real estate professionals confirm these risks. In a formal statement, **Bender Realty of Lake Wales**, the leading brokerage serving Saddlebag, warned that:

“The safety, quality of life, and property values of the owners... would be negatively impacted if the mining project is allowed to commence.”

“[There is] the very real possibility of air pollution and dust formed by mining operations... Studies show that the closer a property is to a borrow pit, the greater the reduction in value... as much as 30% for homes located less than a mile away. Saddlebag Lake Resort is adjacent to the proposed borrow pit property.”

These impacts are especially concerning given that Saddlebag is a **55+ community**, where many residents rely on fixed incomes, home equity, and long-term financial stability. A 30% devaluation would not only destroy personal wealth—it would destabilize a senior community that has existed for over 50 years.

The Polk County Comprehensive Plan requires careful consideration of impacts on existing residential development, especially where economic harm and neighborhood destabilization are likely. Allowing an 855-acre mining operation immediately beside a long-established senior residential community would cause **irreversible economic damage** and violate the County's responsibility to protect the welfare of its residents.

IX. CONCLUSION: THIS CONDITIONAL USE CANNOT BE APPROVED

The proposed 855-acre Mammoth Grove Mine is incompatible with Comprehensive Plan policies, violates multiple provisions of LDC §303, poses significant risks to the health and safety of 1,267 senior residents, threatens two potable water wells, endangers one of Florida's cleanest lakes, and would irreversibly alter the character of a long-established retirement community.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Planning Commission deny Conditional Use Application LDCU-2025-29.

Thank you for your time and your responsibility to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Polk County residents.

Sincerely,

Greg Pratt

Saddlebag Lake Resort Resident

Lake Wales, Florida

Yannone, Lyndsay

From: Call, Planner On
Sent: Monday, December 1, 2025 4:35 PM
To: Yannone, Lyndsay
Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL]: Saddlebag Lake mining proposal

From: Dianne Gillies <sdgillies@rogers.com>
Sent: Monday, December 1, 2025 4:23 PM
To: Call, Planner On <PlannerOnCall@polk-county.net>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]: Saddlebag Lake mining proposal

You don't often get email from sdgillies@rogers.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Our names are Dianne and Steve Gillies and we live at 77 Royal Coachman Street in the Saddlebag Lake Resort. Last Thursday my husband and I were made aware of the meeting to be held this Wednesday regarding a proposed mining operation next to the Saddlebag Lake property. We are vehemently opposed to this application. We fear the serious deleterious effects this operation will have on our water supply, our health, our enjoyment of our home and on property values. Our association looks after our drinking water and our waste water facilities. We fear that the mining company's use of the ground water at the level (35,000 gallons a day) will impact the availability of water for our use and the water level of our lake. There is documented proof that there are toxic wastes associated with this type of mining. Since the predominant wind direction is from the north to the west, we are in the direct path of any noxious elements. We have been told that the facility will run 24-7. The noise will make it impossible for us to enjoy sitting outside at our house or at any common area of the park. Since the facility will run all night, it will seriously impact the ability of many people to sleep. We know that living this close to a mining operation will adversely affect the value of our home. We ask that you vote against this mining operation. We feel that the timing of this meeting has seriously impaired our ability to mobilize a concerted opposition to this operation.

Yours truly, Dianne and Steve Gillies

Yannone, Lyndsay

From: Grohowski, Andrew
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 8:03 AM
To: Yannone, Lyndsay
Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL]: For Immediate Attention: Opposition to Mammoth Grove Mine, Case Number LDCU-2025-29

From: Pamela Larson <pamlarson567@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 1, 2025 5:18 PM
To: Grohowski, Andrew <andrewgrohowski@polkfl.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]: For Immediate Attention: Opposition to Mammoth Grove Mine, Case Number LDCU-2025-29

You don't often get email from pamlarson567@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Attention: Polk County Planning Commissioners and Elected Officials
Re: Opposition to Mammoth Grove Mine, Case Number LDCU-2025-29

Dear Commissioners and Elected Officials,

I ask for your urgent attention on behalf of residents of your area. My name is Pamela Larson, and I am a permanent resident and homeowner in Saddlebag Lake Resort. My family has lived in Saddlebag for 3 generations since the community was established in the 70's. My husband works at Florida's Natural, a key employer in Lake Wales. My family and countless others in Saddlebag have been productive citizens, working, paying taxes, supporting countless businesses while the document pertaining to this proposal quickly made our community irrelevant, not even noting that we are actual homes and residents.

I'm writing to strongly oppose the Conditional Use request for a large Non-Phosphate Mining (Borrow Pit) operation on approximately 855 acres immediately next to my home and the homes of my neighbors. Saddlebag Lake Resort includes nearly 800 homes, and unlike many 55+ communities, we each own the land our homes sit on. This proposed borrow pit threatens the safety, health, property value, and environment of our residents and community.

The applicant's submission is the incorrect description of our community's zoning. The Conditional Use application refers to Saddlebag Lake Resort as "Leisure Recreation." This is factually incorrect. Our properties — including my own — are classified as Residential on our Polk County property tax records. Saddlebag Lake Resort is not a campground, a part-time leisure park, or a transient recreational area. It is a fully established, permanent residential neighborhood where myself at the age of 57 live year-round, We have residents from 55 and up living here and we place a massive amount of tax dollars, votes, support of local businesses and events, as do our numerous guests, into the community for decades. Not to mention letters arrived with a weeks notice before the long holiday weekend.

Mislabeling our community as "Leisure Recreation" minimizes the fact that the proposed mining operation would be placed directly beside hundreds of full-time residential homes, not a recreational park. This misclassification has a direct impact on land-use compatibility assessments and should be considered a serious flaw in the application. I ask that the County recognize this mistake and evaluate the proposal using the correct and legally accurate zoning classification: Residential.

I'm also completely surprised how the Story Rd. facility is somehow used as a comparable to this proposal. If you drive the Story Rd. surrounding areas, it is not at all comparable and back when that was approved, far less information was available about what these sites cause. Placing the proposal up against hundreds of homes is not whatsoever a comparable. Just because one exists does not make another one one **NEXT TO ALMOST 800 HOMES** a good idea, because they are completely opposite.

My mother-in-law is 91 as a Saddlebag permanent resident for over 30 years and has COPD. I have asthma. Dust and fine particulate matter from a borrow pit — even with controls — WILL drift directly into our community. **I can't imagine any of you would have that placed next to your mom, your wife, your sister, where your grandkids play.**

These borrow pits have endless research with proven, terminal, non-reversible life-threatening conditions. This list includes lung cancer, TB, chronic COPD. Please research it yourself. **Look up silicosis.** It is frightening. And the proposal would do that to each and every one of us. Poor air quality triggers respiratory distress, worsens chronic illnesses, and leads to emergency medical situations. **We WON'T have the PPE equipment that the slated 7-10**

employees working right next to our property lines. They are required to wear it but we have NO safety protocols or mention of health in this proposal. Zero. Do you know how that feels to be completely discounted when we are a community that has supported your growth, your elections, for decades?

The operating hours of this proposal is to run 24/7. Can you imagine that in your backyard? And to layer in the dust that the prevailing winds will bring in? **And a report that does not cover at all air quality effects, health effects, health safety for actual residents?** That is ALARMING that it has gotten to this stage.

There are further discrepancies throughout the document such as what operating hours start time is and on wetlands being present.

In addition to the grave health concerns and blatant disregard for us as tax paying, permanent, year-round Florida residents of almost 800 homes – larger than many communities in Lake Wales and surrounding areas- the are documented issues of:

- Water quality
- Wildlife and bird habitat -Did you note that the proposed site will interfere with 1 of only 3 special lands in all of Florida and there is a documented threatened plant?
- Noise pollution from constant heavy machinery engines and digging equipment
- Constant sleep disruption from backup alarms, ground vibration and early morning and long-hour operations

I was in complete shock to read that a traffic study for a short period of time did not assess the reality of driving on Highway 60. Now add 536 Trucks a Day that will that will increase accidents and fatalities. It is already a constant source of accidents, fatalities, and emergency response. We know. We drive it daily. The proposed mining operation plans to add approximately 268 heavy trucks per day entering and exiting Highway 60. These trucks will be pulling out onto a fast-moving highway where vehicles travel well over 65 mph. These trucks, as evident all day at the Story Rd facility, accelerate slowly, damage cars, restrict visibility, create dangerous merging points and require long stopping distances.

The serious Ttreats to Our private well-water supply is real. This issue is critical. Saddlebag Lake Resort operates its own private well-water and sewer systems. We do not have access to city water. A borrow pit of this size adjacent to our homes WILL put in jeopardy: Lowering the water table, reducing or cutting off well-water availability, contaminating the aquifer with fuel, oils, sediment, or subsurface materials, altering underground water flow, pulling contaminants toward our community wells and permanent damage to our drinking-water supply.

If our well water becomes unsafe or depleted, all 800 homes lose safe drinking water — with no alternative source.

Two well respected local real estate agents have noted various ways this will hurt property values. I hope this is not the intention all along was to gain our land hopefully as some have wondered.

I most urgently and respectfully ask EACH OF YOU to do what you know is RIGHT.

1. Deny the Conditional Use request
2. Recognize the application's zoning misclassification
3. Protect the health and safety of residents – **almost 800 homes are WELL OVER 1,000+ residents**
4. Safeguard our well-water supply and lake environment
5. Prevent dangerous increases in truck traffic on Highway 60
6. Protect the property values and financial stability of our community

I implore you to not force us to live in these inevitable conditions.

I emphatically request that proposal LDCU-2025-29 is rejected immediately.

Please protect my neighbors. Please protect my family and friends. **Please do what you would want others to do for your family.**

Thank you in advance for placing the residents of Lake Wales **as our most valuable resource**

Sincerely,

Pamela Larson
5 Catskill Circle
Lake Wales, FL 33898

Yannone, Lyndsay

From: Call, Planner On
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 10:09 AM
To: Yannone, Lyndsay
Subject: Fw: Case number LDCU-2025-29 Mammoth Grove Open Pit Sand Mining

From: cheryl brown <cbrown3445@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 1, 2025 7:26 PM
To: Call, Planner On <PlannerOnCall@polk-county.net>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]: Case number LDCU-2025-29 Mammoth Grove Open Pit Sand Mining

You don't often get email from cbrown3445@hotmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)
Hello,

I, Cheryl Brady, am the co-owner of 4 Silverside Street, in the Saddlebag Lake Resort (SLR), and I strongly oppose LDCU-2025-29 Mammoth Grove Mine which is slated for approval at a Public Hearing on December 3, 2025. I have concerns over some questionable events that have occurred, along with the impact this open pit mining will have on my home.

Questionable Events

1. I live within 500 feet of the proposed burrow mining pit, and I have **NOT** received notice of the December 3, 2025 public hearing. I learned of this hearing from the Saddlebag Lake Homeowners Associations (SLR - HOA) and I find it concerning that all people living within 500 feet of the proposed site were not notified.
2. The notices were received by some residents on Wednesday November 26, 2025. With Thursday being a holiday, and many businesses being closed on Friday, followed by a weekend, leaving 2 business days to consult in preparation of the Wednesday December 3, 2025 meeting.
3. Road Posters were located on the south side of Highway 60. There were no road posters located on the north side of Highway 60, nor on Saddlebag Lake Road, to notify the residents of the December 3, 2025 public hearing regarding the adjacent property.
4. In the application, SLR is identified as a Recreational and Leisure property that would be minimally impacted. SLR is a deeded 55+ residential community. I **own** my property/land and have sole and exclusive use of my property/land, with the common areas managed by the SLR - HOA. There are

nearly 800 residential properties, along with the SLR - HOA common grounds. This is larger than some subdivisions.

The above 4 events appear, whether intentional or not, to be an effort to circumvent any resistance to this application. The initial steps have not demonstrated "Good Faith" with impacted residents and demonstrates a greater likelihood of not following terms, conditions or requirements towards engineering, environmental, and local economical impacts and concerns.

Impacts of open pit mining

1. Destabilizes the nearby ground which will have a significant negative impact on SLR, residents and their homes.
2. Negative impact to ground water levels.
3. Negative impact to the water quality.
4. Negative impact to the Saddlebag Lake.
5. Negative impact to the environment and natural flora and fauna habitat. SLR is home to federally protected/endangered animals.
6. Significant increase on Highway 60 traffic, impacting the health and safety of individuals utilizing the highway.
7. Significant health risks to the residents of SLR with the inhalation of airborne dust, dirt, debris, and chemicals.
8. Significant noise increase, inhibiting the peaceful enjoyment of our homes. Application indicates trucks commencing as early as 4 AM. This will disturb the slumber of many residents.
9. Significant increase in air pollution.
10. Decreases the property value and inhibits residents ability to sell our homes.
11. Decrease of property values should result in a decrease of property tax income for Polk County.
12. Decrease in quality of life for seniors.
13. Negative economic impact of SLR, leading to potential dissolution of the resort, resulting in a downward negative economic impact of Lake Wales.

For the above reasons, I urge the Polk County Commission to **DENY the request LDCU-2025-29** Mammoth Grove mine adjacent to SLR.

Regards,
Cheryl Brady
Saddlebag Lake Resort
4 Silversides Street
Lake Wales, FL