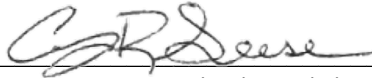


COMMENT/RESPONSE DOCUMENT

**June 26, 2025 Public Hearing
New Centerville Volunteer Fire Department
New Centerville, Pennsylvania**

**Rockwood Stone, LLC
Rockwood Quarry
Large Industrial Minerals Permit Application No. 56250301
NPDES Permit Application PA0279935
Black Township
Somerset County**

Approved:



Cory Seese, District Mining Manager
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of District Mining Operations
Cambria District Office

Compiled By: Michael Schirato, PG
Permits & Technical Services Section
Pennsylvania Department of
Environmental Protection
Bureau of District Mining Operations
Cambria District Office

Date: October 8, 2025

COMMENT/RESPONSE DOCUMENT

Rockwood Stone, LLC
Rockwood Quarry
Large Industrial Minerals Permit Application No. 56250301
NPDES Permit Application PA0279935
Black Township, Somerset County
Public Comment Period Dates: March 22, 2025 through May 12, 2025
June 26, 2025 through July 10, 2025
Public Hearing Date/Time: June 26, 2025, 1:00 pm
Public Hearing Location: New Centerville Volunteer Fire Department, New Centerville, PA

BACKGROUND

Rockwood Stone, LLC has applied for a large industrial minerals permit [Application No. 56250301] for surface mining activities and associated individual National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit [PA0279935] from The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). If approved, the surface permit area would encompass 175 acres and replaced existing Small Noncoal permit number 56190801 and General NPDES Permit number PAM419001 originally issued on May 30, 2019. The new operations, which would be known as the Rockwood Quarry proposes mining 73.1 acres of sandstone and utilizing 28.5 acres for support activities. The application also requests a water withdrawal point on Rhoads Creek for process water use. Stormwater would be discharged to Rhoads Creek, which is classified as cold-water fishery, and all process water will be recycled onsite. No groundwater pumping is proposed for this operation. The draft effluent limits were published in the May 31, 2025 edition of the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. The proposed location of the quarry is 1,100 feet north of the intersection of Markleton School Road (S.R. 3011) and Rockdale Road (S.R. 2016) in Black Township, Somerset County. Access is via a common use road known locally as Substation Road.

Notice of the proposed application was published in the Somerset Daily American on March 22, 29, April 5, and 12, 2025. Notice of receipt of the application was published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin on March 22, 2025. Mountain Watershed Association and Somerset Environment Corps requested a public meeting during the open public comment period. Notice of the public meeting was published in the Somerset Daily American on June 12, 2025, and notice was also published in the June 21, 2025 edition of the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. Eleven people provide written comments or objections during the open public comment period, ten people provide oral statements at the public hearing, and eleven people submitted written comments or objections during the extended public comment period.

Attached is a list of individuals that submitted comments on the application before, during and after the public hearing. Each comment is shown and a response from the DEP follows each comment. The commenter is listed in parentheses after the comment. Where

duplicate comments are received, the DEP response refers to the appropriate comment number that provides a response. Also, the comments and responses are numbered to assist with internal references within this document and do not reflect the order in which comments were made.

A significant number the comments were related to surface and groundwater quality, noise, dust, blasting, the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) trail, and Rockwood's municipal wells, which are addressed under two different DEP programs. The stone processing plant operates under a General Permit issued by the DEP Southwest Air Quality (AQ) program with enforcement by AQ. Other potential sources of dust (roadways transportation, stockpiles, drilling) are subject to AQ standards, with enforcement by the Cambria District Mining Operations (DMO). The mining permit provides the requirements that must be met to ensure compliance with the Federal Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act, Noncoal Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act, Clean Streams Law, and Air Pollution Control Act. The NPDES permit provides the requirements that must be met to ensure compliance with the Federal Clean Water Act, Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law and all applicable regulations promulgated pursuant to these laws. These requirements protect existing and designated uses of the stream which include aquatic life, water supplies, and recreation.

The DEP attendees included: Emily Green, Southwest Region Office of Environmental Justice; Southwest Region Communications Manager; Rocco Giammaria, Southwest Region Local Government Liaison; David Thomas, District Mining Manager, DMO; Shawn McMullen, Environmental Group Manager, DMO, Michael Schirato, PG, Lead Reviewer, DMO, Cory Seese, Mine Inspector Supervisor, DMO, Christine Drobnoek, Mine Conservation Inspector, DMO, and Adam Snyder, Blasting and Explosives Inspector, DMO.

TIMELINE

February 11, 2025: Application received

February 25, 2025: Administrative deficiency letter issued

March 7, 2025: Response to administrative deficiencies received

March 11, 2025: Completeness review complete, application accepted for technical review

March 22, 2025: Notice of Application Received published in Pennsylvania Bulletin

May 1, 2025: Proof of publication received; publication dates March 22, March 29, April 5, and April 12, 2025

May 12, 2025: End of first public comment period

May 14, 2025: Technical deficiency letter issued

June 9, 2025: Response to technical deficiencies received

June 12, 2025: Notice of public meeting published in the Somerset Daily American

June 21, 2025: Notice of public meeting published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin

June 26, 2025: Public meeting held at New Centerville Firehall

July 10, 2025: End of second public comment period.

July 31, 2025: Deficiency email sent regarding June 9 revisions
August 5, 2025: Response to technical deficiency email received
August 14, 2025: Bond request letter sent
September 9, 2025: Bond submitted to Harrisburg
September 23, 2025: Bond approved
October 8, 2025: Permit issued

LIST OF COMMENTORS

(includes all persons who submitted written comments during the open public comment period dates of March 22 through May 12, 2025; and June 26 through July 10, 2025, as well as those that provided testimony during the public hearing)

Commenter	Last Name	First Name	Written	Oral	Date Received
1	Baker	Ashley		Oral	
2	Baltzer	John	Written		6/26/2025
3	Balsley	Jo Ann	Written		5/12/2025
4	Bower	Carter	Written		5/12/2025
5	Cline	Paul	Written		7/10/2025
6	Deskevich	Tracy		Oral	6/26/2025
7	Griffin	Carisa	Written		7/11/2025
8	Harder	Eric		Oral	6/26/2025
9	Ivan	Nancy	Written		7/10/2025
10	Koeberle	Brian	Written		5/12/2025
11	Latuch	Sara	Written		5/9/2025
12	Leisher	Anna	Written	Oral	7/10/2025
13	Leisher	Josiah	Written	Oral	7/10/2025
14	Levy	Susan	Written	Oral	5/12/2025
15	Lindstrom	Lorett	Written		5/12/2025
16	Marshall	Melissa	Written	Oral	5/12/2025 and 7/10/25
17	McMillan	Shea	Written		7/10/2025
18	Perry	Byran	Written		7/10/2025
19	Pletcher	Michael	Written		5/10/2025
20	Race	Robyn	Written		5/13/2025
21	Ricketts	Nate		Oral	6/26/2025
22	Ruddock	Carla	Written	Oral	6/26/2025
23	Soucy	Melissa	Written		7/8/2025
24	Trout	Barbara	Written		5/12/25 and 6/26/2025
25	Webb	Gerald	Written		7/10/2025
26	Wiegmann	Elijah	Written		5/12/2025

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMD – Acid Mine Drainage

AQ –Air Quality (DEP)

DCNR – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

DEP – Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

DMO – District Mining Office (DEP)

E&S – Erosion and Sediment

GAP – Great Allegheny Passage

PENNDOT – Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

NPDES - National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

PA – Pennsylvania

Permittee – Rockwood Stone, LLC

PNDI – Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index

COMMENTS/RESPONSES

1. **Comment:** We go through one million or more gallons of water per year. The school board has concerns that we will be able to maintain access to the same quality and quantity of water that we are used to. (1)

Response: During the review process, DEP considered the effects the permit may have on the hydrologic balance and evaluated the probable hydrologic consequences of issuing this permit as required by 25 Pa. Code § 77.403 Description of hydrology and geology; 77.405 Groundwater information, 77.457 Protection of hydrologic balance; 77.521 General Requirements and Section 7 Permitting as well as Section 9 of the Noncoal Act concerning bonding amount. This included a review by licensed professional geologists with both the Bureau of District Mining Operations and Bureau of Safe Drinking Water for potential impact to Rockwood Borough's municipal wells. Well No.1 is closest to the proposed mining at a distance of 5,000 feet east of the proposed Phase III mining area. Both wells target the Loyalhanna/Burgoon formations which is stratigraphically 660 feet below the proposed quarry floor elevation. In addition, the wells are constructed with 200 plus feet of grouted casing to limit impact from surface water and shallow groundwater. The horizontal and vertical separation of the water bearing zones targeted by the wells severely limits the potential for impact. In addition, the proposed mining area is not located within the recharge area of the wells. Therefore, the mining permit will have no impact on the quality or quantity of Rockwood's wells.

2. **Comment:** Something will go wrong with the quarry and our natural resources will be negatively impacted as well as the lives of those who treasure them. The quarry project is a bad idea for the residence and GAP Trail users. (2)

Response: DMO is required by law to review permit applications such as the Rockwell Stone, LLC's, in accordance with established laws and regulations and the Pennsylvania Constitution. DEP takes seriously its obligations to do this. More specifically, the purpose of the Noncoal Act is to have industry proceed in a manner that "improve[s] the use and enjoyment of the lands," "enhance[s] land use management and planning," "enhance[s] the value of the land for taxation," while protecting "birds and wildlife," "aid[ing] in the prevention of pollution of rivers and streams," "protect[ing] water supply," and "eliminate[ing] hazards to health and safety." 52 P.S. § 3302. DEP has carefully reviewed Rockwood Stone's submissions and technical data which also include correspondence from the township and has asked for more information and verification through a technical deficiency letter where appropriate. DEP has also coordinated its review and shared the information it was provided with various other DEP programs internally to evaluate hydrologic matters unique to this site, air quality concerns, general nuisance questions, surrounding natural resources and recreation concerns as well as the potential impact on the proposed activities on the local community. DEP also discussed the application and shared the material with other state and federal agencies as appropriate. DEP has carefully reviewed and considered public comments and reports submitted with the comments during its review of this application. The permit

application process itself regulatorily required Rockwood Stone to provide extensive detailed information related to the environmental effects of the proposed quarry including general environmental resource information, a description of the hydrogeology and geology, groundwater and surface water information, vegetation, alternative water supply information, and land use considerations 25 Pa Code § 77.401-77.410. The review of this material is discussed throughout this comment response document

3. **Comment:** I am an active biker and value the GAP Trail. It seems that the entrance/exit to this quarry is right on the GAP Trail. I don't want to fathom the unthinkable of what can happen to a biker or walker as trucks enter or exit the area. No matter what warning signs are put in place, something is bound to occur. (3)

Response: Substation Road is a common use road that shares access with the GAP trail for approximately 150 feet. The shared portion of the common use road is located outside of the proposed permit boundary and not within the DEP's jurisdiction. However, DEP can require the permittee to properly maintain the road including all signage. The permittee has already initiated plans to mitigate the shared portion of the trail and is working with the local municipality, County, and PENNDOT to reconstruct the trail with a safety barrier separating vehicular traffic from trail users.

4. **Comment:** The quarry will impact surrounding waters. Sediment from the quarry has already been evident as proven by photos acquired by Mountain Watershed Association. (3)

Response: There have been no known violations of the permittee's erosion and sediment control plan or National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) general permit. The erosion and sediment control issues identified by Mountain Watershed were not associated with the existing small noncoal mining permit and are outside of the jurisdiction of the mining program. The proposed mining permit expansion area includes collection ditches to direct stormwater runoff for all mining affected areas to one of two sediment ponds before being discharged to Rhoads Creek. The sediment ponds are designed to control runoff and sedimentation up to the 10- year 24-hour storm event. All discharges are also subject to effluent limitations. Therefore, impacts to surface waters will be minimized and will not result in increased sediment loadings to the receiving streams.

5. **Comment:** I am concerned with the noise, economy, and for the residence of Rockwood and for the safety of GAP Trail users. (3)

Response: Please see the response to comment 3 concerning trail safety. Module 17.3 of the application addresses noise. Hours of operation are proposed to be 6AM to 4PM Monday through Friday with maintenance and retail sales occurring on Saturdays. The proposed mine site is located on a hilltop surrounded by mature forestland that will provide a natural noise barrier. Best management practices will be utilized by equipment operators at all times to minimize the creation of noise. The proposed processing plant will be located within the pit of the current small noncoal permit. The existing highwalls

will help confine the noise from the processing plant to the pit and as mining advances the active pit highwalls will keep heavy equipment noise stifled. The mining area is situated approximately 800 feet from the GAP trail and 350 feet from the closest residence on top of the hill surrounded by forestland. Therefore, mining operations are not anticipated to disrupt nearby residents or trail users. The quarry will also generate jobs and provide tax revenue to the local municipality which will provide a positive impact on the local economy. Per discussion with the permittee's consultant, Rockwood Stone, LLC anticipates the quarry will employ between 15 and 25 people with other indirect jobs.

6. **Comment:** I am concerned with the proximity of the operation to the Rockwood Area School. Equipment can be heard at 5:30 am and the traffic associated with the quarry is troubling. Trucks have been traveling at unsafe speeds and distances. (4)

Response: Please see the response to comment 5. DEP does not regulate truck traffic safety outside of the permit boundary. Residents may wish to call the local or State Police with concerns regarding enforcement of all traffic laws on public roads.

7. **Comment:** I am also concerned with impacts to the local water table and Rockwood's water supply. (4)

Response: Please see the response to comments 1 (hydrologic balance) and 2. Please see the response to comments 1 (hydrologic balance) and 2 (permit review process).

8. **Comment:** The quarry's exit route crosses a heavily used trail. This is a popular path for cyclists, walkers, and families, and any increased industrial traffic through this area presents a clear safety issue. (4)

Response: Please see the response to comment 3 regarding traffic. The Department does not have jurisdiction over truck traffic outside of the permit boundary. Local and State police enforce all traffic laws on public roads.

9. **Comment:** I am concerned with bald eagles in the area. I typically see them in the area every few weeks but have not seen any since early February. (4)

Response: There are no known bald eagle nesting areas located within or adjacent to the proposed quarry that could be impacted. Bald eagles have been observed nesting in close proximity to other quarries in Pennsylvania with minimal disruption by mining activities.

10. **Comment:** The so-called temporary effects to water quality and levels are not temporary and do create longer term physical damage to the water supply. (5)

Response: DEP considered the effects the permit may have on the hydrologic balance and evaluated the probable hydrologic consequences of issuing this permit and has determined that the quarry will have minimal impact on the quality and quantity of groundwater within and adjacent to the permit area. Water supply impacts are not

anticipated. Please see response to comment 1 (hydrologic balance). However, 25 Pa Code Chapter 77.533 requires the permittee to restore or replace any water supply that is impacted by mining activities and be appropriately bonded to cover the increased operation and maintenance costs should and unanticipated impact occur.

11. **Comment:** My main concern is with the drinking water. My mother used to have grey muddy water until they put a new well in. Will the water still be clean after the quarry goes in. (6)

Response: Please see the response to comments 1 (hydrologic balance), 4 (discharges), 10 (water quality), and 2 (permit review process).

12. **Comment:** The expansion would significantly disrupt the local ecosystem, affecting wildlife habitats, groundwater quality, and the natural landscape. Dust, noise, and vibrations from increased blasting and operations are not only disruptive but potentially damaging to nearby homes, water sources, and local biodiversity. (7)

Response: Please see the response to comment 2 (permit review process).

13. **Comment:** Increased truck traffic, airborne particulates, and noise pollution threaten the well-being of residents particularly vulnerable populations like children and the elderly. We are also deeply concerned about long-term exposure to silica dust and other pollutants known to be associated with quarrying. (7)

Response: Please see the response to comments 5 (noise) and 6 (traffic enforcement). The Air Pollution Control Plan is outlined in Module 17.2 of the permit application. 25PA Code § 123.1 prohibits the emission into the outdoor atmosphere of a fugitive air contaminant from sources but provides exemptions for the following activities:

(1) Construction or demolition of buildings or structures.

(2) Grading, paving and maintenance of roads and streets.

(3) Use of roads and streets. Emissions from material in or on trucks, railroad cars and other vehicular equipment are not considered as emissions from use of roads and streets.

(4) Clearing of land.

(5) Stockpiling of materials.

(6) Open burning operations.

(7) Blasting in open pit mines. Emissions from drilling are not considered as emissions from blasting

The exemptions in bold above are the activities proposed to be conducted by Rockwood Stone, LLC on the Rockwood Quarry. The air quality standard that Rockwood Quarry must meet is that any emissions of fugitive dust from those activities must not be visible at the point the emissions pass outside the permit boundary (see Pa Code § 123.2). The air pollution control plan requires the use of an onsite water truck to suppress fugitive dust from onsite truck traffic and to ensure dust doesn't blow off any stockpiled material. The only activities proposed by Rockwood Stone, LLC as part of the Rockwood Quarry

operations that wouldn't fall under the activities listed above are the crushing and screening of rock. A General Permit (GP3) air quality permit for crushing and screening equipment is required to be obtained from the Department's Air Quality Program. Water sprays will be used to suppress the dust, and conveyor covers and shrouds to block dust from escaping.

The material proposed to be mined at the Rockwood Quarry is sandstone, which are composed predominantly of silicate minerals, of which crystalline quartz would be the primary component. The exposure of Rockwood Quarry, LLC employees to silica when they are working on the site is regulated by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). MSHA established a threshold limit value (TLV) for the protection of workers. The MSHA TLV assumes that mine workers can be safely exposed, without personal protective equipment, to respirable dust at the level of the TLV for a full 8-hour shift each and every workday of their careers. For a sandstone surface mine the existing exposure limit for quartz is 100 micrograms per cubic meter of air ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) for a full-shift exposure, calculated as an 8-hour Time Weighted Average pursuant to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 30 Subchapter K Part 56 Subpart D § 56.5001 and the technical manuals that the regulation references. The state of Pennsylvania has no specific air quality standard for silica dust in ambient air. A 2020 study from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) entitled "Ambient Air Monitoring and Evaluation of Community Health Impacts Near Aggregate Production Operations". That study from TCEQ reviewed the ambient air quality of locations throughout the United States and at locations near "Aggregate Producing Facilities" (APOs) such as the proposed Rockwood Quarry. The TCEQ study did not find any evidence of impacts to ambient air quality from APOs. The TCEQ study is linked below:

[Crystalline Silica, Ambient Air Monitoring and Evaluation of Community Health Impacts Near Aggregate Production Operations \(AS-202\)](#)

The TCEQ study references another study by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Air Quality which was focused on a train loading facility in Tunkhannock, Wyoming County, PA that handled sand used in hydraulic fracturing of gas wells ("frac sand"). That report stated that "Historically, air quality concerns related to this mineral resource, crystalline silica, have been more of an occupational nature rather than of an ambient nature. As such, any airborne silica, which would be captured as a component of the more generalized particulate matter sampling that DEP conducts, had not been identified for specialized sampling." The PADEP study of the facility at Tunkhannock did not find any evidence of ambient air quality impacts from the facility. The report is linked below and included in the Exhibits of this comment response document. Link to PADEP Tunkhannock Study Report:

[Microsoft Word - FINAL Tunkhannock Silica Monitoring Project Report 3-15-2016a](#)

14. **Comment:** This expansion risks degrading the peaceful, rural character of our area and may lead to a decline in property values. Residents who have lived here for generations could see their investment and well-being jeopardized. (7)

Response: Please see the response to comment 2 regarding the rural character. Another quarry operator engaged the economic consulting firm Consult Solutions, Inc. (ESI) to conduct an evaluation of property values in the area around their proposed site. ESI employed a hedonic regression model, commonly used to evaluate the relative importance of a series of variables on a property's value. This analysis was conducted for properties located within 3 miles in (Adams and Franklin Counties Pennsylvania) of the that facility and included 561 residential property transactions during the period 2000 to 2019. ESI concluded that the quarry has not had a negative impact on nearby property values. Another study conducted by The Phoenix Center also undertook a similar analysis for properties surrounding the Rogers Group Quarry near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Across all model specifications the price distance relationship was negative, controlling for other variables, properties at further distance from the quarry tended to have lower prices. In addition, they analyzed the impacts of quarries on property values in Wellington County, Ontario. The analysis found a small positive impact associated with being close to a quarry, meaning prices were slightly higher near the quarry. (*G. Ford and R. Seals, Quarry Operations and Property Values: Revisiting Old and Investigating New Empirical Evidence, The Phoenix Center (March 2018)*). The report is available at the following link:

[PCPP53Final.pdf](#)

15. **Comment:** Has any monitoring been performed in recent years on the discharge near Huskey Haven? (15)

Response: Yes, sample points 3 and 4 represent discharges from the Lower Kittanning mine workings near Huskey Haven. Both DEP and the permittee have obtained background water quality samples from these locations. The permittee's sample results were provided in Module 8.1A of the application. DEP will review the water quality data from these points and any departure from pre-mining quality will be investigated.

16. **Comment:** What are the potential impacts from blasting? (15)

Response: The potential effects of blasting include ground borne and air borne vibrations, as well as gasses produced by the detonation of explosives. 25 Pa. Code §211.151 limits the levels of vibrations experienced by adjacent buildings to levels which have been shown in scientific studies to not cause damage. Blasting gasses will primarily occur at the blast site immediately following detonation of the blast and will dissipate over time. Blasting gasses are prohibited from affecting the health or safety of individuals by 25 Pa. Code §211.152.

17. **Comment:** Maybe an existing use study should be performed on Rhoads Creek to determine if an updated use designated is necessary? (15)

Response: Although the project was cleared beforehand, the fish commission completed a stream survey on Rhoads Creek as part of the application review and didn't find any indications of the longnose sucker which was the species identified as of concern in the

PNDI review. In addition, the overall biomass was low for the surveyed sections of stream. The designated and existing use of Rhoads Creek is cold water fishes. You can petition DEP to change the designated use provided that the redesignation is not less restrictive than the existing uses. The procedures for petitioning DEP are outlined in Chapter 4 of the Water Quality Antidegradation Implementation Guidance (TGD 391-0300-002) and would require a regulatory change.

18. **Comment:** Sounds like there are different regulations between limestone and sandstone mining. (15)

Response: The regulatory requirements for noncoal mining activities can be found at 25 Pa Code Chapter 77. There is no difference in regulatory permitting requirements between various noncoal minerals.

19. **Comment:** Wetlands have been missed on some of the delineated stream segments. (15)

Response: DEP has not verified the accuracy of the wetland mapping outside of the proposed permit boundary since no earth disturbance is authorized outside of the permit boundary. DEP did identify one small wetland area within the permit boundary near sediment pond 2. The location of the wetland was included in the revised exhibits received June 9, 2025. The closest mining activity to Rhoads Creek will occur at the proposed water withdrawal point. No wetlands were identified along Rhoads Creek at this location. No impacts to potential wetlands located downstream of the proposed discharge locations is anticipated. Therefore, DEP did not require delineation outside of the permit area.

20. **Comment:** A water well was drilled at the bottom of the access road. How does this fit into the mining project? (15)

Response: The water well referenced is not located within the proposed permit and is not proposed to be used for mining activities. Any future request to utilize the well for mining activities will require a permit revision.

21. **Comment:** There have been instances where the existing mining has gone outside of the permit boundary. Will there be increased inspections and oversight? (15)

Response: DEP issued a cessation order on April 28, 2025 for failure to abide by the terms and conditions of the permit and required the disturbed area be immediately reclaimed and the permittee has complied with the order. At a minimum, DEP will strive to conduct inspections on a quarterly basis for the proposed Rockwood Quarry consistent with the inspection frequency of other mine facilities of similar type. Additional inspections will occur when staffing availability permits.

22. **Comment:** The permittee should go above and beyond the regulatory requirements for pre-blast surveys. (15)

Response: 25 Pa. Code §77.562 requires the operator to offer preblasting surveys to dwelling or structure owners within 1,000 feet of the area where blasting will occur. This requirement only applies if the operator exceeds the vibration limit found 25 Pa. Code §77.562(a)(3)(ii) or if the operator does not wish to provide a seismograph report for each blast, regardless of whether a seismograph would otherwise be required. Presently, blasting activity does occur on the small noncoal mining operation. The operator has successfully conducted compliant blasting to-date. Furthermore, the blasting activity should advance further away from occupied dwellings adjacent to the operation.

23. **Comment:** What do the seismograph readings from the small noncoal quarry look like so far? (15)

Response: All vibration levels have been in compliance with regulatory limits.

24. **Comment:** The GAP trail brings tourism into Rockwood. One million to 1.4 million people utilize the bike trail. To even consider rerouting it due to safety and blasting concerns disrupts the natural flow of the bike trail, and loss of revenue for Rockwood, which is a major resting point for trail users, such as myself. I find this very disturbing that rerouting the bike trail is being considered. (16)

Response: Please see the response to comments 3 (traffic) and 14 (economics). The trail is not proposed to be rerouted but rather separated from the common use road.

25. **Comment:** The creek has finally been clean, and fish are breeding. How can it even be considered to ruin the water quality, all in the name of this unsafe processing quarry? How would the water be monitored? I hope not just once a year. (16)

Response: Please see the response to comments 1 (hydrologic balance) and 2 (review of the application) and 10 (water quality). DEP is prohibited from issuing a permit where there is presumptive evidence of pollution to waters of the Commonwealth. Module 8 of the application includes the proposed monitoring program. The monitoring program includes quarterly measurement of quality and quantity of various surface water points and springs. In addition, to permittee sampling, DEP periodically collects samples from the monitoring points. All surface water discharges from the sediment ponds must meet the effluent limits outlined in the issued permit. Twice monthly samples are required during discharge and the results are reported to the DEP quarterly. In addition, DEP collects effluent samples during complete inspections when outfalls are discharging.

26. **Comment:** People have the right to clean air and water. Blasting and sandstone mining do not contribute to clean air or clean water. (16)

Response: Please see the response to comments 2 (permit review process) and 13 (air quality).

27. **Comment:** My family owns a vacation home at King's Mountain Resort near Rockwood. We consider the GAP trail as our home trail. I was shocked to see the entrance to the quarry sharing a portion of the trail. We have seen nonstop speeding of trucks from the Jim Mountain Quarry and don't want to see this type of dangerous activity close to our beloved trail and the town of Rockwood. Tourism is a major cultural and financial impact to our local community and the economy. (10)

Response: Please see the response to comments 3 (traffic), 8 (traffic enforcement), and 14 (economics).

28. **Comment:** I frequently recreate in this area, kayaking, on the Casselman River and enjoy the nearby bike trail with friends. I am concerned about the mine expansions impact on water quality. (11)

Response: Please see the response to comments 2 (permit review process) and 25 (sampling requirements).

29. **Comment:** Public meetings in my experience have more notice that was given for this meeting and are accommodating to working families. (12)

Response: 25 Pa Code Chapter 77 requires DEP to hold a public meeting if requested within 60-days of the close of the public comment period. DEP published the meeting notice in the Somerset Daily American two weeks prior to the meeting date. In addition, DEP provided notice to persons requesting the meeting on June 9th. The public comment period was extended two weeks following the meeting date to allow persons unable to attend the meeting the opportunity to provide written comments to DEP for consideration. Written comments are given the same weight as oral comments provide during the public meeting.

30. **Comment:** The intersection of Rockdale Road and the trail is already problematic. The applicant intends to reroute the trail and contribute to the community. What does the design process look like, and will the community be involved? The existing curve on Rockdale Road doesn't accommodate the turning radius of the heavy trucks and requires hopping the curve to get around. A traffic study should be performed at the intersection of the GAP Trail and Rockdale Road. The public should have the opportunity to comment on this study. How many trucks are there going to be? What do they look like? What are the impacts on the roads and water infrastructure? (12)

Response: Please see the response to comment 3 regarding traffic. The trail realignment is outside of the proposed mining permit area and DEP does not have regulatory authority over the proposed realignment or vehicular traffic outside of the permit area. The number and type of trucks will vary depending on market conditions. According to the permittee's consultant, the estimated number of trucks entering the quarry daily is 15-20 trucks at full quarry development. Per the county, the permittee's consultant is working on a plan to shift the trail slightly to the north by excavating the bank down to the existing roadway elevation and reconstructing the trail with concrete barriers separating

vehicular and trail traffic. The county's engineer is preparing the highway occupancy permit for the project and construction will commence upon PENNDOT approval of the highway occupancy permit.

31. **Comment:** Please have literature available at prominent locations and business in the community that explains the project to the layperson and provide the opportunity for commenting via paper forms as well as web forms. (12)

Response: The regulations require the permittee to provide a copy of the application for inspection within the county where the mining activity will occur. A copy of all application materials was made available at the Somerset County Conservation District, 6024 Glade Pike, Suite 103, Somerset, PA 15501. In addition, a copy is available at the Cambria District Mining Office, 286 Industrial Park Road, Ebensburg, PA 15931 and digital copy was provided to Mountain Watershed Association. DEP accepts public comments via email, letter, written, or oral statements. We currently do not have the capability to accept via web forms.

32. **Comment:** Require valiant effort to reach all Black Township/Rockwood residents and business owners explaining the proposed expansion and expand the public comment period to August 11, 2025. (12)

Response: The applicant met the public notice requirements found in 25 Pa Code § 77.121. Please also see the response to comment 26 (public meeting).

33. **Comment:** Require the trail realignment planning process include and extensive stakeholder and public engagement process. (12)

Response: Please see the response to comments 3 (traffic) and 30 (trail alignment).

34. **Comment:** I am concerned with the proposed outfall upstream on Rhoads Creek and the impact to the waterway and potentially making it unsafe for children and wildlife. How will the outfall be balanced with the ecology of Rhoads Creek? (13)

Response: Please see the response to comments 1 (hydrologic balance) 2 (permit review process), 4 (surface water impacts), and 25 (sampling requirements).

35. **Comment:** What kind of explosives will be used and how will the residual affect my children who swim in the creek. (13)

Response: The blasting contractor will be using commercial excavating explosives typically consisting of detonator units, a high explosive charge, and ammonium nitrate (fertilizer) based blasting agents. When the blast is detonated the explosives are consumed and there is typically no residual material remaining. (13)

36. **Comment:** The initial project has destroyed wetlands and as of today there has been no restoration. (13)

Response: DEP is unaware of any wetlands being destroyed under the initial small noncoal permit. Any effects from the timbering or road improvements should be brought to the attention of the Somerset County Conservation District and/or field operations out of the DEP's Southwest Regional Office.

37. **Comment:** It seems like a conflict of interest to have a botany survey completed by the same firm and staff that conducted the PNDI. Their qualifications were not included on any survey reports. Please delineate the peak time for Actea plant. It's found in August and the identification did not happen then. (13)

Response: DEP relies on the DCNR recommendation for reviewing threatened and endangered species under their jurisdiction during permit reviews. In a letter dated March 9, 2022, DCNR requested a field survey be completed for mountain bugbane and Fraser's sedge by a qualified surveyor and that approved DCNR survey protocols be followed. Field surveys were completed on May 23, June 3, and September 9, 2022, by Amanda Deal and John Pile and a final report submitted for review January 13, 2023. Both are qualified to complete surveys for DCNR review and followed DCNR protocols for conducting the survey. Upon review of the report DCNR issued a clearance letter dated February 15, 2023, indicating no impacts and no further review required. A new PNDI was completed on May 31, 2023, that encompassed additional acreage. At the request of DCNR in a letter dated May 31, 2023, a second field survey for the additional acreage was completed on July 24, 2023, and a final report submitted to DCNR for review on December 6, 2023. DCNR issued a second clearance letter dated December 13, 2023, indicating no impacts and no further review required. Based on DCNR's recommendation, DEP determined that no impacts will occur to either mountain bugbane or Fraser's sedge from the proposed quarry.

38. **Comment:** Are there any concerns with the Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle Protection Act. 16 U.S.A Code 668-668d, mainly 50 CFR 22.6? (13)

Response: Please see the response to comment 9 regarding bald eagles.

39. **Comment:** A change in classification from limestone to sandstone seems to change the required buffer. Has the project title changed on the application to avoid the 5,280 foot that will require monitoring and action for most homes in Rockwood? Why is the buffer area unclear on the maps? Why are there no studies mentioning the buffer zone? (13)

Response: Please see the response to comment 18 regarding permitting requirements. There are no regulatory requirements for a buffer other than the distance limitations outlined in Chapter 77 which apply to all types of noncoal mining activities. Distance limitation for noncoal mining activities are outlined in 25 Pa Code § 77.504, 77.562 outlines the requirements for pre-blast surveys, and 77.454 outlines the requirements for mapping. § 77.454(a) requires the mapping to include all areas within 1,000 feet of the permit boundary unless otherwise approved by DEP.

40. **Comment:** How does the project hinder the county-wide comprehensive plan including potential impacts to the trail and town of Rockwood? Please provide studies to show that the project aligns with outdoor recreation as directed in the adopted comprehensive plan. (13)

Response: The applicant provide notice to the Township and County via certified mail of the proposed project and indicated in the application that the application was consistent the adopted local and county land use planning. DEP also notified the Township and County of receipt of the application. Neither the Township nor County has responded indicating that the project is inconsistent with approved plans.

41. **Comment:** Please define the contamination and volume of pollutants that will be released onto Rhoads Creek. What protections is offered to me as a homeowner that is threatened by rise in volume of the creek. How will erosion be handled at my property line. (13)

Response: The permit application and background sampling has indicated that iron, manganese, aluminum, sulfate, and sediment (suspended solids) may be present in the discharge. Effluent limits have been established for these parameters and may not exceed the following effluent limitations:

Iron: 30-day average of 1.5 mg/L, daily maximum of 3.0 mg/L and instantaneous maximum of 3.7 mg/L

Manganese: 30-day average of 1.0 mg/L, daily maximum of 2.0 mg/L and instantaneous maximum of 2.5 mg/L

Aluminum: instantaneous maximum of 0.75 mg/L

Total Suspended Solids: 30-day average of 35.0 mg/L, daily maximum of 70.0 mg/L and instantaneous maximum of 90.0 mg/L

The operation does not propose to mine below the water table. Therefore, groundwater pumping will not occur. Surface water will be directed to one of two sediment ponds to be constructed that are designed to handle the 10-year 24-hour storm. Most stormwater will be retained onsite in the active pit, sediment ponds or reused on site decreasing the likely hood of a discharge from the stormwater control facilities. There will be no increased discharge above the 10-year 24-hour storm since this runoff would naturally report to Rhoads Creek.

42. **Comment:** Require verification of the protocols for the environmental botanical survey have been adhered to by a firm other than Earthtech. (13)

Response: Please see the response to comment 37 regarding botany survey.

43. **Comment:** If public water could be affected, please ensure that the applicant is bonded for the associated cleanup and restoration of water services for Rockwood water customers. (13)

Response: Please see the response to comment 1 regarding and comment 10 regarding water restoration.

44. **Comment:** Please define the expansion plans for Phase 2 and Phase 3. (13)

Response: The permittee has chosen to mine and bond the permit in phases. Therefore, outside of E&S controls, mining plans are only required for Phase I of the operation at this time. The permittee will be required to submit a permit revision and bonding increment application to DEP prior to affecting Phase II or Phase III. The mining plans will be detailed in the revision package if mining is pursued in Phase II or Phase III. However, DEP did factor in mining within Phase II and III when considering the probable hydrologic consequences of issuing this permit.

45. **Comment:** The proposed routing of 70-80 trucks per day directly onto the trailhead sets the stage for potential disaster. A different access road was originally proposed. The total impact of all options should be considered before approval was given to use Substation Road. Bikes at the intersection will be unable to see up and down the road before crossing. There is some discussion on rerouting the trail, but no details were provided. (14)

Response: Please see the response to comment 30 regarding the number of trucks utilizing the quarry daily. The application received proposed to use Substation Road as the access point and the regulations allow for use of common use roads for access to noncoal mining permits. Please see the response to comments 3 (traffic) and 30 (trail realignment).

46. **Comment:** Visitors passing through will have no knowledge of blasting or warnings. Bikers and hikers could potentially be hit with falling debris. (14)

Response: 25 Pa. Code §77.564 requires that audible warning signals be sounded prior to the blast which are audible within 1,000 feet of the blast. Warning signs must be placed at the entrance(s) to the permit area which warn of explosive use and explain the meaning of the audible warning signals. Any areas subject to flyrock must be guarded to protect the public and livestock. Flyrock, which includes overburden, stone, clay or other material cast from the blast site through the air or along the ground, is prohibited from being cast beyond the permit boundary or the blast area by 25 Pa. Code §211.151(b).

47. **Comment:** Will trucks be washed and if so, where? Will it result in mud and rocks on the trail or roadway that poses hazards to bikers? (14)

Response: A truck wash is not included in the application. Substation Road has been paved from Rockdale Road to the scale house. Commercial and retail sale vehicles will be traveling on paved or gravel roadways before entering onto public roadways or the trail. In addition, Rockwood must comply with 25 Pa Code § 123.1(c) which requires it to take reasonable action to prevent particulate matter from becoming airborne which includes but is not limited to prompt removal of earth or other material from paved streets

onto which earth or other material has been transported by truck or earth moving equipment, erosion by water or other means.

48. **Comment:** Sandstone containing silica has been known to cause cancer. (14)

Response: Please see the response to comment 13 regarding air quality.

49. **Comment:** All stakeholders including trail users and local businesses should have the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed trail rerouting. A traffic light should be installed with physical barriers separating bikes. Bikers should have priority crossing the road. (14)

Response: Please see the response to comments 3 (vehicular traffic), 8 (traffic enforcement), and 30 (trail realignment).

50. **Comment:** Signs should be placed along the trail warning about blasting and the blasting schedule. (14)

Response: Please see the response to comment 46 (warning signs).

51. **Comment:** Blasting should be limited to Monday to Friday. (14)

Response: There are no regulations limiting the days of the week when blasting may occur.

52. **Comment:** Ensure that air pollution control plans are followed and install independently monitored air quality monitors along the trail. (14)

Response: Adherence to the dust control aspects of the operation is regularly reviewed by the mining program during the course of our field inspections. The operator may also be subject to inspection by AQ due to the stone processing activities proposed on this permit. The mining program will monitor this operation and consider dustfall monitoring in consultation with the AQ when field conditions indicate a regulatory issue may exist. Please also refer to comment 14 regarding air quality.

53. **Comment:** Require an alternate access to the quarry. (14)

Response: 25 PA Code 77.633 allows or the use of common use roads for access to noncoal mining permits. Please see the response to comment 3 regarding traffic.

54. **Comment:** I drove by where the road is going to go to the quarry and was surprised that it is going right off the GAP Trail access Road. I feel this is not a good place to access the quarry. The GAP is often used by families and where GAP trail crosses Rockdale Road is dangerous. Adding truck traffic is going to lead to a disaster with someone getting hurt or worse yet, killed. They need to find another way to access the quarry. (15)

Response: Please see the response to comments 3 (traffic), 8 (traffic enforcement), 30 (trail realignment) and 45 (access).

55. **Comment:** Although this mine is the exact same as a full surface mine, this permit gives you less protection that you would receive if you lived near a coal surface mine. Because the mine is 30 feet above and underground mine void, we are inherently taking on the same risks that you would if you lived near a coal surface mine with far fewer protections. (16)

Response: Please see the response to comment 18 regarding noncoal permitting. Mining activities are proposed within the coal measures with the presence of an abandoned Lower Kittanning deep being located approximately 110 feet below the proposed final quarry floor elevation (180 feet below ground surface). As such DEP required the permittee to conduct overburden analysis to assess for the potential to generate acid mine drainage as is required on coal mining permits. The overburden analysis is contained in Module 7 of the permit application and did not identify any sulfur bearing zones above DEP's 0.5% sulfur threshold. Therefore, there is a low probability for the sandstone to produce acid mine drainage. The 110-foot vertical separation between the final quarry floor and the Lower Kittanning mine works is sufficient to prevent hydraulic connection with the abandoned mine. Background water quality data has been collected from the mine discharge to evaluate any potential effects from the proposed mining.

56. **Comment:** If this were a coal mine everyone within a half mile would be entitled to a pre-mining survey including costs for water supply testing and people don't have the time or money to do their own testing. We are not getting water supply inventories around the area. (16)

Response: 25 Pa Code Chapter 77.562 outlines the requirements for pre-blast surveys. All public and private water supplies located within 1,000 feet of the permit boundary must be inventoried. Module 8.2(A)(8) contains information on the private water supplies inventoried for this permit. Background water quality samples were collected from all the private water supplies inventoried and static water levels were collected from all but two wells, which were inaccessible for measurement. Most residences in the area are connected to public water.

57. **Comment:** If this were a coal mine and there is any chance of causing AMD, they must post a bond to cover the increased amount so that taxpayers don't cover the cost of the remediation and restoration of water supplies in perpetuity. (16)

Response: 25 Pa Code § 77.126(a)(3) prohibits DEP from issuance of a permit if there is presumptive evidence of pollution to waters of the Commonwealth. Please see the response to comment 1 (hydrologic balance) and comment 55 (overburden analysis).

58. **Comment:** For noncoal permits there is just one permit issued for the mining activity until mining and reclamation is completed years from now. It seems like there is a lot of involvement and opportunity for oversight from DEP and for protection of the environment. (16)

Response: Noncoal permits do not require a permit renewal unless not activated within 3-years of issuance. However, the NPDES permit must be renewed every five years until reclamation is completed and no further discharge will occur. In addition, any changes or revisions to the permit or bond liability require DEP review and approval. In addition, the permit is subject to quarterly inspection by compliance staff. The mining permit also requires a hydrologic monitoring plan with sampling results submitted to/and reviewed by DEP quarterly.

59. **Comment:** Quarries are never good for the communities or the Laurel Highlands. We need to protect our waterways and great outdoors. (17)

Response: Please see the response to comment 2 regarding permit review process.

60. **Comment:** We're supportive of small business owners up and down the GAP and want to seem the flourish. I'd like to urge the quarry operator and DEP to be diligent, thoughtful, and conservative in considering any expansion efforts, keeping the viewshed, adjacent rivers, forests, neighboring business, local water quality, and the concerns of the safety of the local residents, and trial travelers prioritized and top of mind. (18)

Response: Please see the response to comment 2 regarding permit review.

61. **Comment:** I lived in the Rockwood area my whole life. A project like this is going to bring noise, dust and water pollution to an already stressed area. My local watershed is contaminated with lead and cadmium from commercial activities. What kind of legacy are we leaving for future generations of people and animals? (19)

Response: Please see the response to comments 2 (permit review), 5 (noise), and 13 (air quality).

62. **Comment:** My family hikes and bikes the trail regularly. I also kayak on the Casselman River. I observed increased truck traffic and dust near the quarry. I am concerned that the expansion will result in increased air and noise pollution in the area. Additionally, I am concerned about the Casselman Rive and local water supplies. (20)

Response: Please see the response to comments 1 (hydrologic balance, 2 (permit review), 5 (noise), 10 (water quality), and 13 (air quality).

63. **Comment:** The permittee has received violations resulting in a cessation order. This raises concerns over the operator's compliance history and ability to manage the expansion responsibly. (20)

Response: Please see the response to comment 21 regarding oversight. The permittee appeared to have some confusion surrounding the conditions of the small noncoal permit. Subsequent meetings appear to have instilled an understanding of interpreting and abiding by the permit to the operator. The Surface Mine Conservation Inspector assigned to this site will be aware of the permittee's compliance history and monitor quarry development regularly.

64. **Comment:** Expanding the quarry would threaten the community water resources, cause air pollution and threaten the quality of life and recreation opportunities in the immediate area. (21)

Response: Please see the response to comments 1 (hydrologic balance), 2 (permit review), 5 (noise), 10 (water quality), 12 (quality of life), and 13 (air quality).

65. **Comment:** The blasting zone is immediately next to a number of homes that depend on private wells for water. The municipal authority's wells are less than one mile away. (21)

Response: Numerous scientific studies into the effects of blasting on residential water wells have been conducted, primarily by government agencies. The most extensive study was conducted by Philip R. Berger and Associates under contract to the former US Bureau of Mines. The study evaluated a total of 24 wells located primarily in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and Indiana including a well in Brotherton, Somerset County. The study authors found that, aside from occasional temporary increases in turbidity, there were no permanent physical vibration effects observed on the wells even when vibration levels far exceeded those allowed under Pennsylvania regulations. Other federally and state funded studies have reported similar results.

66. **Comment:** The site sits 110 feet above an abandoned coal mine, which is notoriously toxic. (21)

Response: Please see the response to comment 55 regarding overburden analysis.

67. **Comment:** Residents have already seen mud trucked onto the trail and Rockdale Road as well as large sediment plumes in Rhoads Creek and the Casselman River. (21)

Response: Much of the initial mud tracking appeared to be related to timbering traffic. The application contains measures including paving the entrance way to the quarry and use of gravel to control mud from entering public roadways. Runoff from the small noncoal permit area is mainly directed into the pit or alternate E&S controls. DEP is unaware of any runoff issues with the small noncoal permit. It is possible that runoff issues exist or had existed with the timbering and road improvement projects. Any effects from the timbering or road improvement projects should be brought to the attention of the Somerset County Conservation District and/or field operations out of

the DEP's Southwest Regional Office. Please also see response to comment 47 regarding dragout.

68. **Comment:** DEP Should require the installation of offsite monitoring wells and post monthly water levels and chemistry from the wells and Rhoads Creek on DEP and EPA's webpage. (21)

Response: The proposed mining plan does not extend below the local water table. Therefore, DEP determined that groundwater monitoring wells were not necessary.

69. **Comment:** The permittee is not abiding by his blast plan. (21)

Response: There have been no known violations of the permittee's current blast plan.

70. **Comment:** Residence reported no warning signals prior to blasts. (21)

Response: Under 25 Pa. Code, Chapter 77, audible warning signals are only required to be heard out to a distance of 1,000' feet from the blast area. Additionally, audible blast warning signals are not intended to be heard from inside of buildings or homes.

71. **Comment:** When residents reported these blasts to DEP the reporting party indicated that they were told that the operator reports his blasting and has no records of any blast. (21)

Response: It is common for private individuals to use unregulated "explosive" products like Tannerite which can produce shaking in nearby homes and cause an audible sound which may seem similar to blasting at permitted mines. DEP has no regulatory authority over private individuals using these types of products on private property. When investigating citizen concerns near surface mines, to determine whether the mine was involved, DEP requests and reviews the blast reports for the mine site. The blasting contractor is required to produce a complete, written record of each blast by 25 Pa. Code §211.133. The record includes information like date, time, blast loading parameters, the amount and type of explosives used, seismograph monitoring results, and other information which would be necessary to allow DEP to recreate the events and conditions surrounding each blast. If a blast report does not exist for the date and time the resident reported the explosion, and there is no other evidence of blasting activity on the site, it becomes reasonable to check for non-mine blasting related causes. However, because DEP does not have authority to trespass on private property, DEP is limited to contacting nearby emergency responders and observing for signs of unregulated material use from public roads. To-date DEP has investigated every blasting complaint relating to the small noncoal mining operation. No evidence of illegal blasting activity has been identified during the course of those investigations.

72. **Comment:** DEP should require a third party to install a seismograph and publish monthly records on DEP and EPA's webpage. (21)

Response: 25 Pa. Code § 211.172 and § 211.173 set requirements for monitoring instruments and monitoring records. The regulations specify the construction standards for monitoring instruments, require instruments to be calibrated annually by the manufacturer, require that the operator of the instrument must be trained in its use, and specify the contents of the monitoring records. The regulations also specify that if DEP questions the validity of a monitoring record DEP can require the record to be analyzed or certified by a third-party consultant not related to the blasting activity permittee. However, the regulations do not have provisions allowing DEP to require the installation of a third-party seismograph. Regarding publishing seismograph results on the DEP website, DEP currently does not have a system in place which would allow for posting of seismograph results to the website. However, the DEP blasting inspector will be routinely reviewing blasting reports, including seismograph records, to ensure compliance with the regulations. The Federal Office of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) is the federal regulatory authority which covers the use of explosives. EPA does not have any regulatory authority over the use of explosives. DEP has no authority to require ATF to publish monthly seismograph records.

73. **Comment:** DEP should require pre-blast surveys for all structures within 1,000 feet. (21)

Response: Please see the response to comment 22 regarding preblasting surveys.

74. **Comment:** Heritage Coal and Natural Resources filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on March 30th of this year. Who is going to pay for remediation of this site or is it going to fall back on taxpayers? (22)

Response: Heritage Coal and Natural Resources, LLC has no affiliation with Rockwood Stone, LLC. Prior to issuance of the permit, the permittee is required to post a bond to cover the reclamation liability of the permit.

75. **Comment:** The Great Allegheny Passage is a protected land which should receive protection through legal and other means because of its recognized natural, ecological, and cultural value. Once the coal mine is breached and the discharge is established, it will require perpetual treatment. Who is going to take responsibility to monitor, maintain, and treat the discharge? (22)

Response: Please see the response to comments 2 (permit review), 55 (overburden analysis), and 57 (permit issuance).

76. **Comment:** Just below the site is a public water supply area. If anything happens to the discharge on Rhoads Creek, it's going to go into the Casselman and affect drinking water. (22)

Response: Please see the response to comments 1 (hydrologic balance), 10 (water quality) and 41 (pollutants). The first surface water intake is located over thirty miles downstream of the proposed outfalls. Rockwood's municipal wells are located approximately 5,000 feet upgradient of the Phase III mining area.

77. **Comment:** The PNDI documents submitted with the application are actually expired. (22)

Response: The application contained two PNDI clearance submittals. The first was filed on February 22, 2022, and the second was filed on May 31, 2023. PNDI reviews are valid for two years. Therefore, the second PNDI was valid at the time of application submittal.

78. **Comment:** If the permit is issued, it should be subject to increased inspections. (22)

Response: At a minimum, DEP will strive to conduct inspections on a quarterly basis consistent with the inspection frequency of other mine facilities of similar type. Additional inspections will occur when staffing availability permits. Rockwood Stone, LLC is also required to submit quarterly discharge monitoring reports and hydrologic monitoring reports to DEP.

79. **Comment:** The depth between the mining and the abandoned mine should be increased, water testing for private water supplies paid for by the company. (22)

Response: Please see the response to comment 1 (hydrologic balance), 55 (overburden analysis) and 57 (permit issuance). The interval between the Lower Kittanning mine workings is 110 feet from the proposed final quarry floor elevation and not from ground surface. This depth is sufficient to limit the hydrologic connection. Sampling and testing of all water private water supplies in use within the 1,000 feet of the permit boundary has been completed as required by the regulations. Water sampling and testing results are contained in Module 8 of the application. The water monitoring program is also outlined in Module 8 and contains upstream, midstream, downstream, monitoring locations on Rhoads Creek.

80. **Comment:** Data loggers should be installed upstream and downstream of all outfalls and the data shared with Mountain Watershed. (22)

Response: Based on a thorough review of the application, continuous stream monitoring is not warranted. Please see the response to comment 1 (hydrologic balance, 2, (permit review), 4 (surface water impacts), and 25 (sampling requirements). All monitoring data collected during the life of the permit will be available for public review at the Cambria District Office upon request.

81. **Comment:** My concerns are what is going to happen to the roads in another five years after all this heavy truck traffic is going back and forth on them. Who is going to pay for them to be repaired and the upkeep. Also, what's going to happen when school opens,

and the school buses are sharing the roads with these monster dump trucks tailgating them. If you expand this quarry, there will be many, many more dump trucks on the road. The trucks are bringing dust and rock debris down from the quarry because they don't clean the trucks off before they leave. Who will be responsible for Cleaning these roads? (23)

Response: DEP does not regulate truck traffic outside of the permit boundary. Questions concerning road maintenance should be directed to PENNDOT. Traffic violations and enforcement should be directed to the local police department. The application contains measures including paving the entrance way to the quarry and use of gravel to control mud from entering public roadways. Please refer to the response to comment 47 regarding drag out.

82. **Comment:** Why should we give this person the rights to change water wells and the rail trail? They were here first and no amount of moving things and words is going to convince me that things will be okay in the future. (23)

Response: Please see the response to comments 1 (hydrologic balance), 3 (traffic), 10 (water quality), 24 (trail realignment), and 25 (sampling requirements).

83. **Comment:** If you're watching the trucks bring dust and rock debris down from the quarry because they don't wash their trucks before leaving. Who will be responsible for cleaning the roads? (23)

Response: Please see the response to comment 47 regarding drag out.

84. **Comment:** I do not believe that the river is not going be affected and the flora and fauna over a period of time. He has broken the rules already more than once. What is to say he's not going to break them in the future. Will we need a constant watchdog to make sure he abides by the rules. (23)

Response: Please see the response to comments 58 and 63 regarding compliance.

85. **Comment:** I hope we have another opportunity so more people can voice their opinion. The meeting in the middle of the day was a rotten deal because a lot of people wanted to come but had to work and they had a lot to say. Why not give them a chance to have their say. (23)

Response: Please see the response to comment 29 regarding public comment.

86. **Comment:** My house, swimming pool, deck, and have all be shaken from the blasts and I'm concerned about the damage that could be done to them. (24)

Response: Extensive studies have been done both in the United States as well as internationally by both government and private groups into the effects of blasting

vibrations on buildings and other structures. The former US Bureau of Mines conducted numerous blasting vibration studies, including a study of the effects of multiple blasts over time. The studies found that the potential for blasting damage to homes was only possible if the vibration levels exceed the damage threshold for the given building material. Materials like concrete and drywall are more resilient to blasting vibration than older materials like plaster on lathe walls. Pennsylvania has adopted regulations at 25 Pa. Code §211.151 which limit both ground vibration and air vibration to levels which have been shown in the studies to protect even older building materials, like plaster on lathe walls. Many of the studies can be found on the DEP website, free to the public, at the following link:

[Blasting Research Papers | Department of Environmental Protection | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)

87. **Comment:** I am concerned about our well water, house foundation, silica dust, and Rhoads Creek. (24)

Response: Please see the response to comments 2 (permit review), 4 (surface water impacts), 13 (air quality), 25 (sampling requirements), 41 (pollutants), and 86 (blasting).

88. **Comment:** The proposed quarry will be abutting my property. The proposed sediment ponds are directly behind my house, which concerns me. I would ask that you not allow this to come so close to my property and my neighbor's property. (24)

Response: All ponds constructed on the permit require design specifications approved by DEP and as-built certification by a registered professional engineer or land surveyor. Once constructed, all ponds and ditches are regularly inspected by the permittee and also visually inspected by the mine conservation inspector quarterly.

89. **Comment:** We have experienced problems with access to our property, Mr. Svonavec and others associated with the quarry have been speeding up the road, and mud is going onto the bike trail. (24)

Response: Any effects from the timbering or road improvements should be brought to the attention of the Somerset County Conservation District and/or field operations out of the DEP's Southwest Regional Office. Any access or speeding related issues should be brought to the attention of the local police. Please refer to the response to comment 47 regarding drag out

90. **Comment:** DEP should be concerned with the damage this quarry will cause. There are major waterways nearby that have already suffered from pollution and the quarry will only enhance those problems. (24)

Response: Please see the response to comments 25 (sampling requirements) and 41 (pollutants).

91. **Comment:** The trailhead is another concern. People come to enjoy biking and hiking, and we don't want to have the trail moved so greedy people can make money. (24)

Response: Please see the response to comments 3 (regulatory review) and 30 (trail realignment).

92. **Comment:** There is certainly a lot of corruption in Somerset County seeing as how this permit was approved and no homeowners on Eagle Hill were made aware of it until they started working on the quarry. (24)

Response: Notice of issuance of small noncoal permit number 56190801 was published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin June 15, 2019. Public notice requirements are contained in 25 Pa Code § 77.121.

93. **Comment:** I would like to express safety concerns with truck traffic entering Rockdale Road and proceeding through Rockwood. We pass that intersection several times daily and have observed very dangerous conditions. (25)

Response: Please see the response to comments 3 (traffic), 8 (traffic enforcement), and 30 (trail realignment).

94. **Comment:** When proceeding from Rockwood across the bridge trucks cannot see oncoming vehicles and often pull dangerously out in front of oncoming traffic. When trucks are turning to head across the bridge (Left hand Turn) there is not adequate clearance to turn resulting in running over the curb and offroad surface. Their inability to see and safely proceed is an accident waiting to happen. A safety concern for users of the rail trail proceeding westward is lack of ability for them to see truck traffic coming down the hill. If the truck should see bikers, they may not be able to stop due to heavy loads and inadequate visibility. On numerous occasions I have observed gravel and dirt on Rockdale Road as truck's cross the railroad tracks and proceed up the hill. The amount of heavy trucks passing through Rockwood will lead to excessive road deterioration and the deposits of dirt and debris. Living on Markleton school road the closure of the rail trail between Rockwood and Markleton due to mudslides has made bikers use this road and the van transportation of bikers have shown me just how busy the rail trail is. This is adding to my safety concerns for bikers. While extensive safety measures need to be implemented, I am concerned that will still not be enough to prevent accidents. A major concern is how this mining application has proceeded so far without concerns of safety for vehicular traffic and impact on rail trail users. I greatly oppose the expansion of mining at this location which will increase truck traffic exponentially and make transiting through Rockdale Road and the city of Rockwood unbearable. Also consider that there is not a reasonable alternative route to avoid the dangerous intersection created by the mining operation. Please assure addition of intersection improvement and traffic control measures are implemented and restrict mining operations to initial smaller permits. Extension of larger mining operations is not in the public interest or safety. (25)

Response: Please see the response to comments 2 (permitting process), 3 (traffic), 8 (traffic enforcement), and 30 (trail realignment), and 47 (drag out).

95. **Comment:** I am concerned with the effects of the proposed quarry expansion on drinking water as well as noise, dust and other unintended outcomes of the quarry expansion. (26)

Response: Please see the response to comments 1 (hydrologic balance), 3 (traffic), 5 (noise), and 13 (air quality).

96. **Comment:** We also rent our farmhouse out as an Airbnb bringing guests and tourist dollars into the area for hunting, hiking, biking, kayaking, and sightseeing. It would be a major negative impact if the proximity of the quarry was increased. (26)

Response: Please see the response to comments 2 (permitting process), 5 (noise), and 14 (property values).