

Vermonters for a Clean Environment

Dear neighbor,

I'm a small farmer who lives and works in Danby. And today I'm writing to ask your help on an urgent matter that will affect the lives of everyone in this area.

As you have undoubtedly heard, OMYA -- a privately-owned, billion-dollar Swiss corporation that currently operates calcium carbonate mines in Middlebury, Florence, and South Wallingford, Vermont -- has purchased hundreds of acres of land in the beautiful Danby Four Corners valley, and plans to open a new strip mine there. It will be located on the east face of Dutch Hill, and the strip mine will be visible for miles.

This mine will have a devastating impact on the quality of life in our region:

- According to their own proposal, OMYA will use 76,000-pound tractor-trailers for the 30 miles to their processing plant in Florence. They'll make 80 truck trips every day (40 loaded, 40 empty), 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., six days a week -- that's one rumbling, ground-shaking truck every 7.5 minutes, not counting other trucks for the waste, gravel, and other by-products. These trucks will travel on narrow, winding roads with no shoulders, as well as through small villages. The roads and bridges OMYA proposes to use are posted at only 24,000 pounds.
- OMYA has not offered any money for road work. Clearly, OMYA expects Vermont taxpayers to foot the potentially multi-million dollar bill to repair and upgrade the roads and bridges along the truck route. Property values along the route will plummet, based on what has happened to property values around OMYA's other mines. The negative economic impact will be enormous.
- Abundant and pure water from the Danby Four Corners valley will be wasted. As their huge hole fills with water, OMYA will pump it, along with waste from the strip mine, directly into Baker Brook, depleting the water table of the valley and polluting the stream.
- They will be blasting three times a week -- blasts that will be heard and felt for up to five miles away from the strip mine, and even further depending on the weather. In addition to the blasting, OMYA will do all of its drilling, trucking, screening and crushing on-site, creating even more noise and filling the air with calcium carbonate dust. OMYA says this mine will be active for at least 50 years.

I've enclosed a fact sheet outlining the effect that a new OMYA mine will have on the lives of you and your neighbors. Please read it carefully, and discuss it with your friends. This strip mine will have a tremendous toll on everyone who lives in this area.

(continued, over)

Take it from people who live near current OMYA mining operations. A man whose home is on one of OMYA's truck routes told me recently,

"I have breathing problems, and the diesel fumes and dust from the trucks are so bad that I have to keep my windows closed -- and even then I can hardly breathe. When it rains, the trucks track the white stuff all over, and then when it dries, there is dust everywhere."

Another OMYA neighbor said,

"The blasting -- when it hits, it scares the living s*** out of you, and I almost have a heart attack. When they move around, it affects different parts of the house. It's put a hairline crack in my foundation and broken windows. All kinds of snakes have moved away from the blasting into our neighborhood."

There are two things you can do to help counteract this threat.

The first thing, and perhaps the most important, is to add your voice to a strong grassroots movement of your neighbors -- concerned people like you -- from Danby, Pawlet, Dorset, Middletown Springs, Tinmouth, West Rutland, and Wallingford. Together we can try to "cut them off at the pass," and stop this strip mine before it ever gets started.

Please come to an informational meeting at the Danby Town Hall, 7 p.m. on September 26, and share your concerns and ideas.

The second is even easier. Vermonters for a Clean Environment needs your help to hire lawyers and experts to fight OMYA through Act 250 and the courts. OMYA has stated that they will file for their Act 250 permit in December, so time is of the essence. Because the strip mine will affect us all, we need to make sure this project never comes to pass. But to do that, we need an experienced litigator who knows the ins and outs of Act 250 and other appropriate legislation. And that takes money. A lot of it.

We're all in this fight together. We're farmers, carpenters, ski-lift attendants, mechanics, retirees, professionals, craftspeople -- hard-working people all. But to win this battle, we need to raise at least \$250,000 in a hurry. That's why I'm asking for your donation today.

I've enclosed a reply card and an envelope. Please be as generous as you possibly can. This is our home; these beautiful hills belong to all of us. Don't let OMYA take it all away.

Sincerely,



Annette Smith
Executive Director

P.S.: We founded Vermonters for a Clean Environment to oppose the billion-dollar natural gas pipeline and electric power plant project for Rutland and Bennington Counties, which would have had far-reaching ramifications for both the environment and your pocketbook. (See the fact sheet for more information.) Now we're fighting OMYA with everything we have -- but we can't do it without your help. Please get involved, and please send money.

Vermonters for a Clean Environment

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Some things you should know about OMYA's proposed strip mine in Danby

FACT OMYA Inc., owned by the multi-billion-dollar Swiss corporation Pluess-Stauffer, is proposing to open a strip mine in Danby to produce calcium carbonate ore. The size, traffic, and air and water pollution caused by this strip mine on the east face of Dutch Hill in Danby Four Corners, which they are calling the Jobe Philips Quarry, would devastate the lives and economy of nearby landowners, residents, and dairy farmers, and harm the sensitive natural resources of the valley.

OMYA intends to use the roads in Danby, Tinmouth, and Wallingford, and perhaps Pawlet, Middletown Springs, West Rutland and other surrounding towns, to transport their ore. According to OMYA's proposal to the town of Danby, OMYA will use 76,000-pound tractor-trailers for the thirty miles to their processing plant in Florence. OMYA plans to "start small," applying for a permit to run 40 loaded trucks to Florence daily, and 40 empty trucks returning, for a total of 80 truck trips per day, from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., six days a week—that is, one approximately every 7.5 minutes. Other truck traffic is anticipated due to waste that will be sold as aggregate for roads and construction. There is no safe route to get OMYA's trucks from Danby to the Florence plant, and private property and mountainous terrain stand in the way of rail or conveyor solutions. These trucks will travel on small roads with no shoulders, through small villages and three dairy farms. The roads and bridges OMYA proposes to use are posted at 24,000 pounds.



OMYA claims that the new trucks they use to transport their "plant feed" to the factory are very low in emissions. But the off-road haul trucks that they use to haul from the mine to the on-site crusher spew huge black plumes of fumes.

The strip mine's supporters claim it will add to Danby's tax base, yet as can be seen in South Wallingford at SLC, the Town of Danby can expect to see perhaps \$1,000 added to the tax receipts. OMYA also expects Vermont taxpayers to foot the potentially multi-million dollar bill to repair and upgrade the roads and bridges along the truck route, and Vermonters will be the ones who will pay for the devastating devaluation of their own properties.

FACT While OMYA claims that a number of new jobs will be created by the strip mine, few if any of those jobs will go to local townspeople. The majority will go to current and past OMYA employees, and the rest will likely go to people who live near the Florence plant, since all trips will begin and end there.

FACT Danby's history as a producer of top quality marble is recognized around the world. Contrary to the claims of OMYA's hired public relations firm, this strip mine bears no resemblance to the underground Imperial Marble Quarry in Danby, where marble is extracted from a small hole in block form. This has relatively little impact on the natural landscape, and one can barely hear the quarry machinery operating inside the mountain. By contrast, the Jobe Philips "quarry" is the very definition of a strip mine, where they will strip away the overburden and will do all of the blasting and crushing out in the open, with the blasts able to be heard for up to five miles in all directions.

FACT OMYA first came to Vermont in 1976 when they bought the Vermont Marble Co. They then shut down the Proctor fabricating plant, eliminating 200 jobs. They currently operate strip mines in Middlebury, Florence and South Wallingford, and own land in thirty Vermont towns. OMYA just lost an appeal they took to the Supreme Court from a decision of the environmental board that restricted the number of trucks that OMYA could drive through Brandon—in fact, 230 OMYA trucks go through Brandon every day. Meanwhile, OMYA is applying in Federal court to avoid Vermont's regulation of its trucking.

FACT The global market for calcium carbonate has quadrupled since 1992 and is dominated by OMYA. OMYA operates the largest factories in the world. Concentrating on Ground Calcium Carbonate (GCC), OMYA's aggressive expansions have resulted in the replacement of kaolin with calcium carbonate in the papermaking industry. OMYA has built its future on products that require grinding into dust the kind of pure white marble that is found in Vermont. However, the marketplace has made significant advances in utilizing synthetics and lesser grades of limestone for paper, paint, plastics, coating and filler markets. In the United States, Precipitated Calcium Carbonate (PCC) is rapidly replacing Ground Calcium Carbonate in the papermaking industry. Satellite plants that process the plant feed at the site of the paper mill reduce energy consumption and transportation costs. There are now alternatives available to the industry. It is not necessary to make paper and paint out of Vermont's mountains.

FACT The *Rutland Herald* reported that the OMYA operation in France, OMYA SA, was fined 5 million francs by the French government after World War II for "economic collaboration" related to its business dealings with Nazi Germany. The French government confiscated what they termed the company's "illicit profits." According to the article, "An OMYA official in France sought to dismiss inquiries about OMYA's past, saying such questions were as useless as the prosecution of French war criminals."

Some facts about Vermonters for a Clean Environment

Vermonters for a Clean Environment is a non-profit coalition of citizens in southwestern Vermont. Founded by Annette Smith, a sustainable farmer who lives in Danby. VCE has two principal core beliefs:

- Vermont's future lies in conserving its clean, rural, small-town environment; and
- An involved and informed electorate will make the best decisions for Vermont's future.

Vermonters for a Clean Environment's first project was in educating citizens about the environmental (and economic) consequences of a proposed natural gas pipeline in Rutland and Bennington counties.

In addition to mobilizing the towns surrounding Danby on the OMYA issue, VCE is also working hard on Tom Macaulay's power plant in New York, where we are preparing to become Intervenor; helping the citizens of Bennington address their town's by-laws as they relate to power plants; working on pipeline safety legislation that is pending in Congress, particularly since the recent natural gas pipeline explosion in New Mexico; getting involved in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's upcoming conference in Albany which is to help expedite the siting of new natural gas pipelines; and participating in Vermont's Committee to Ensure Clean Air.