

ROCKWOOL RANSON, WV INFORMATION SHEET

July 10, 2018

The government is subsidizing a high-pollution, global-scale factory on an apple orchard by an elementary school in the middle of the state's most successful residential growth zone. That is a staggering policy failure, and will mark the end of Jefferson County as a clean and safe residential and agricultural community.

Rockwool Ranson, located between Kearneysville and Shenandoah Junction, will be the largest industrial facility of its kind in the world and operate 24/7. Its giant smokestacks-- the largest is 21 stories-- will redefine the county's skyline and create a health crisis for our public schools. If built, Rockwool will produce more toxic air pollution closer to more schoolchildren than any other manufacturing facility in the entire state of West Virginia.

WHAT WE KNOW

Rockwool will pollute the air on a scale unseen in Jefferson County

Rockwool will be a major source of at least nine different categories of air pollution that deteriorate air quality and harm human health. The plant's huge industrial furnaces and large-scale use of hazardous chemicals make it far dirtier than traditional manufacturing, and unlike any facility in the region.

Rockwool will emit cancer-causing chemicals

Rockwool will be West Virginia's second largest emitter of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)-- that's #2 out of all significant polluting sites across the state.

The VOC payload includes 6 different known or suspected cancer-causing chemicals: Acetaldehyde, Formaldehyde, Biphenyl, 1,3-Butadiene, Naphthalene, and Benzene.

Rockwool pollution damages intellectual development in children

One of Rockwool's VOCs, Formaldehyde, is a neurotoxin that damages memory, concentration, behavior, and physical dexterity in children.

Rockwool pollution causes serious heart and lung damage

Hazardous Fine Particulate Matter (PM 2.5) is pollution that is inhaled and penetrates deep into the lungs. Rockwool will rank #10 out of several hundred polluting sites in West Virginia for PM 2.5 emissions.

Rockwool will produce haze, airborne grit, and smog precursors

It will be a major source of ozone (O3) pollution, a primary cause of asthma in children.

Rockwool is situated to profoundly impact local schools

Although technically part of Ranson, the site is northeast of the Route 9/480 junction and as close to Shepherdstown as the center of Ranson.

Rockwool is directly across Route 9 from North Jefferson Elementary and within 10,000 feet of T.A. Lowery Elementary, Jefferson High School, and Wildwood Middle School, as well as two freestanding daycare centers.

These four schools comprise 2,744 students, or thirty percent of Jefferson County's entire student enrollment.

Again, there is no manufacturing facility anywhere in West Virginia producing this much toxic air pollution situated this close to this many schoolchildren.

Rockwool wrecks the county's school growth plans

Beyond the nearby schools, within a four mile radius of Rockwool are each of the county's two major land purchases on Shepherdstown Pike and Old Leetown Pike, as well as Driswood Elementary.

By way of comparison, there are no schools within four miles of Rockwool's Mississippi plant, and Rockwool Ranson will be more than 3 times larger than that facility.

Rockwool will degrade the visitor experience at Harpers Ferry

The plant's haze and smog will impact Harpers Ferry National Historical Park and its overlooks, just six miles away.

West Virginia is providing \$15-18 million in taxpayer financing for the site

State tax dollars are going to support a multibillion dollar foreign company in a commercial venture with no public purpose.

Rockwool will not bring significant job growth

Rockwool Group says the plant will create "approximately" 150 jobs but declines to provide any salary information or details.

While all jobs are important, to put 150 jobs in perspective, Jefferson County has 57,000 residents and 9,000 K-12 students who will be harmed by the facility.

Jefferson County doesn't need Rockwool

Jefferson County is already growing rapidly with very low unemployment, and boasts by far the highest median household income in West Virginia. In fact, our income and unemployment figures are better than the U.S. as a whole. And our county's population has grown 50 percent in the last 25 years, while the rest of West Virginia has actually declined.

Jefferson County is already working, and the way to create more good jobs is deeper integration with tech, government, and medicine in the booming DC metro region.

Rockwool will instead harm our economy by making our community a less attractive place to live, work, and visit. This Charleston-led model of subsidizing high-pollution industries has failed the rest of West Virginia and it will fail here.

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

Unfortunately, Rockwool's permit raises more questions than it answers, as it omits key data, relies on outdated demographic information, and doesn't model the impact on nearby schools.

Hiding heavy metal pollution

There's an entire class of hazardous air pollution at Rockwool that isn't accounted for in project planning. An engineering review by the Sierra Club states that Rockwool "fuels and raw materials are known to contain numerous hazardous air pollutants, such as mercury, arsenic, cadmium, and chromium" that will be released into the air during plant operations.

There's no disclosure or safety modelling of these pollutants, which can be extremely hazardous. We don't know why WVDEP would issue a permit that ignores heavy metal pollution.

Rockwool uses outdated demographic data in their permit

Old 1992 data lets Rockwool Group ignore Shenandoah Junction and classify land use in the miles around the site as "less than 1% urban." That would be a surprise to the thousands of people living, working, and going to school near the plant.

We don't know what impact using severely outdated data has on the overall permit assessment or why it was accepted by WVDEP.

Rockwool's permit excludes consideration of many common plant operations like startup/shutdown and maintenance

The permit takes a shortcut in the assessment of the overall pollution from Rockwool Rason. Rockwool Group should provide WVDEP and the public with information about air pollution from all phases of their plant's operations. We don't know the full potential pollution from this facility.

Huge new volumes of heavy trucking

The plant has loading docks with staging for 100 tractor-trailers. Heavy trucks will constantly import raw stone, slag, and other inputs, and truck out finished mineral wool. The trucking volume, routes, and pollution impact have not been studied.

Light and noise pollution

A 463,000 square foot industrial operation running 24/7 is going to generate a lot of light and noise (and probably odors). These impacts can be very serious for people living near the plant. There's nothing else close to this size and intensity in Jefferson County, and it will impact local quality of life and potentially even nighttime skies across the county.

Potomac River pollution

Contamination in the Potomac River often starts as airborne pollution. Given the river's importance to local drinking supplies, Rockwool's nitrogen and hazardous pollution impact needs to be evaluated.

What is next?

Clearly, no one thought this through.

It is urgent that Jefferson County officials immediately pause work at the site and conduct an independent review of the permit and plant operations, and in particular evaluate the impact on nearby schools. The WVDEP permit uses outdated data and is full of omissions, and further there has been no local presentation or input on Rockwool Ranson.

This is not how our local government is supposed to work. This facility may bring profound harm to our schools and will change life here for all residents; Jefferson County deserves a complete and independent assessment of Rockwool's impact on our community.

Sources:

WVDEP Roxul/Rockwool Permit Application
https://dep.wv.gov/daq/Documents/November%202017%20Applications/037-00108_APPL_R14-0037.pdf

WVDEP Preliminary Determination/Fact Sheet

https://dep.wv.gov/daq/Documents/March%202018%20Drafts%20and%20IPR/R14-0037_Preliminary_Determination.pdf

EPA National Emissions Inventory (NEI) Data (2014 most recent year available)

<https://www.epa.gov/air-emissions-inventories/2014-national-emissions-inventory-nei-data>