Garden of One Thousand Buddhas near Arlee could become louder with gravel pit

LAURA LUNDQUIST // JULY 14, 2022

The Buddha Garden is kind of the one tourist attraction of Arlee, and they’re going to put a gravel pit and asphalt plant there. Jennifer Knoetgen, who owns the property where the gravel pit is proposed to be built, said. "We have a pretty shallow water table and it adjust seasonally. And one thing that’s not going to happen is that water level will be going to tank if an asphalt plant goes in across the road." Talbott said. "This is playing out all over the state. These gravel pits come in, and they don’t have any sideboards."

The application says the pit won’t affect the groundwater but Talbott knows the groundwater level fluctuates to 12 feet below the existing sprinkler pivot across 160 acres. One corner of the section will house a rock storage area. "It’s really not that many people that get a voice even though it impacts a lot of people outside that half-mile radius," Talbott said. "There are quiet people that are just going to suffer because of this even if they don’t speak up." Knoetgen fears all the negative aspects of having what is essentially an industrial facility next door, including loud things, noise, and pollution. "We have a pretty shallow water table and it adjust seasonally. And one thing that’s not going to happen is that water level will be going to tank if an asphalt plant goes in across the road. It’s definitely going to change the experience there," Talbott said. "This is playing out all over the state. These gravel pits come in, and they don’t have any sideboards."

Jennifer Knoetgen is still hopeful that Missoula-based Riverside Contracting Inc. won’t open the Marvin gravel pit within a half-mile of her home. She first learned of the possibility at the beginning of May and has learned that Thompson Contracting had applied to open a gravel pit along the Farm to Market Road outside of Arlee. "The Buddha Garden is kind of the one tourist attraction of Arlee, and they’re going to put a gravel pit and asphalt plant there."

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