ARLEE - A proposed gravel pit and asphalt plant in Arlee is unifying the community through controversy.

Non-Native neighbors near the proposed pit said they understand the dispute.

"An asphalt plant that runs 24/7 is going to emit toxins into the airshed," Knoetgen said. "You can cook dinner in your house and you can smell it." Knoetgen told MTN the Montana DEQ gave residents within a half mile of the pit the right to make comments.

"I had hoped that the most recent comments that were sent in from our attorneys and the hydrologist, that we would've gotten a longer review process," Knoetgen said. Everybody knows that when you put water in the ground it just somehow going to affect the groundwater," Fyant said. "And water is the lifeblood of mother earth. Once you ruin that water there's no way to go back."

The Friends of the Jocko contracted a hydrologist from Hydro Solutions out of Helena for an independent investigation, hoping for an answer to all the controversies. They are opposed to the proposed site and mining of gravel rock.

"Anytime you dig into the earth, no matter what your projections are, it's going to be some potential danger to the water in Lake County despite the company's reports." The proposed mining operation has "an industrial site to be developed on Native land," Coefield isn't alone in his beliefs. Other neighbors believe there's a "potential danger to the water in Lake County despite the company's reports."

The Friends of the Jocko's website says the proposed site at the Jocko River is "a pristine river valley that is a habitat for whitefish and salmon. It has been a historical place for Native peoples for thousands of years." They are "opposed to the gravel mining due to negative impacts on the river, wildlife, water quality, air quality, property values and human health." The group is in favor of preserving the site for future generations and for the Montana DEQ to "consider the cultural significance of the area and protect the traditional values of the Native people.""