

To the Editor

April 19, 2019

Land Use and Economic Opportunity

Pend Oreille County Commissioners Comprehensive Plan amendment CPU-18-001 involves sweeping changes that eliminate the "Public Land" designation for all currently designated Public Lands. Public lands include Federal, State, local agencies, and private ownership. CPU-18-001 public land rezone would impact lands across approximately 2/3 of the county, and would allow more intense uses; including industrial, residential, and other development.

A recent article in the Sandpoint Reader (3/29/19) confirmed speculation that CPU-18-001 would facilitate the location of the controversial smelter in Newport. (22) From the Reader: "... until the county amends its Comprehensive Plan to "reform the current county zoning laws," PacWest is unable to apply for a conditional use permit."

After diligent deliberation, the Pend Oreille County Planning Commission recommended to deny the blanket Public Land rezone CPU-18-POC at its 4/9/2019 meeting. The discussion regarding the amendment was highly professional, and the conscientious work demonstrated by the Planning Commission is to be commended. County Commissioners will make a final decision at some point in the future.

A past letter in the Newport Miner (11/15/2017), "Is smelter another ToyPack?" describes an offshore company's proposal to build an experimental paper mill in Pend Oreille County that sparked citizens' concerns. "The experimental mill was not built, we waited and we got a clean, proven design paper mill instead."

We are now faced with another foreign company's proposal to build a heavy polluting facility; and the smelter has again sparked citizens' concerns.

We need an honest and cooperative approach to securing our economic future. The Kaniksu Connections Trail Project Public Workshop at the Camus Center (Thursday, 4/18/2019) included the movie "Era of Mega Fires." This movie recommends management strategies that could revitalize our timber and forest product industry. Environmentally conscious land use, plus economic opportunity--this sounds like a potential win-win situation worth pursuing.

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