

JOSEPH ELY

Hello, I'm a concerned citizen from Matagorda County, speaking about the pattern of negligence and ineffectiveness by the TCEQ. This is exemplified not just broadly by Texas leading the nation in emissions per person of a variety of hazardous and toxic substances but more specifically from my occupational and personal experience, and especially in regards to the granting of coal permits like the potential White Stallion Coal Plant in Matagorda County. I'm not paid to be here, in fact, I've been sacrificing badly needed hours at work to be here.

I grew up on the Colorado river, and through the years have seen the area change drastically from being a couple of small towns of a few rough neighborhoods, to a rapidly growing part of the county due in large part to our thriving recreation, hunting, fishing and ecotourism industries. Along with 40 local doctors, our elected representatives, and our community as evidenced by signs in front of homes all over the county, I'm concerned that the irrational permitting of this plant will cancel out what the people I grew up with have worked so hard for.

I've been talking to people who live around the Coletto Creek coal plant and have heard about the trees losing half their foliage, and the parts of the creek where even IF the fish bite, they aren't safe to eat more often than once a month.

I have worked in a private storm water consulting firm and have seen how environmental enforcement works. The regulations that pass in this capitol so often have little effect on the reality on the ground. The law only exists on the days the inspector is around, even if they are, the company appeals and ends up paying a meager fine and continues as before. This will be what we have to deal with if this permit is granted.

We are concerned that the rush to build this plant is ignoring the economic externalities involved with the mercury in our rivers, the acid rain on our crops, the particulate matter we breathe, and most importantly, the cumulative effect of it all.

When I go out fishing with my father, I don't want to have to worry about getting the catch tested for mercury. When I go down to the river with my niece, I don't want to have to tell her about the days when folks would come to town back when the trees had more leaves and the fish used to bite. When I run into my friends I don't want to hear about how their medical bills shot up because their kids got asthma. I don't want to hear from my friends who grow rice about how yields aren't what they used to be.

At the last sunset review town hall a former TCEQ official stated openly that permits are very frequently granted despite widespread popular outcry from the local communities. So I ask, are we a country of, by and for the people? Or a country of, by and for the wealthy regardless of public health, our rivers, or the reality that the rest of us face. The primary role of government is to protect us from all enemies foreign and domestic. Isn't someone who poisons you a domestic threat? I'm not asking for lip service, I'm asking you to take action because my family, my friends, and my community are at stake.