



For Immediate Release

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Contractors Association issues statement on gravel permit decision

Official Statement:

The Montana Contractors' Association is pleased that the court recognized and addressed the gridlock situation at DEQ by ordering that gravel permits be issued if complete applications have been submitted. We share the judge's observation that DEQ lacks adequate resources to address the number and complexity of permit applications, and we have repeatedly demonstrated our support in the Legislature for a reasonable fee system to pay for DEQ's increased staffing needs.

This decision also sheds light on a perennial problem with Montana's environmental permitting process, which leads to analysis paralysis. The DEQ is constantly under siege by opponents of projects to look under every pebble and to hold endless meetings until every potential problem is identified and mitigated, regardless of its significance.

Under the current structure, the MCA questions how the State of Montana could possibly attract major industrial development such as multi-billion dollar coal-to-liquid facilities, if the DEQ cannot process and issue routine gravel permits on a timely basis.

Construction projects around Montana annually consume about 18 million cubic yards of gravel, which must be extracted and processed in local communities throughout the state. A timely and efficient method of securing permits for these operations is imperative if economic prosperity is to continue.

The Montana Contractors' Association stands ready to assist in finding reasonable, practical legislative approaches to permitting gravel operations that protect public health, safety and the environment. However, we strongly suggest it is time for Montana to grapple with finding a realistic balance between economic growth and environmental protection. It is time we stop simply saying "NO" every time there is opposition to a legitimate project.