

# Group fires off its anti-quarry ammo

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The Avon Peninsula Watershed Preservation Society wants a proposed gypsum quarry rejected or a more detailed environmental assessment done.

The project will harm the area's watershed, one of the most diverse ecological habitats in Nova Scotia, the society said Wednesday in its official response to the proposal.

It also says the 347-hectare expansion by Fundy Gypsum near Avondale, Hants County, would destroy important plant and animal species, including a population of bats whose existence is threatened with extinction in five years.

The 128-page report says the population of lady's slippers is also at risk in an area recognized as the lady's slipper capital of the Maritimes.

Damage to important wetlands has not been addressed by the company's expansion plans and its own environmental reviews, says the report.

And it claims the company has not adequately responded to the concerns of the community and its residents.

Submitted with the report are 12 comments from federal and provincial government officials, along with 95 letters from concerned citizens, most of whom want the project rejected or more environmental work done.

"We have both quantity and quality submissions in favour of what our community has been saying for nearly four years," said society president Raymond Parker.

"We trust the Dexter government is giving due consideration to this proposal, and we're pleased the (Environment De-

partment's) environmental assessment branch is taking more time to review the many comments made," he said in a news release.

He said the comments contained in the report "express grave concerns and identify contradictions in the company's report and multiple failures to address the terms of reference set out by the previous government."

Fundy Gypsum, a subsidiary of United States Gypsum of Chicago, says it will soon run out of gypsum at its mines in Miller Creek and Wentworth, near Windsor, and needs the expansion to continue operations.

The company used to employ 100 people but laid off 40 last December because of the economic slump and low U.S. demand for gypsum.

The company presented its own environmental assessment of the proposed mine expansion last year, but former environment minister Mark Parent sent it back, asking for more detail about environmental impacts.

Mine manager Mike Bishop said in a recent interview the company spent 18 months reassessing those concerns. The additional work revealed "there should be no major issues that can't be mitigated," he said.

The company report says 13 wetlands would be removed over the 40-year life of the mine expansion. The company expects to extract about 50 million tonnes of gypsum from the site over that period.

The province was expected to make a decision on the expansion by Jan. 11, but Environment Minister Sterling Belliveau recently pushed the deadline back to Feb. 5 to allow more study.

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