

# SMITH LAKE IS UNDER ATTACK

Concerned Residents and the Cullman County Commission must Act to save it...

# A foreign company seeks a permit to strip mine the heart of Smith Lake

- ❑ TCW Asset Mgmt is a Los Angeles based subsidiary of a French holding company- **Société Générale (SocGen)**
- ❑ SocGen received an \$11 Billion bailout from the United States taxpayers – they were the largest recipient of AIG funds paid by U.S. Taxpayers in March 2009.
- ❑ Strip Mining by a foreign company on a recreational lake in Cullman County AL is not how we would envision our tax dollars being used.



**JULY 2009 - NATIONAL COAL SAYS ITS ALABAMA UNIT HAS DEFAULTED ON LENDING AGREEMENTS AND IT'S ALABAMA OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN FORECLOSED ON BY THE LENDER.**

# StopSmithLakeStripMining.com, Inc.

As a group of concerned Smith Lake AL home owners and residents – we have come together to oppose strip mining in the Smith Lake AL watershed.

Once you know the facts, we believe that you will agree with us that this strip mining has no place in Cullman County – let alone on one of the county's jewels – Smith Lake.

**We are asking the Cullman County Commission to join with us in urging the**

**Alabama Surface Mining Commission (ASMC) to deny permit number**

**P-3939**

**Want to know what coal strip mining is really like?**

**Press Ctrl and Click the links below.**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62\\_vUAaa-wA&feature=Playlist&p=EAA120A17D141C5C&playnext=1&playnext\\_from=PL&index=14](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62_vUAaa-wA&feature=Playlist&p=EAA120A17D141C5C&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=14)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiBzLMpsxEM>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQ-rOWhDAmQ>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvzx7eEKd74&NR=1>

# ASMC – Permit P-3939

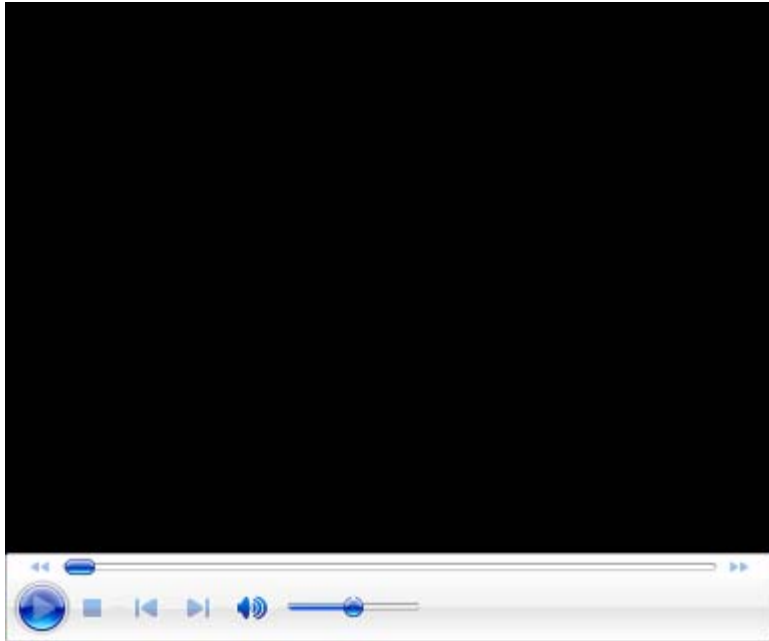
We believe this permit should be denied and fails the test of the law and the ASMC regulations in at least three important areas:

1. Safety Issues
2. Environmental Concerns
3. Lack of Economic Benefit to anyone other than the coal company.

**Important:** ASMC's own regulations require that surface mining permits be complete before being considered. P-3939 has a large number of incomplete, pending and inaccurate sections and should be denied on that basis alone.

The AL Surface Mining Commission does not include anyone from the Cullman Area. Without representation – how will we protect ourselves?

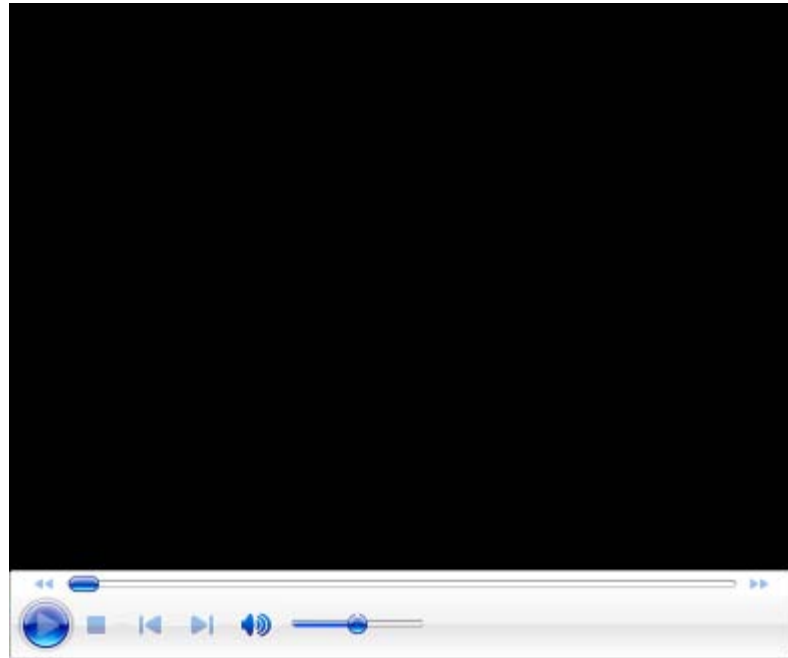
# Safety Issues – Two Lane Country Roads



- County Road 222 Is not adequate nor was it designed for large coal trucks.
- The feeder roads to CR222 are even less capable.
- Coal truckers are paid by the pound delivered, incentive enough to disregard safety in favor of more money.
- We call on the Cullman County Commission to require the ASMC to require a full safety study of the impact of this permit on the local transportation system.



# Environmental Concerns



- Long retention time
- Low alkalinity
- Offsite/ Near Site Impacts
  - ▣ Contaminated sediment in drinking water, wells and ponds
  - ▣ Noise and air pollution
  - ▣ Flying rock

# Long retention time

- Smith Lake has a longer retention time than any other lake in the state. The retention time for Smith Lake, on average, is 435 days; any contaminants that enter the lake will be there over a year.
- Coal mines also discharge large amounts of sediment. Any contaminants in the sediment discharged to the lake will return to the surface every time the lake turns over, which is every time the water on the surface gets colder and, therefore, heavier than the warm water below. The weight of the cold water causes the lake to turn over which brings the bottom sediment to the surface. This can be caused by seasonal temperature changes or even a very cold rain when the water is warmer. Any contaminated sediment discharged can re-visit us at the surface each time the lake turns over. This turn over also occurs in ponds.

# Low alkalinity

- Smith Lake has a very low alkalinity of 20 -30 mg/l which determines the buffering capacity of the water. Low alkalinity, and therefore, a low buffering capacity, means that small events can cause wide swings in pH.
- Coal mines produce acid mine drainage; if this drainage enters a lake, like Smith Lake, with a low alkalinity/low buffering capacity then a little acid mine drainage can result in a large drop in pH and the water becomes acidic.

# Contaminated Drinking Water Supplies

- Birmingham, Jasper, Arley and Cullman County via Arley withdraw drinking water either directly from Smith Lake or just below Smith Dam from the Sipsey Fork. Contaminants reaching the lake could pollute the source water for these drinking water withdrawals and thereby either reach your faucet or make treatment more expensive.

# Offsite/ Near Site Impacts

- ❑ Mines and the associated blasting cause fractures in the earth which can cause well water and ponds to simply disappear into the fracture. Portions of the proposed mine area have been mined, re-mined and reclaimed so the easy-to-reach coal is gone; blasting will be a reality.
- ❑ Mines run 24/7 and the blasting can occur anytime after sunrise and before sundown which can result in noise pollution, sleep deprivation, stress, dust, and respiratory problems in humans as well as animals.
- ❑ Flyrock is another product of blasting. Flyrock is considered an offsite impact meaning that huge boulders can 'fly offsite'. According to an ASMC audit, more than 50% of the major complaints to ASMC are about the failure to control flyrock and failure to prevent injury and damage outside the permit area.

# Environmental Summary

**Smith Lake is the headwater or beginning point of the Warrior River so we cannot blame our water quality on Georgia or any one else but ourselves and we must protect our lake, our community, and our drinking water.**

- ❑ 435 day average retention time
- ❑ Low alkalinity means a low buffering capacity against changes in pH; acid mine drainage causes pH to decrease making the receiving water more acidic
- ❑ Natural lake turn over causes contaminated sediments to return to the surface
- ❑ Drinking water withdrawals, wells and ponds can be affected or disappear.
- ❑ Mining and blasting can cause problems with noise and air pollution
- ❑ Flyrock can land anywhere

# Economics 101 – Smith Lake

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- The top ten reasons why the Cullman County Commission and the people of our area should insist that Permit P-3939 should be denied.....

# Top Ten Reasons # 10

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- In the past twelve years there has been a rapid growth of residential homes on the shores of Smith Lake due mainly to the lake's recreational value.

# Top Ten Reasons # 9

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- Recent studies of recreation on the lake resulted in an estimated benefit of \$219 million per year to owners and visitors.

# Top Ten Reasons # 8



- The number of lakefront properties and homes has more than doubled since 1995, with constant dollar values increasing from \$0.7 billion to \$1.8 billion in 2007.

# Top Ten Reasons # 7

- Assessors databases indicate that there are 8,800 properties (properties with residences) located on the shores of Smith Lake.

# Top Ten Reasons # 6

- Property Taxes on these properties provide a significant source of revenues - \$5.8 million per year to Cullman, Walker and Winston counties.

# Top Ten Reasons # 5

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- Smith Lake provides an estimated \$88 million per year in revenues to local businesses.

# Top Ten Reasons # 4

- There is a proposal being considered right now by the FERC to hold the level of the lake several feet higher – 502 msl year round. It is estimated that this single action will increase property values on the lake by \$.5 billion.
- Can you imagine how fast that value – and a lot more - will vanish if the lake gets the reputation of being a run off bucket for coal mining waste?

# Top Ten Reasons # 3

- If the proposal to the FERC is adopted and the minimum level of the lake is raised to 502, then Smith Lake would generate an additional \$1.8 million in local property taxes.
- This sorely needed revenue would be negated if the lake loses its reputation for “Clean and Beautiful” because of strip mining.

# Top Ten Reasons # 2

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- We don't believe that a foreclosed company controlled by a foreign country's banks should have the right to ruin our homes and livelihoods.

# Top Ten Reasons – Drum roll....



**And now** - The Number One Reason coal mining on Smith Lake is a horrible idea....

A photograph of a sunset over a large body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow across the sky and reflecting on the water. In the foreground, the silhouettes of an adult crouching and three children standing are visible on a sandy shore, looking out at the water. The background shows a dark, silhouetted forest line.

**We owe it to our children.**

# Economic Summary – Deny Permit P-3939

Does a foreign company have the right to our homes and national assets?

We say NO and ask you to join us.

- Recreation on Smith Lake, a major benefit, are not addressed.
- The effects of lake recreation on the local economy are not addressed.
- The impact of the mining on municipal revenues are not addressed.
- Inadequate bonds in the proposed mining application. ASMC own figures in the audit report show reclamation costs on average = \$4090 per acre. The true cost is likely closer to \$15,000 per acre/
- The coal industry is fond of promising – but not guaranteeing jobs or delivering on that promise. They have estimated 10-15 jobs at this mine if permitted. It is almost certain that any jobs actually created would most likely be transfers and temporary and there will not be any NEW jobs created.
- The local area – mostly Cullman - will lose many tens of millions of dollars because of lost tourism, fishing and recreation.



Save Our Lake

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