

February 24, 2006

The Hon. L. Preston Bryant, Jr.
Secretary of Natural Resources
P. O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218-1475

Re: Public Comment, Draft Air Permit for Columbia Forest Products - Chatham.

Dear Mr. Bryant:

Enclosed is a copy of our comments regarding the proposed new air permit for Columbia Forest Products - Chatham. You will note that we have serious concerns. Although the permit is a result of plans to reduce the heavy smoke, it appears to us that, as currently construed, it has insufficient safeguards to prevent the problem from actually becoming worse and more dangerous.

We have been communicating with DEQ for almost three years now regarding this situation. Our discussions have included many contacts with the Lynchburg office; and a written appeal to former DEQ director Mr. Robert Burnley, and two meetings with him. In the meantime, the conditions of smoke, odor, and noise have continued to deteriorate (for example, to the point that in January the Mitchell family found it necessary to close their bed-and-breakfast business of 20+ years). Please note that the prior to recent conditions, the factory and community enjoyed a pleasant coexistence for decades.

You may obtain further background from Mary Catherine Plaster, legislative assistant to Sen. Charles Hawkins. We look forward to having an opportunity to meet with you, and/or for you to visit with us. Thank you very much for your attention to, and assistance with, this matter.

Yours truly,

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