

February 3, 2022

Kelly Bacon, Permit Coordinator
Kittitas County CDS
411 N. Ruby St., Suite 2
Ellensburg, WA 98926

Re: Cape (SE-22-00002)

Kelly:

I'm the property owner at 1100 Alice Road, Cle Elum, parcel 425834. Ours is a home on 5 acres accessed via Alice Road and an easement road that leads to eight different properties. I just today became aware of this proposed project.

The Cape application concerns our shared easement road, calling it a "driveway."

I fear this project to resurface the easement road could be harmful. Your notice of application says, "A Determination of Non-Significance is expected to be issued." Please consider my comments, as I believe the project could indeed cause harm.

1. "Robbie and Bonnie Cape are proposing driveway improvements including surfacing, widening as needed to meet County standards, and re-establishing and installing new drainage swales as needed." Background: At its lower reaches, the easement road property is owned by myself and our next-door neighbors, the Thayers. The property line runs down the middle of the road. However, there is an easement, atop which the road (obviously) was built, circa 1976.

Sapphire Skies and HMIC sought to develop the acreage uphill from my home two decades ago. Shortly before we bought our home in July 2004, Sapphire had expanded the existing easement road (originally built to access Burlington Northern/Plum Creek timber above) by dumping fill, topped with a mix of dirt and crushed gravel. The original dirt road had been crowned so that rainwater drained to its sides into shallow culverts. But the new 30-foot-wide Sapphire road was not crowned, and Sapphire did not build swales or culverts. As a result, since 2004, rainstorms have gouged deep channels into the road itself. Sapphire never should have been allowed to develop the easement road without addressing drainage. Subsequent uphill-owners HMIC (Harold Kern, manager) promised in 2005 that engineers were "planning culverts and hydro-seeding" to resolve the problems near my property and the parcels uphill. But that never happened.

Currently, with each downpour, new gouges appear in the road. The runoff empties onto Alice Road and our neighbor's property below. Paving the easement road will only accelerate the speed of that water runoff. If the Cape project were to proceed, it must include a crowned roadway with swales and culverts, to protect the road itself and Alice Road below.

2. Re: "widening" the easement road (quoting from your notice) – please know that I have zero interest in selling or yielding any of my property to accommodate that.

3. Re: “approximately 5,000 cubic yards of regrading and base material” being delivered to the site, the only access is via Alice Road. Alice Road is a private road of compacted dirt and gravel maintained by the Little Peoh Point Tracts property owners. Delivering that much material, and the heavy equipment required to work it, might well damage Alice Road, incurring significant repair costs. The Alice Road property owners should not bear that burden. So, who will pay?
4. Re: “No changes to drainage patterns will occur,” and “No surface water withdrawal or diversions are proposed and existing drainage patterns will not be altered.” As noted above, drainage patterns SHOULD be changed to remediate the existing problem caused by Sapphire Skies.
5. Re: “animals known to be near the site” – aside from the songbirds, deer, and elk already noted, there are bear, cougars, bobcats, and wild turkeys known to frequent the area.
6. Re: “Is the site part of a migration route?” Perhaps irrelevant, but residents noted a change in deer and elk patterns after Sapphire Skies extended the easement road uphill. I’ve personally seen a marked decrease in the frequency of deer on my property since the road uphill was bulldozed in 2004-2005.
7. Re: “gas transmission pipelines located in the vicinity,” my two propane tanks border the easement road, just across the fence on my property.
8. Re: “Adjacent properties should benefit from the improved driveway.” A paved easement road would benefit us by reducing dust in the summer. Conversely, speeding on the road already is a problem, and a smooth paved surface would likely increase speeding, and vehicle noise. A paved road in general could erode the rural nature of our community.
9. Re: “Will the proposal require improvements to existing roads, not including driveways?” Yes. As noted earlier, runoff water will need to be diverted along the easement road and, at its intersection with Alice Road, perhaps diverted beneath Alice Road.
10. Re: “How many vehicular trips per day....” Note that the existing easement road serves eight property owners and nine parcels, not four as listed.
11. I see the proposed construction time is May-June. The easement road is my only access to our home. How do we drive to our home during those weeks? May-June is a busy time for hosting friends and family, including a wedding shower we’re hosting this May.

Thank you for listening, Kelly.

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