

## Ellie Myers

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**From:** Jeff Penick <penickjeff@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 15, 2026 8:17 AM  
**To:** Ellie Myers  
**Subject:** Comments on Kittitas PUD #1 Project (File SE-26-00003)

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TO: Kittitas County Community Development Services  
FR: Jeff Penick  
509-899-4011  
[Penickjeff@gmail.com](mailto:penickjeff@gmail.com)  
RE: Public Comment File SE-26-00003

Thank you for your attention to the comments below.  
Jeff Penick

## Public Comment – File SE-26-00003 (Kittitas PUD #1 Project)

- I appreciate the role that Kittitas PUD #1 plays in supporting essential infrastructure and recognize the potential benefits of a modernized headquarters, including improved service capacity, operational efficiency, and long-term planning for regional utility needs.
- However, I have significant concerns about the location, process, and potential impacts of this proposal to develop an industrial facility and gravel yard on prime agricultural land just outside Ellensburg.

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### Major Concerns

#### 1. Loss of Prime Agricultural Land

- The proposed site is designated agricultural (A-20) and contains prime farmland soils when irrigated.
- Converting nearly 10 acres of actively farmed land—including removal of over 5 acres of topsoil—undermines long-term agricultural viability in the Kittitas Valley.
- This appears inconsistent with the intent of the Washington Growth Management Act, which encourages development away from productive farmland.

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## **2. Inadequate Environmental Review (SEPA Process)**

- The County appears to be fast-tracking a Determination of Non-Significance (DNS) with minimal supporting studies.
- The SEPA checklist reportedly contains inaccuracies and lacks key analyses, including:
  - No traffic impact study despite thousands of anticipated truck trips
  - No meaningful evaluation of dust, runoff, or groundwater impacts
  - No assessment of effects on adjacent irrigation systems or farms
- A project of this scale and impact deserves a full environmental review, not a streamlined approval.

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## **3. Impacts on Surrounding Farms and Rural Character**

- Adjacent agricultural operations rely on irrigation systems that could be affected by runoff, dust, and altered drainage.
- Concerns include:
  - Fugitive dust impacting crops and air quality
  - Noise and heavy equipment disrupting a quiet rural area
  - All-night industrial lighting degrading the rural night sky
- These impacts are not adequately addressed in the current application.

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## **4. Water Use and Site Suitability**

- The proposal appears to understate water usage, raising concerns about accuracy and transparency.
- The site has a high water table and nearby irrigation ditches, making it a questionable location for an industrial yard with potential runoff and contamination risks.

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## **5. Traffic and Infrastructure Impacts**

- The conversion to a gravel yard would require thousands of dump truck trips, yet no traffic study is included.
- Increased heavy traffic on Kittitas Highway raises safety and infrastructure concerns.

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## **6. Impacts to Agricultural Easements**

- The project would narrow or impede an existing 30-foot agricultural easement, directly affecting farm operations and access.

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## 7. Lack of Public Engagement and Transparency

- Notification to the public was extremely limited (less than two weeks).
  - Nearby landowners and farmers were not meaningfully included early in the process.
  - The fact that outreach was limited to a select group raises concerns about transparency and fairness.
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## 8. Precedent for Future Development

- Approving this project could set a dangerous precedent for industrial development on prime farmland throughout Kittitas County.
  - This is a long-term land use decision with consequences beyond this single parcel.
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## Constructive Alternatives

- I am not opposed to a new PUD facility, but this project should be relocated to a more appropriate industrial zone, such as previously considered sites (e.g., along Dollar Road).
  - The current parcel could instead remain in agriculture or even be preserved through a conservation easement.
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## Request to the County

- Require a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) rather than issuing a DNS.
  - Extend the public comment period and ensure meaningful community engagement.
  - Reevaluate the site selection in alignment with agricultural preservation policies.
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## Closing

- This is a consequential decision affecting farmland, rural character, and community trust.
- It deserves thorough review, accurate analysis, and genuine public participation before any approval is granted.

Thank you,

Jeff Penick

