

Ellie Myers

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
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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.

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.

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.

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

