



YOU STOPPED BULLDOG MINE!

By Andrew Behn

History at last! In a huge win for community organizing and the environment, the long-proposed Bulldog mine in Vermilion County is dead. And what a battle it has been! The fight against Bulldog Coal began over a decade ago when the company began redefining agricultural land under farmland between the towns of Macon, Atlanta, and Tolt. On May 16, 2022, the permit expired due to lack of use, effectively killing the proposed mine.

This victory is a testament to the hard work and collaboration of PRN and Stand Up To Coal (SUTC) and other groups like Iron-Heart Collaborative, Board of Illinois Irons Club, and Citizens Against Longwall Mining. The grassroots effort came together in 2010 as word spread of the proposed mine. PRN members, local farmers, landowners, and community members, including former PRN board member Charles Goodall, banded together with the support of PRN staff to stand up for the drinking water, farmland, and clean air in surrounding communities.

"This important victory is an amazing example of the power of people working together," former PRN Water Resources Specialist Trent Bartley said of efforts to stop the mine. Bartley worked on the issue from 2010 to 2015. "PRN and SUTC really activated a diverse group of people to do the difficult, strategic, and sustained work to defeat outside corporate interests."

Fighting this mine required a multi-pronged strategy and years of community involvement. In 2011, SUTC and PRN held multiple public education meetings, spreading the word and building a case against the mine. In 2014, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) held a public hearing that was packed with community members challenging the mining permit. Then in 2015, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency heard from over 70 concerned community members about the proposed mine's water discharge permit.

Despite years of fighting and public outcry and a nearly three-year delay by

Bulldog Coal in addressing all permit deficiencies, IDNR issued the mining permit in 2019.

"The fight to stop Bulldog mine didn't end with the permit issuance," says PRN Senior Water Resources Engineer Andrew Behn. "Instead, SUTC challenged the permit through an Administrative Review, a complicated legal process that reviewed the permit to ensure that it met the letter of the law. Even though the permit was still 'under review,' it was considered final, meaning that Bulldog could break ground at any time."

When the permit was issued on April 3, 2019, a three-year clock started ticking. If Bulldog Coal didn't break ground within that period, the permit would expire. Fast forward to April 2022, IDNR found no mining activity at the site and terminated the permit.

Stopping the Bulldog mine was a long, hard fight, but this grassroots victory shows what's possible when a community stands up to major fossil fuel interests. No single action turned the tide, but the tenacity of Stand Up To Coal and its members, and PRN and our members working together achieved this major win for clean water! //



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