

February 24, 2006

Dr. Robert B. Stroube, State Health Commissioner  
Virginia Department of Health  
P. O. Box 2448  
Richmond, VA

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

Dear Dr. Stroube:

Enclosed is a copy of the cover letter accompanying our comments regarding the proposed new air permit for Columbia Forest Products - Chatham. You will note that we have very serious concerns. Although the permit is a result of plans to reduce the heavy smoke from the facility, it appears to us that, as currently construed, it has insufficient safeguards to prevent the problem from actually becoming worse and more dangerous. Among our concerns are dangerous airborne compounds created by incomplete burning of a significant amount of plastic resins that the Virginia DEQ is regulating as though it were clean wood.

We have been communicating with Virginia DEQ for almost three years now regarding this situation. Our discussions have included many contacts with the Lynchburg office; a written appeal to former DEQ director Mr. Robert Burnley; and two meetings with Mr. Burnley. In the meantime, the conditions of smoke, odor, and noise have continued to deteriorate (to the point that in January the Mitchell family found it necessary to close their bed-and-breakfast business of 20+ years, and the pervasive noise is causing discomfort and sleep interruption at locations as much as a mile away). 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. Thank you very much for your attention and assistance.

Yours truly,

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