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**Stand Up To Coal to Vermilion County Board: Act to Protect Farmland and Clean Water from Coal Mine**

*Resolution put forward to oppose mining that would compromise farming*

Danville, IL –At this evening’s meeting of the Vermilion County Board, farmers and rural residents from the citizens’ group Stand Up To Coal asked the Board to send a strong message opposing coal mining in Vermilion County.

Supporters from the area where Sunrise Coal, LLC is buying up coal leases boarded a charter bus to attend the meeting. Speakers Kevin Block and Charles Goodall detailed existing damages in other Illinois communities caused by coal mining, toxic coal slurry and coal ash waste disposal, and called on the Board to take strong action to halt threats from new coal mining to the county’s economic and natural resources.

"In today's high-population world, food production trumps everything. We'd be foolish to buy into a scheme that damages the land, water, health resources and long-term viability of our communities," explained retired Sidell farmer and Stand Up To Coal co-founder Charles Goodall.

Prior to the meeting, Stand Up To Coal member and local landowner Sue Weidemann echoed the concern that subsidence from underground mining would cause long term problems for farming. “We know the expense of maintaining the essential field tiling that underlies the valuable farmland. Even a few inches of land subsidence would damage that drainage system. We need to protect our farming heritage, not allow it to be damaged.”

Traci Barkley, Water Resources Scientist with Prairie Rivers Network who also spoke at the Board meeting, explained that a new coal mine could also have devastating effects on local water quality and quantity, and it is not yet clear how Sunrise plans to address these concerns. "Sunrise Coal still has lot of questions to answer to residents near the proposed mine...like where will they get all of the water to wash the coal? And, why is storing toxic coal wash water slurry in an onsite pit the best they can do?"

Sunrise Coal, LLC has been seeking to secure the coal leases for an underground coal mine since early 2010. The mine would be located on some of Illinois’ best farmland, raising long term concerns about damage to drainage from subsidence. It would also be in close proximity to the communities of Sidell, Broadlands, Allerton, Homer and Fairmount. All of these communities except Broadlands rely on groundwater to supply their residents’ domestic needs, as do the rural residents who live in the area. Speaker

Kevin block explained: “This area does not have abundant water supplies. In fact the proposed mine would use more water daily than is the daily usage of the towns of Homer, Broadlands, Allerton, Sidell and Fairmount combined.”

Although the Board members say their hands are tied because Vermilion County has no zoning regulations, Stand Up To Coal urged the board to pass a non-binding resolution opposing coal mining that would compromise the county’s agricultural resource base. They pointed to Madison County, which recently passed a non-binding resolution opposing longwall mining. They also asked the County Board to scrutinize the permitting process to ensure that local lands and waters are protected to the fullest extent.

"Even without zoning regulations, the Vermilion County Board has opportunities to protect the resources of the county," explained Ms. Barkley. "Our state statutes authorize county boards to support county water commissions, control and regulate refuse and waste, prevent water pollution and take groundwater protection measures to protect a public drinking water supply. Further, they can declare their intention to protect the county's land, water and community health by adopting a resolution while barring subsidies to the coal industry."

Stand Up To Coal is a voluntary association of farmers, residents and landowners who are concerned about the about the negative effects that Sunrise Coal, LLC's planned coal mine could have on farmland, the local economy, clean water, and the health and quality of life of rural residents.

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