

Mosaic is back in Manatee. But what they're asking for is not necessarily new

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A mound of phosphate from the Mosaic beneficiation plant is piled high after being processed from sand dredged at the Mosaic Wingate Creek Mine in East Manatee County. **Bradenton Herald** File photo

More than a year after The Mosaic Company was [granted a request to expand](#) their mining operations, they're back in Manatee County commission chambers for another ask.

No, not more phosphate mining. Sort of.

This week, Mosaic representatives proposed two local development agreements and two master mining plan amendments to five of the seven planning commissioners. Al Horrigan Jr. and Paul Rutledge were absent.

"We're not asking for any additional land to be rezoned," lawyer Hugh McGuire said Monday. "We're not asking for any increase in permitted water withdrawals. We're not asking for any new clay settling areas. And we're not asking for any additional trucking routes."

The fertilizer company is requesting changes to the master mining plan for the Wingate Creek Mine, where there is an existing processing plant, and Southeast Tract, where there are two existing clay settling areas.

Currently, the buildout dates for the Wingate Creek Mine is July 31, 2023, and for the Southeast Tract, it is Sept. 30, 2023. The reclamation dates, when the company expects to be finished putting the land back the way it was, are Dec. 31, 2027, and Sept. 30, 2027, respectively.

Because the 5-2 approval of the Wingate East Mine last February included a buildout date of 2037, Mosaic officials want to extend the lives of the two adjacent properties by 14 years for buildout and 15 years for reclamation to match.

Michelle Tickles, senior mine permitting specialist with Mosaic, said that reclamation is an ongoing process. Right now at the Southeast Tract, 99 percent "of what is available to be reclaimed" has been reclaimed, and 83 percent has been done at the Wingate Creek Mine.

The request is just a continuation of what was already approved, McGuire said. The local development agreements transfer the company's vested rights from the development of regional impact, or DRI, which Mosaic spokeswoman Jackie Barron equated to "consolidating" and "housekeeping" rather than anything new.

Barron added that since the February decision, no mining has taken place on the rezoned land. That's because an operating permit needs to be approved first, which will go before the board of county commissioners in July.

Retired hydrogeologist David Woodhouse spoke out against mining as a whole, and expressed concerns about the risk of pollution into the environment.

"I understand there's a need for fertilizer, but there should be a compromise here," he said.

One resident who lives near the mining operation, Garrett Ramy, said it was not "master mining" but "master manipulation." He wanted more oversight of Mosaic's operations and called for Assistant County Attorney Bill Clague to be removed from the hearing, claiming that during the February meeting "citizens in opposition were disregarded" and that Clague "instructed the commissioners how to vote by threat of lawsuits from the applicant."

At the time, Clague had told commissioners "a total denial outright, that could be a tough case for us to defend." County commissioners Robin DiSabatino and Charles Smith voted against the rezone last year.

Ramy is also [part of a lawsuit filed](#) against the county for approving the rezone. According to court documents, the case remains open.

Planning commissioners approved the request by a vote of 5-0, and it's scheduled to go before Manatee County commissioners during a special land use meeting on May 24.