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Monsanto project good foreconomy,consumers

COMMENTARY

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Most of us in Idaho think of Monsanto as phosphate miners. To folks across the rest of the country, it's an agriculture and seed company.

Both are right. To continue to be a reliable agriculture resource to American farmers, Monsanto needs to continue mining phosphate here in Idaho. At the same time, the company has recognized that the old ways of mining are no longer acceptable.

Monsanto is nearing the end of its current phosphate ore supply and wants to obtain permits for a new mine which would be just down the road from the current operation in Caribou County. Like the company's existing South Rasmussen Mine, the new Blackfoot Bridge mine will provide the phosphate that feeds Monsanto's processing plant turning the raw product into elemental phosphorous.

Elemental phosphorous has multiple uses, including putting the fizz in your soda pop and making fire retardants more effective. It's even used in certain water treatment applications. The phosphorous from Monsanto's plant at Soda Spring is primarily used as a key ingredient in Roundup. That's the herbicide many of us use to spray the grass in the cracks in our sidewalk and farmers use to control weeds that compete with corn and soybeans for water and sunlight. Roundup actually reduces farmers' carbon footprint by reducing the amount of fuel burned during tilling.

That's important. But what's even more critical is that the men and women who run the Soda Springs operations have learned a lot about protecting Idaho's water quality while still utilizing a critical natural resource. Monsanto has led the way in funding studies, working with experts in academia, cooperating with government agencies and taking a variety of other steps to determine how best to protect the environment and deal with legacy issues such as selenium entering streams as a result of phosphate production.

One of the approaches Monsanto has taken in tackling the selenium issue is to work cooperatively with the appropriate state and federal agencies. In the case of the proposed Blackfoot Bridge Mine, the company presented a proposal to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. The agencies evaluated Monsanto's plan and together it was determined that water quality could be better protected if the company committed an additional \$24 million to implement a high-technoloview and comment in the form of a draft Environmental Impact Statement. We suggest you take a look at the draft EIS and let the agencies know your views. (http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/info/nepa/Pocatello/blackfoot_mine_deis.html)

We think the BLM and IDEQ have developed a plan that properly protects the environment, including containing selenium, while allowing Monsanto to proceed with an essential project that maintains 750 good Idaho jobs. American farmers benefit, as well, with the guarantee of a continuing supply of Roundup helping ensure the production of high-quality, inexpensive food for all of us. gy liner system – not unlike liners in a landfill – that will keep selenium and other elements from reaching nearby streams, including the Blackfoot River.

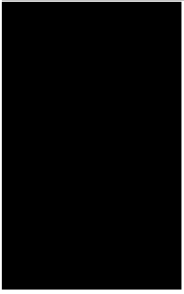
Led by the folks at their Soda Springs operation, Monsanto didn't argue with the need to go the extra step. Even if nothing like the special liner has ever been required of mines in the past, they said If that's what it takes to operate a modern mine and protect the environment, we'll step up and do it.

That proposal – Monsanto's plan with the improvements and additional mandates from the BLM – is now open to public re-

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