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The Charlotte Observer, the state's largest and perhaps most influential newspaper, [has come out with a strongly worded editorial against the proposed Titan cement plant](#) near Wilmington, NC. The paper's editorial board weighed the alleged benefits against the significant impacts the project will have on our region's fisheries, wetlands and coastal resources: "The 160 or so permanent jobs Titan America would bring to the Cape Fear region are not worth the potential damage the plant could do to an area that attracts tourists, boaters, retirees and residents from around the world."

The paper also mentioned the increased risks associated with emitting up to 263 pounds of mercury near a stretch of the Northeast Cape Fear River that is already listed as mercury impaired. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin that causes birth defects and developmental problems in infants and young children. "The air pollution threat and mercury deposition is especially troubling," according to the paper. "Thousands of school students live within five miles of the site....(t)his is not the time for taking for granted the safety of children, let alone the environmental health of a region so attractive for the quality of its air, water and lands."

The Charlotte newspaper joins a growing chorus of opposition to the project, which would also destroy 1,000 acres of wetlands to create a two-square mile open pit mine in northern New Hanover County. Just last week, the Raleigh News and Observer published a similar editorial, weighing in against Titan's cement plant and mine. Thousands of citizens have contacted legislators and officials at the Division of Air Quality asking that Titan's air permit be delayed until the cumulative impacts of the cement plant and mining operation are known. Joining the chorus of concerned citizens are Representative Carolyn Justice (R-NC) and Senator Julia Boseman (D-NC), the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission, Southern Environmental Law Center, Duke Environmental Law & Policy Clinic, North Carolina Coastal Federation, Cape Fear Riverwatch, the local chapter of the Sierra Club, PenderWatch & Conservancy and Friends of the Lower Cape Fear/
StopTitan.org.

Adding to the numerous concerns about this project is a recent decision by a federal circuit court revoking Titan's mining permits in Medley, Florida. The court ruled that the Army Corps of Engineers did not adequately address environmental or public health impacts of the mining operations before it issued the permits. Titan's Florida mine is one of several suspected of contaminating one of Miami's nearby well-fields with benzene, a known carcinogen.

Despite growing opposition to the proposed cement plant, the Division of Air Quality is expected to issue Titan's draft air permit soon—spurring nearly a thousand letters to legislators calling for an immediate moratorium on new cement plants in North Carolina until adequate regulations are in place and all impacts are known.

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/story/584750.html>