

# THE STANLY NEWS AND PRESS

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## **County's efforts send wrong message to potential businesses**

Tuesday, April 15, 2008— I'm concerned that the Stanly County commissioners are being short-sighted and misguided with their last-ditch attempts to deny Alcoa a new license for its dams on the Yadkin River.

To suggest that a government-run operation will be more beneficial to Stanly County than a private enterprise demonstrates that county officials don't understand the negative impact such a move would have on businesses in our community.

As a private business owner who located in Stanly County because of Alcoa, I can tell you that Alcoa's presence here supports many local businesses like mine.

By outsourcing services to local contractors, Alcoa can get work done more efficiently and with lower costs. I employ a number of people who work directly for Alcoa but are not technically Alcoa employees. These people live here, pay taxes here and support local establishments.

Will I stay if the property becomes government run? Probably not. The business opportunities will be much more limited with a government-run enterprise, so I'll probably pack up and move to a place where my business — and private industry in general — is more valued.

The commissioners also should consider how their relentless attacks on Alcoa will impact Stanly County's ability to attract new companies here in the future. If you were a private business owner thinking about moving your company to Stanly County, imagine how you would react.

No business owner wants to move to a place where this type of treatment of a long-time corporate citizen is not only tolerated, but encouraged, by our elected leaders. I'm afraid that Stanly County is shooting itself in the foot by earning a reputation for being unfriendly to private businesses.

I write this letter as a concerned employer in a county that needs to enhance its attractiveness to private employers for its economic well being. I don't think citizens are going to be best served if the largest employer becomes the government.

Development of the private sector is crucial to sustainable economic growth which creates jobs and increases the tax base and ultimately benefits its citizens. We must have a market-friendly environment for economic growth, lest we cause an avalanche of problems that could take years to recover from.

On a related note, I can tell you that the claim made by the county's public relations firm (MMI Associates) that Alcoa was delayed in making the necessary upgrades to its facilities is completely false. I've worked with Alcoa for more than 20 years on its hydro operations in North Carolina and it has been working to upgrade its facilities for more than 15 years.

Most people don't realize what is involved in the process — inspections, engineering assessments, financing, selection of contractors — and how long it takes. The first round of physical upgrades began more than 12 years ago and much more work is planned for the future.

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