

In Tennessee, January is the exact window when bald eagles engage in pair-bonding and begin building or repairing their nests for the breeding season. If Vulcan blasted during that window and the eagle abandoned the site, that is a huge problem. This is not under the jurisdiction of Knox County commissioners; the jurisdiction falls under federal wildlife law, which supersedes the county entirely.

We demand that the commission give us time to notify the proper agencies. We demand Vulcan does a study about how this expansion will affect our beautiful wildlife. This must be done before the county proceeds with a vote.

1. We formally request or demand the time to obtain the December 2025 and January 2026 Blasting Logs Vulcan is legally required to maintain. The state requires Vulcan to log the exact date, time, and seismic charge of every single blast.

We demand time to file a formal Tennessee Public Records Request with the Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office (Department of Commerce & Insurance), which regulates blasting and explosives.

We Request the "Blasting Logs and Seismograph Records for Vulcan Materials Dixie Lee Quarry for the dates of December 15th, 2025, through January 15, 2026." If the logs show a high-decibel blast occurred the same week the eagle abandoned the nest building, we have evidence of a federal violation.

2. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA)

Under the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, it is a federal crime to "take" a bald eagle. The legal definition of "take" does not just mean killing the bird—it explicitly includes "disturbing" them.

The Legal Definition of Disturb:

Federal regulations define disturbing as any action that "causes, or is likely to cause... nest abandonment, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior."

Nest Protection:

Under the BGEPA, an eagle nest is strictly protected even when it is empty or unoccupied. Because eagles have high "site fidelity" (meaning they return to the exact same nest year after year), it is illegal to destroy or heavily disrupt the area around a known nest site without a federal permit.

3. The USFWS Blasting Buffer Zone

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has very specific National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines regarding industrial activity. For extreme, concussive noises like quarry blasting, the USFWS mandates a minimum buffer distance of 0.5 miles (2,640 feet) from an active nest during the breeding season. Hickory Meadows is within a half-mile of the 58-acre expansion zone and Vulcan's current foot print. Vulcan is federally prohibited from blasting without first undergoing a rigorous, expensive environmental review to obtain an "Incidental Take Permit" from the federal government.

We demand time to report the potential nest:

We need time to contact the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services Field Office in Cookeville, TN. Provide them with the exact GPS coordinates in Hickory Meadows, the January dates, and any photos or videos residents took. If the nest is found we will demand that the nest site be officially documented on the state and federal registry.

4. Environmental Assessment:

If Vulcan is applying for an expansion, they had to submit environmental documents claiming the site is clear of protected species, not promise to get the assessment done at a later date. Since this assessment has not been done, the commission simply can not approve this expansion. If we get the USFWS to document an eagle nest in the subdivision or surrounding area, Vulcan will be forced to stop the expansion process and spend months (or years) conducting new wildlife impact studies.

If the Knox County Commission ignores us and approves the expansion anyway, you we can and will file for an injunction in Federal District Court. Knox County is illegally authorizing heavy industrial blasting within the 0.5-mile federal buffer zone of a documented potential Bald Eagle nest, violating the BGEPA. We have gathered photographic and text message evidence of the eagle during prime mating season. We demand time to contact every neighbor who took a photo, video, or has Ring camera footage of that eagle in January, log the exact dates, and submit that dossier straight to the federal game wardens.

Eagles are well-documented in Knox County (specifically near Melton Hill Park, the Clinch River, and Seven Islands State Birding Park). Currently, our specific location does not currently show an active, public pin, however. state and federal wildlife agencies intentionally keep the exact GPS coordinates of eagle nests off public-facing maps to protect the birds from poachers and harassment. Furthermore, if the eagle just began building the nest in January 2026, it is highly likely that it simply hasn't been surveyed and added to the official registry yet. If the nest isn't officially on the books, Vulcan's environmental consultants certainly didn't include it in their environmental impact assessments, which apparently has not been done anyway.

We demand an extension check the "Shadow" Databases (eBird and Local Birders) before you proceed with approval. Hardcore bird watchers keep meticulous records that often pre-date

government surveys. An extension would allow us to reach out to the Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society (KTOS). Ask their members if anyone has logged bald eagle activity near Graybeal Road or Hickory Meadows on the eBird app around January 2026. If a local birder logged it, we have instant, third-party verification to take to the state.

We demand time to allow for a TWRA Investigation. We cannot rely on Vulcan to report the nest, because doing so legally paralyzes their expansion. You have to force the state to document it. We plan to contact the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) Region 4 Office in Morristown by sending a certified letter with the exact locations, the dates of the sightings (on or around January 4, 2026, and subsequent days), and any photos and text conversations our neighbors have. We will request that a TWRA wildlife biologist come to the site to find, inspect and officially register the nest on the state database if the eagle built a nest in that tree or a surrounding area. Highly probable considering when the eagle was in the tree and how long the eagle stayed during peak mating season.

We are formally notifying the commission of our plan to submit evidence to the TWRA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding an active Bald Eagle nesting site within the 0.5-mile federal blasting buffer zone of the proposed expansion. Voting to approve this expansion while a federal wildlife investigation is in the works or pending could expose Knox County to liability under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act."