

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, this is a serious issue. We are filing a formal Tennessee Public Records Request with the Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office (Department of Commerce & Insurance), which regulates blasting and explosives for Blasting Logs and Seismograph Records for Vulcan Materials Dixie Lee Quarry for the dates of January 1, 2026, through January 15, 2026. If the logs show a high-decibel blast occurred the same week the eagle was occupying the tree in Hickory Meadows, this may be a violation under 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. 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. 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.

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. Vulcan, in my understanding, is federally prohibited from expanding without first undergoing a rigorous, expensive environmental review to determine if the eagle did indeed end up building a nest close by. While residents are not claiming said eagle did end up nesting in the area, we do have enough documentation to suspect it as a possibility.

We are formally contacting the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services Field Office in Cookeville, TN. to look into what happened to the eagle. We will provide them with the exact GPS coordinates in Hickory Meadows, the January dates, and any photos or videos residents took. We plan to ask these agencies to investigate if Vulcan's actions during that time cause the eagle to abandon the tree in question and if there is another nesting site nearby. If Vulcan is applying for an expansion, they should have to submit environmental documents claiming the site is clear of protected species. If Vulcan has submitted these documents then their environmental assessment is invalid and should be forced to stop the expansion process and conduct new wildlife impact studies.

If the Knox County Commission or Planning Commission ignores this and approves the expansion anyway, we believe we can file for an injunction in Federal District Court. We can argue that Knox County is illegally authorizing heavy industrial blasting within the 0.5-mile federal buffer zone of a documented Bald Eagle nest, violating the BGEPA. Again, we have well

documented evidence of the eagle's presence, specifically in known habitat during mating and nesting season in Tennessee.