



Penticton

Mining work going ahead

Colin Dacre - Sep 7, 2018 / 5:00 am | Story: 235867

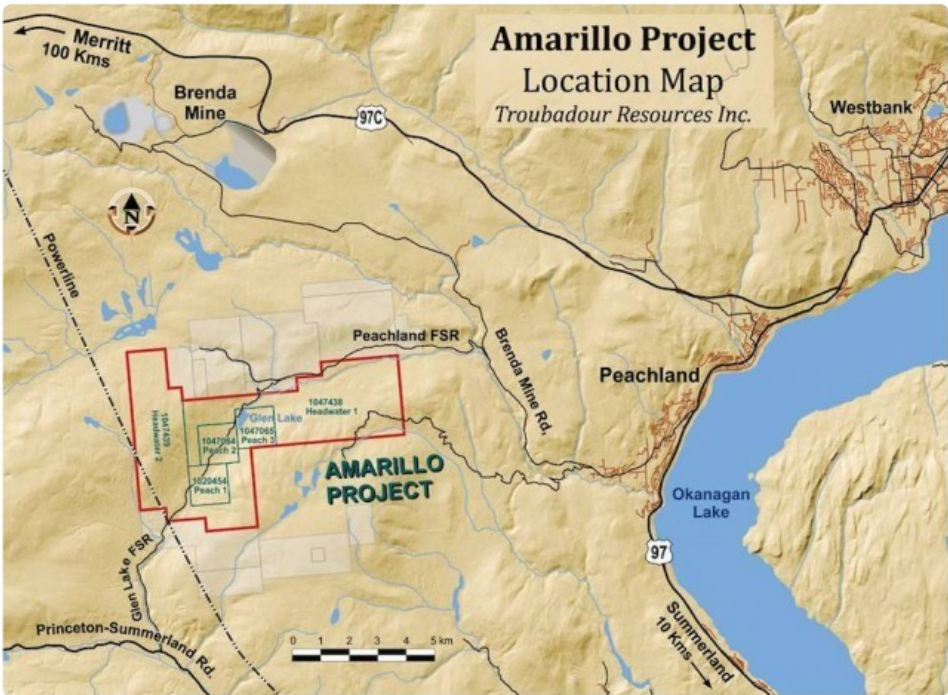


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Controversial exploratory mining work is set to get underway this fall in the mountains between Summerland and Peachland, despite opposition from the municipalities.

Troubadour Resources is probing five mineral claims near Eneas Lakes Provincial Park in search of copper, molybdenum and gold — work that has provoked outcry from local governments in Peachland and Summerland, which were erroneously not informed of the permit prior to it being issued.

Documents released to Castanet News through a Freedom of Information request confirm the company did not disclose the exploratory work would be taking place in a municipality's watershed, which triggers consultation with the communities.

"That was an error on our part, and it was an error on the ministry's part for not catching it at the time," Troubadour Resources president Geoff Schellenberg said, explaining it's "not very easy" to determine where exactly watershed boundaries are.

He said the ministries handling mining and water rights work in different silos, and suggested information could be shared a bit better.

"I think there is probably change coming," he added.

Several trenches and drill holes are slated to be dug in the area, which is being accessed by existing active and decommissioned forest service roads.

"We have pretty stringent rules to control water runoff - there can't be any water running off any drill sites that contains any sediment," Schellenberg said.



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The incident has also pushed the Okanagan Basin Water Board to write to Minister of Mines Michelle Mungall asking for the province to seek local assent prior to approving mining work in community watersheds.

In a letter dated May 2 — seven months after the permit was approved — B.C. Inspector of Mines Mike Cloet wrote to Troubadour Resources about the mistake on the application that stated the work would not be taking place in a community watershed.

"In fact this application is located in the Peachland community watershed as designated under the Forest and Range Practices Act," Cloet wrote to Schellenberg, explaining that Troubadour would no longer be allowed to source water from within the watershed.

Schellenberg confirmed to Castanet they will likely be trucking in water to complete the work.

The overall approval of the work permit, however, never appeared to be at risk. While the local governments are supposed to have a chance to provide input on mining work in their watersheds, they don't get a veto.

Summerland resident Amie Harbor is a user of the area that will be impacted by the mining work. She isn't happy with how the ministry dropped the ball in failing to consult with the municipalities.

She's not sure the ministry would have made a different decision should they have heard the local government's negative feedback earlier, "but it certainly made it a lot harder to make a difference after the fact," noting the bar to revoke a mining work permit is extraordinarily high.

"I don't get how the process can be so completely ignored, and then there is no accountability for that," she said. "Errors were made along the way, but I don't really hear the ministry addressing it."

A report completed in 2010 by Golder Associates for the District of Peachland listed mining work as a "low-risk" activity for the watershed, something Schellenberg highlighted.

"In my personal opinion there are bigger issues happening around that area. Perhaps we are getting a lot of focus when the risk we are posing is a lot smaller than a lot of the other activities."

He pointed to recreational backcountry use — classified as "high-risk" by the Golder report — which sees garbage left behind, as well as cattle grazing, another "high-risk" industry.

"That's got to be a huge issue, because you've got excrement going directly into the watershed," Schellenberg said, adding they will be required to fully restore their drill sites.

Harbor agrees that the watershed is under immense pressure, and said better protections need to be put in place.

"Forests, Lands and Natural Resources is failing as well, because the logging roads, they are causing so much sediment," she said. "I don't think mining is the only problem."

"There are watersheds in the province that are actually protected, ours just isn't one of them," Harbor said, adding she's not sure fully banning industry from the area is the answer, "but I think there is a lot of room there."

Troubadour Resources refers to the mineral claims in question as the Amarillo Project, the company's main asset listed on its website. The Vancouver-based firm went public in June, and is now trading on the TSX at around 15 cents a share.

Schellenberg said an exact timeline for when the work will take place this fall hasn't been finalized yet.

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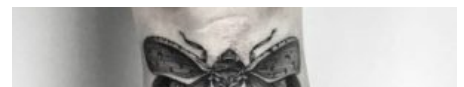
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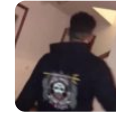
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