



**Keri Brenner**

**[kbrenner@theunion.com](mailto:kbrenner@theunion.com)**

April 29, 2015

## **Blue Lead Gold Mine gets go-ahead from Nevada County Board of Supervisors**



Dara Zimmerman stands on the deck of her parents home which overlooks the Blue Lead Mine located at 18272 Red Dog Road, about 7 miles east of Nevada City. The Nevada County Board of Supervisors gave their approval to launch new mining operations at the 74-acre site Tuesday, after years of debate.



The Nevada County Board of Supervisors gave their approval to launch new mining operations at Blue Lead Mine located at 18272 Red Dog Road, about 7 miles east of Nevada City Tuesday, after years of debate.



Randy Fuller and Dara Zimmerman are shown at the Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday. The supervisors gave their approval to launch new mining operations at Blue Lead Mine located at 18272 Red Dog Road, about 7 miles east of Nevada City Tuesday, after years of debate.



G. Braiden Chadwick, from Roseville, represented the owners of Blue Lead Mine at the Nevada County Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday.

After years of debate, Blue Lead Gold Mine principals won approval Tuesday to launch new mining operations at a 74-acre site at 18272 Red Dog Road east of Nevada City.

“We think this is the way it should have gone out after this number of years,” said Arthur Knadler, a principal in the mining company since 2009. “Now there’s 100 hoops to jump through, but we’ll get there.”

But opponents, including neighbors in the You Bet community and area environmental groups, said they were discussing a potential lawsuit to block the approval.

“I have never seen such a shoddy environmental review in my life,” said Dara Zimmerman, a federal environmental engineer who deals with regional water issues and whose family owns a home about a mile from the mine site.

Zimmerman, other neighbors, community members and representatives of The Sierra Fund and the San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association said they had concerns about water supply, noise and the infiltration of old mercury deposits.

“Our intent is to be good citizens. This land has been raped and pillaged. We want to do this right, and return the land to the way it was 150 years ago.” Arthur Knadler, principal in the Blue Lead mining company

“I think there should be a full environmental impact report,” said former county supervisor Peter Van Zant, one of more than a dozen people who spoke during six hours of testimony Tuesday before Nevada County Board of Supervisors.

Supervisors, presiding before an audience of about 75 people, voted 4-0, with board member Hank Weston absent, to deny an appeal brought by neighbors and to approve a use permit, mitigated negative declaration and zoning change to mining extraction zone.

The board added a series of last-minute conditions to require 10 years of groundwater well monitoring and shielding of generators to control noise.

The approval is also pending issuance of a mining waste discharge permit from the state’s Central Valley Regional Water Control Board to address water quality.

“Our decision is based on the fact that people have to give up some of what they want on both sides,” said Supervisor Dan Miller. “We feel comfortable that the county took the time to listen to the concerns of the neighbors and recognized that their concerns were valid.”

During earlier testimony, Elizabeth “Izzy” Martin, CEO of The Sierra Fund, said new science on distribution of old mercury deposits show it can travel via rainfall onto new soils and into creeks. She called for a more detailed reclamation plan to restore the mine site and remove mercury.

But Knadler said the plans call the group to do Placer mining on an area not previously mined and also reclaim the mercury-tainted old mined land to its pre-Gold Rush state.

“Our intent is to be good citizens,” Knadler said. “This land has been raped and pillaged,” he said of the previous hydraulic mining common in the 1800s. “We want to do this right, and return the land to the way it was 150 years ago.”

Under terms of the conditions for approval, the mine and the county will be required to create a well monitoring plan that includes water flow monitors on wells at the Zimmerman house, as well as the homes of neighbors Randy Fuller and Andrew Jennings. Water level monitors will also be added at the two wells on the mine site.

Zimmerman, in a letter to the board and in testimony Tuesday, called into question the results of county consultant Dr. Andrew Kopania of EMKO Environmental Inc. in El Dorado Hills.

Zimmerman said Kopania “falsified the results” of the tests by overestimating the amount of water that could be pumped and recharged in relation to the needs of mining operation. He also failed to pump both of the wells at the same time — opting instead to only pump one well at a time.

“This study doesn’t meet the state (Senate Bill 610) standards and would not hold up in court,” she said.

Kopania testified Tuesday that his pumping tests found no impact on neighboring wells and that there was adequate groundwater to support the project, even during a drought.

He said later his county contract only specified a need to pump one well at a time. He said the well water would only be used to supplement recycled water in two ponds that would be the main source for the mining operation.

Knadler said the next step would be to await issuance of the discharge permit. Meanwhile, he said his crew would get the mine site ready by sealing the ponds and by laying pipe to connect one of the wells to a pond.

Tuesday’s public hearing was a continuation from a hearing in April 2014 on the appeal brought by neighbors. At that time, supervisors voted 3 to 2 to delay a decision in order to do more tests on noise and water supply.

The appeal, brought by Fuller, was of the Feb. 13, 2014 approval by Nevada County Planning Commission.

NOTE: This story was updated on April 29, 2015 to correct the name of an environmental group.

To contact Staff Writer Keri Brenner, email [kbrenner@theunion.com](mailto:kbrenner@theunion.com) or call 530-477-4239.

©2005 - 2015 Swift Communications, Inc.