



Photo by Peggy Fagerstrom

TUNDRA SWANS— Gracing local ponds and lakes with their presence, tundra swans, or "whistling swans" (*Cynus columbianus*) are at home on the Arctic tundra. The birds breed in Alaska and far northern Canada. They spend the winters at sites ranging from southern Alaska to Nevada, Utah and Baja California and also in the mid-Atlantic coast.

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Alaska Gold Company introduces Rock Creek Mine project to public

By Diana Haecker

"Tonight ends a lot of hard work and time, a lot of money and efforts spent by a lot of people to bring the project to this stage," began Doug Nicholson's presentation on the proposed Rock Creek Mine at last week's project public meeting at Old Saint Joseph Hall.

The meeting was part of a public comment period to give the community a chance to voice its opinion on the two proposed open-pit mine projects at Rock Creek and Big Hurrah, together called the Rock Creek Mine Project.

Army Corps of Engineers project manager Jim Wolfe, State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources project review coordinator Jim Renkert, DNR office of project

management and permitting project manager Tom Crafford and Ed Fogels, deputy commissioner of the DNR were present to hear public comment on the project. State of Alaska DEC Project Manager Luke Boles was present telephonically.

Alaska Gold General Manager Doug Nicholson gave an overview of what the public can expect once the Rock Creek Mine Project goes online, extracting an estimated 3.3 million ounces of gold from the area.

First, he thanked Alaska Gold parent NovaGold President and CEO Rick Van Nieuwenhuysse for the tenacity to invest and pursue the Rock Creek Mine Project at a time when gold prices were down.

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Photo submitted by Joy Hewitt

FOURTH OF JULY— Madison Johnson enjoys the Fourth of July Celebration in Council last weekend after winning prizes in the fun-filled activities.

FBI profiler's report says no serial killer suspected in missing persons cases

By Diana Haecker

Last Thursday, a special meeting of the Community Safety Work group reviewed a report by FBI profilers asked to review 24 case files of missing persons and suspicious deaths that had occurred in Nome since 1966.

The FBI profiler's analysis: "Based on its review of the submitted case materials, it is the NCAVC's opinion that no evidence exists to support the conclusion that a serial killer has been targeting Native Alaskans in Nome."

The excerpts read by NPD Chief Craig Moates during the meeting said that none of the cases have been linked forensically and that there is no singular or unusual behavior reflected in the cases, which would support their linkage to a common offender. "Additionally, the lack of trauma is virtually unheard of in homicide investigations, let alone in serial killing investigations. The very long time span of four to five decades is also highly unusual for a serial killing case," the report reads.

Rather than suspecting one serial killer of the unsolved cases, the profilers suggested that a combination of other factors may need to be looked at. "When examining the number of cases that do not appear to be homicides, it is important to note the very cold climate, isolated and potentially treacherous geography, and cold ocean currents that exist in Nome. These factors, in conjunction with the excessive alcohol consumption by many of the victims, have to be taken into consideration."

Eighteen months ago resolutions were issued by the Bering Straits Native Corporation, Kawerak and Norton Sound Health Corporation to press law enforcement and the community to take a closer look at unexplained disappearances and deaths of young Native men under suspicious circumstances.

Two FBI agents from Quantico, Virginia, two agents from Anchorage and one from Fairbanks met with the core group of the Community Safety Group the day before the public meeting.

The well-attended public meeting the next day saw representatives from the Regional Wellness forum, NSHC, Nome Eskimo Community, Kawerak, AMCC, Alaska State Troopers, the City of Nome, as well as an *Anchorage Daily News* reporter and the Unalakleet IRA present telephonically.

According to Moates, NPD had been reviewing and investigating 24 missing persons and suspicious death cases dating back to the 1960s. The 24 case files were submitted to the FBI for analysis and review. "The purpose of the review was to determine the probability of a serial killer in the Nome community and to make suggestions to law enforcement concerning techniques and technology that would assist in the investigation of these cases," said Moates.

Out of the 24 cases, 19 had a definitive outcome, which did not seem to have a criminal element.

One case that could be put to rest was Ward Olanna's, whose body is still missing, but his murderer, Reuben Rock had been arrested,

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Photo by Diana Haecker

HAPPY BIRTHDAY — Nome Volunteer Fire Department Chief Wes Perkins celebrates his 50th birthday while working the wrench at a fire hydrant on Front Street last week opening the valve to let the water flow for the annual Front Street cleanup. With the Fourth of July celebrations around the corner, the fire department traditionally gets the fire hoses out and hoses down the mud, dust and dirt from Front Street.

• Alaska Gold



Photo by Diana Haecker

ROCK CREEK PROJECT—Alaska Gold's General Manager, Doug Nicholson, glances up at his Power Point presentation and explains the proposed operations at Rock Creek mine and Big Hurrah during last week's public meeting.

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NovaGold's website states that Van Nieuwenhuyse took over the management of NovaGold Resources Inc. in 1998 — then a company with no significant assets, no money and no appreciable market capitalization. Under Van Nieuwenhuyse's leadership, NovaGold turned into a company valued at over \$1.5 billion and is on the verge of becoming a mid-tier gold and copper producer.

Nicholson explained that NovaGold is now transitioning from an exploration company to a production company. Other NovaGold projects are located at Ambler Creek near Kobuk, the Galore mine and Donlin Creek.

Nicholson said that for the past years, Alaska Gold has worked on the exploration aspect of the Rock Creek and Big Hurrah mines. The companies has established hydrology baselines, monitored surface water and air quality, identified wetlands delineation, rock characterization and cultural resources; surveyed the socioeconomic as well as the wildlife aspect of the project and has come up with alternative analysis, mine planning and environmental mitigation.

Nicholson then gave a project overview of the two sites. Planned are two open-pit mines at Rock Creek, approximately eight miles

out of town, and Big Hurrah, 42 miles from town. A mill crushing and grinding 7,000 metric tons of material a day is to be constructed at the Rock Creek site. Nicholson projected that the output would be 100,000 oz. of gold a year, for a project life of four to five years. The mill will use a projected five to seven MW of electricity, supplied by Nome Joint Utilities. The Rock Creek mine footprint is mostly privately patented land, but other parts are owned by Bering Straits Native Corporation and Sitnasuak Native Corporation.

Nicholson said that Rock Creek had first been mined in 1902 and that extensive exploration took place in the last 30 years.

A 1200' x 3000' x 400' open pit following the drainage feature of the area is planned. Nicholson said that the company tries to avoid drainage into Glacier Creek, since it is a salmon stream. The mine mill would operate on two 12-hour shifts, year around. He said that controlled blasting in the pit would occur once a day and the ore would then be taken to the mill facility located at Rock Creek. He anticipates that 5,000 to 7,000 tons of ore will be processed each day. Gravity floatation will be utilized to capture the bulk of the gold. Approximately 1,000 tons are then skimmed off

and processed in a cyanidation circuit. He said that the material then goes through a detoxification circuit, where the cyanide is complexed to where it is not soluble and then gets recycled. "By the time the water comes out, it meets drinking water standards," said Nicholson.

Industry standard is that a sodium cyanide solution is mixed with finely ground rock and then separated from the ground rock as a gold cyanide solution. Zinc is added to the solution, precipitating out residual zinc, as well as the gold metals. The zinc is removed with sulfuric acid, leaving gold sludge that is generally smelted

into a doré that is shipped to a metals refinery for final processing into 99.9999 percent pure metals.

Nicholson said that carbon is added to the solution, which frees the gold from the cyanide, and the gold is then screened out and smelted right on site.

The solution is then taken through a detoxification process, and the tailings are taken to the tailings impoundment.

Nicholson showed photos of a mine mill building which the gold company acquired from Eleonore Creek mine. The building was disassembled and will be barged up from the Yukon and arrive in Nome soon.

He said that after the closure of facility, the open pit is proposed to be left as a lake as potential fish habitat.

At Big Hurrah, 42 miles east of Nome, Alaska Gold owns the patented rights to mine the entirety of the mine's proposed footprint. Nicholson said planned are an annual ore production of 270,000 tons. The ore will be trucked year around, 24/7 to the Rock Creek mill site with a convoy of two or three 100-ton trucks on road every hour and a half. The route is to follow the Council Highway to town, use the Nome Bypass Road, Nome-Beltz Highway, on to the Nome-Teller Road, off to the newly built spur to Glacier Creek Road.

Big Hurrah Creek will be re-channelized, and Nicholson said that Alaska Gold is seeing a unique opportunity to do something for the environment and to restore a stream from previous mining. "Tailings are in the creek drainage, which is something you do not want to see in [a] salmon stream," he said.

Nicholson then said that the building expenditure to bring the Rock Creek mine project online is estimated at \$78 million. The annual expenditure is projected at \$31 million, which is split up in \$20.6

million for consumables and \$10.4 in payroll. To date, Nicholson said, the company had spent \$44 million. Nicholson said that the mine would employ 135 people, preferably from Nome or the region. He said that there would be 70 employees needed at the mine, 46 to operate the mill and 19 to work in administration. He said there won't be a camp at the Rock Creek site and that employees will live in town. Nicholson emphasized a local hire priority policy.

"As we said all along, we will hire locally," Nicholson said. "We want to hire as many as possible from this region. It benefits us as well as the region. We get a more productive worker with somebody who's familiar to the area, who goes home every night to his family, who wants to be here and who enjoys the area."

On its website, NovaGold advertises the Rock Creek mine project to its shareholders by emphasizing the existing infrastructure and other existing state and city services. "The Rock Creek project is located only seven miles from the City of Nome and is accessed by state maintained roads. Positive attributes of the project include the presence of the nearby town site infrastructure and power, simple mining and processing, modest capital costs and exploration expansion potential. Permitting is also anticipated to be a straightforward and timely process, due to community support for the project and based on the long history of mining in the area. Permits are anticipated to be finalized by mid-2006."

The public comment period for the first wave of permits expired on Thursday, July 6. For more information go to www.dnr.state.ak.us/mlw/mining/largemine or to www.novagold.net.

• NJUS

cedure for Rock Creek as the enterprise comes to the end of its developmental stage.

Besides supplying dependable power to the mine where operators have vowed to put locals to work, an added benefit from the power

deal with NovaGold could be lower utility prices for other NJU customers, according to Handeland. "We will be able to spread our fixed costs over a much broader base," he said. "Rate-payers will see a savings."

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