

THE YUKON

Curragh seeks delay in filing abandonment plan

By SARAH DAVISON
Star Reporter

The beginning of what promises to be the end to one of the territory's longest-running abandonment sagas has started with a request for a further delay.

Curragh Resources Inc. has asked the Yukon Territory Water Board for permission to delay filing its abandonment plan for tailings near the Faro pit for another four months.

It makes more sense, the company argues, to file the plan for the Faro pit along with a Final Tailings Deposition Plan and a Water Recycle Plan.

Some federal officials agree.

The final plan and the recycle plan are due July 31, 1991. But the "Down Valley Tailings Project" is due March 31, 1991.

Curragh is requesting that all three studies are submitted together, so that final plans for abandonment can be coordinated.

But the water board has responded that under its governing legislation, the Northern Inland Waters Act, it cannot allow the delay without a full amendment of the water licence. This would take at least three months.

It's possible, therefore, that Curragh will overshoot the March 31 deadline and find itself, once again, in contravention of its water licence.

Curragh, however, calls this a hypothetical suggestion, and a situation that can be avoided.

"We don't have any intention of being in contravention of our water licence," George Whyte, Curragh's vice-chair and corporate secretary, said in an interview Wednesday.

But he said he didn't want to comment at this stage on how



Star File Photo

The Faro pit: the lead-zinc mine is one of the world's largest.

Curragh will avoid the situation.

Nor would he say why Curragh requires an 11th-hour delay to produce studies and plans it's known about for at least three years.

When Curragh bought the former Cyprus Anvil mine in November, 1985, chair Clifford Frame made as a sale condition the removal of a clause in the mine's water licence that required an abandonment plan.

Cyprus Anvil proposed building up the tailings dam by 55 metres and flooding the pond with water.

Covering tails with water is recognized as the most effective

method known to date of preventing acid rock drainage, a serious potential problem at Faro.

However, the Cyprus Anvil plan was budgeted at more than \$50 million in 1985 dollars, a sum Frame claimed at the time would make the mine start-up uneconomic.

The water board gave Curragh the emergency water licence amendment, and the sale went through.

Since the 1985 purchase, therefore, Curragh has been searching for a cheaper way of disposing these tails. It's hired two teams of experts

to help solve the problem.

In the meantime, however, Curragh has been overshooting deadlines contained in its water licence for production of those plans.

And the enormous Curragh mine, one of the largest lead-zinc mines in the world, has been operating without any abandonment plans, either temporary or permanent.

In addition, important questions have still to be answered about how the mining company will pay for these eventual abandonment plans.

At a public hearing last February, a legal expert hired by the water board told the public that a trustee environmental fund, set up to pay for abandonment of the Faro pit, does not legally exist.

At the same hearing, all intervenors said that the fund's cap of \$7.5 million was nowhere near adequate

for the job at hand.

But Curragh's inability or refusal to give the water board any indication of the potential cost for its proposed, but still secret, abandonment plan turned the whole situation into a catch-22.

Curragh said it couldn't give any indication of cost because its research was not yet complete.

In the meantime, the federal government also recommended that the financial security it has demanded for Curragh's expansion to the Vangorda Plateau — which amounts to many millions of dollars — be included in the apparently non-existent fund.

And a revision of the fund which would make the document fund and the document legal has yet to make an appearance.

The water board still has not said whether it accepts a further revision of the fund trust documents, submitted last February by Curragh's lawyers.

March 31, 1991 was targeted as the final date where everyone involved could begin to resolve the situation.

Once Curragh does present a plan, the water board will hold a public hearing because it will require an amendment to the company's water licence.

The Final Tailings Deposition Plan, due in July, deals with the abandonment of tailings generated by the whole mine.

This includes not only the Down Valley tailings pond near the Faro pit, but the tails from the Vangorda Plateau as well. Curragh proposes depositing some tailings from the Vangorda Plateau into the soon-to-be-exhausted Faro pit, and flooding it.

The Water Recycle Plan, also due in July, will deal with the recycling of water used by the mill, which is located near the Faro pit. It will also be used to mill ore from the Vangorda Plateau, 13 kilometres away.

Weather

LOCAL

Forecasts for Yukon and northwestern British Columbia for today and Friday.

SYNOPSIS

Generally clear skies were observed in southern regions early this morning. Cloudy skies and light snow were prevalent elsewhere. The warming trend will continue as a southwesterly flow of mild Pacific air gradually becomes established over the district. However a Pacific storm moving into the Gulf of Alaska on Friday will spread snow to most regions on Friday. Greatest accumulations will be on the coastal highways where a snowfall advisory is now in effect.

FORECAST

Whitehorse, Atlin, Teslin, Haines Junction, Klane Lake, Cassiar Mountains-Dease Lake: Today and tonight, mainly clear. Winds increasing to southeast 20 kmh in some valleys this morning causing high wind chills. Highs -16. Lows -18. Friday, becoming cloudy in the morning. Periods of snow in the afternoon. Continuing windy. Highs -12. Probability of precipitation in per cent 10 today, tonight and 80 Friday.

Haines-Skagway Roads: Snowfall advisory issued. Today and tonight, periods of snow. Highs -14. Temperatures rising to -10 overnight. Friday, snow becoming heavy in the afternoon. Accumulations to 12 centimetres by evening. Highs -8. Probability of precipitation in per cent 80 today, tonight and 100 Friday.

Liard: Today and tonight, mainly clear. Highs -24. Lows -32. Friday, becoming cloudy with periods of snow in the afternoon. Highs -20. Probability of precipitation in per cent 10 today, tonight and Friday.

Central Yukon: Mostly cloudy. Periods of light snow. Highs -22. Tonight, mainly cloudy. Chance of snow. Lows -28. Friday, mostly cloudy. Snow in the evening. Highs -22. Probability of precipitation in per cent 70 today, 40 tonight and 70 Friday.

Northern Yukon: Today and tonight,

mostly cloudy. Chance of snow. Highs -28. Lows -35. Friday, clearing in the morning. Highs -28. Probability of precipitation in per cent 40 today, 30 tonight and 20 Friday.

OUTSIDE

TORONTO (CP) — The Canadian weather picture today.

British Columbia: Rain and snow along the coast with increasing wind late in the day. Highs 5 to -12. Sunny periods in the interior. Highs -4 to -23 in the north.

Yukon: A few clouds in the south. Mainly cloudy in the north. Highs -16 in the southwest to -32 in the north.

Northwest Territories: Cloudy periods in Mackenzie Valley and Great Slave district. Occasional very light snow. Temperatures ranging from -25 to -35. A few clouds in Keewatin district. Temperature range -30 to -35. A few clouds in Baffin district. Temperature range -28 to -34. Cloudy in High Arctic district with chance of light snow in the west. Temperature range -26 to -32.

Alberta: Mainly sunny. Highs ranging from 0 in the southwest foothills to -10 in central regions to -25 in the north.

Saskatchewan: Variable cloud with scattered flurries. Clearing from the west during the day. Highs -18 in the south to -25 in the north.

Manitoba: Cloudy in the south. Sunny with cloudy periods in the north. Highs -18 in the south and -30 in the north.

Ontario: A mix of sun and cloud in the south with scattered flurries. Highs -5 to -10. Mainly clear and cold in central and northeast regions. Highs -15 to -27. Periods of snow developing in the northwest. Highs -20 to -25.

Quebec: Mostly sunny and very cold in the north. Highs -23 to -34. Mostly sunny and cold in the south except light snow along the lower north shore. Highs -10 to -24.

TORONTO (CP) — Temperatures in Celsius; precipitation in millimetres:

Vancouver	3	1 024.8
Victoria	2	1 012.4
Comox	1	0 010.2
Port Hardy	3	0 008.8
Prince Rupert	-3	-15 000.0
Terrace	-19	-21 000.0
Penticton	-7	-9 002.6
Kamloops	-12	-14 005.8
Abbotsford	-1	-2 023.4
Cranbrook	-12	-17 001.2
Revelstoke	-10	-11 004.0
Puntzi Mountain	-16	-27 000.0
Williams Lake	-23	-25 000.8
Prince George	-25	-27 001.5
Mackenzie	-28	-35 000.4
Fort St. John	-25	-31 000.0
Fort Nelson	-24	-32 000.0
Dease Lake	-21	-34 000.0
Peace River	-31	-35 000.0
Whitehorse	-22	-29 000.0
Yellowknife	-31	-40 000.4
Inuvik	22	35 000.0
Resolute Bay	-26	-30 000.0
Eureka	-37	-40 000.2
Alert	-25	-39 000.0
Cambridge Bay	-30	-35 000.0
Calgary	-16	-19 000.0
Edmonton	-22	-27 000.0
Lethbridge	-1	-21 000.0
Medicine Hat	-22	-26 000.0
Swift Current	-17	-22 000.2
Regina	-24	-28 000.0
Saskatoon	-25	-28 000.4
Prince Albert	-32	-34 000.4
North Battleford	-28	-30 000.0
Winnipeg	-28	-32 000.0
Brandon	-31	-34 000.0
Churchill	-32	-38 000.2
The Pas	-27	-34 000.0
Kenora	-26	-34 000.0
Thunder Bay	-15	-33 000.0
North Bay	-5	-25 002.0
Toronto	2	-8 000.5
Ottawa	-9	-16 004.8
Montreal	-6	-12 009.2
Fredericton	-7	-10 008.2
Charlottetown	-5	-8 021.1
Halifax	-1	-8 012.2

Vangorda mining begins

"We are now mining Vangorda," says Ted Parry of Curragh Resources Inc.

A water licence and surface lease for the expansion of the Faro operation came through in November.

The production from Vangorda is the end result of years of planning and negotiation by Curragh, the Yukon's largest private-sector employer. It all started when the mine was owned by Cyprus Anvil Corp.

Curragh bought the mine from Cyprus Anvil in 1985 and re-opened it in 1986.

The Vangorda deposit is one of three deposits on the Vangorda Plateau. It lies about 13 kilometres away from the Faro deposit.

The plateau consists of three deposits, the Vangorda, the Grum and the Dy.

Underground mining to extract the final reserves in the Faro pit is continuing, said Parry. He expects the Faro deposit will be extinguished by mid-1991.

There are minor metallurgical differences between Vangorda and Faro ore, said Parry. The mill has been modified so ore feed from both the Vangorda and Faro deposits can be milled at the same time.

"The majority of (ore feed) is coming from the Faro pit at the moment. But we'll see a gradual change over the next six months, and at the end of it, we will have switched entirely to Vangorda ore."

The Vangorda ore is being trucked to the mill, which stands next to the Faro deposit. There are varying grades of ore in the Vangorda deposit, said Parry, and some are harder to extract than others.

Exploration of the Dy deposit is continuing, he said. Curragh hopes to have that deposit in development within the next two years.

"We're actively pursuing the Dy, and we've done a lot of testing and feasibility work. Indications are positive."