

https://www.bhpioneer.com/local_news/coeur-wharf-mine-expansion-approved/article_5abf4f76-7ec7-11ec-8af0-c7b6df63ad77.html

FEATURED

Coeur Wharf mine expansion approved

By Jaci Conrad Pearson, Black Hills Pioneer

Jan 26, 2022



Using the same mining means and methods, Coeur Wharf will expand its mining operation by 48.7 acres, called the Wharf Boston Expansion. Pioneer photo by Jaci Conrad Pearson

[Click to purchase this photo](#)

LEAD — Coeur Wharf's Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application #470 was approved by the Lawrence County Commission Tuesday, making way for 48.7 acres of new disturbance and additional mining, dubbed the Wharf Boston Expansion.

"The applicant is requesting a new CUP to increase the boundary to extend mining operations," said Lawrence County Planning and Zoning Administrator Amber Vogt. "Basically, what they're looking at doing is an expansion of the already existing mine operation. They have been mining since the early 1980s and as part of

the application, all of their state mine permits are still in place.”

The project area is located approximately three miles west of Lead in the Bald Mountain Mining District. As of Jan. 1, 2021, the permitted affected acreage at Wharf is 1,480 acres with 1,272 acres disturbed and 266.5 acres reclaimed.

The Boston Expansion area is located to the south of the existing Wharf Mine. The property is accessed by Wharf Road and Nevada Gulch Road. The Boston Expansion area encompasses approximately 48.7 acres, 8.1 acres of which is within the existing permit.

Vogt indicated in her staff report that mining in the Boston Expansion area will be an open-pit, truck-and-shovel operation, which is the same method used in the ongoing operations at the Wharf Mine.

“Total production is estimated to be approximately 175 million tons of material and both gold and silver will be produced,” Vogt said. “Mining in the expansion area is anticipated to increase the mine life by one to three years, thus extending the total mine life until 2028 to potentially 2030.”

The conditions of CUP #470 are similar to Coeur Wharf’s other permits.

There were 20 letters submitted to the county in support of the expansion.

There was one letter submitted by Mark and Judy Javersak, who live near the proposed expansion area, opposing the expansion.

A public hearing was held Tuesday prior to the commission vote.

Judy addressed the commission with several concerns including blasting, dust, weeds, down trees, and if she and her husband will get fair market value for their house, as they recently listed it for sale.

Nine individuals representing businesses and not-for profit entities spoke in favor of the Wharf expansion.

Rob Hall, mining department head for the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology praised Wharf and their partnership with the college.

“I’ve been really impressed with their support for us at the school,” Hall said. “They hire students, they provide scholarships, they provide funding to support our building. They sit on our industrial advisory board and provide input into what we’re teaching our students to make sure that they’re capable when they come out of the school. They host us for field trips.”

The public hearing was closed and commissioners held discussion on the CUP.

Commissioner Richard Sleep said it sounded like Wharf has a good impact on the county and the surrounding area.

“I’m sure there’s going to be cases, like the lady said about the disturbance, every once in awhile, but it doesn’t seem to be a regular thing, so I would support their endeavor,” Sleep said.

Commissioner Brandon Flanagan said Wharf has been a great neighbor to Terry Peak and that the mine area looks much better than what Golden Reward looked like prior to Wharf.

“Every year, it seems like they do more and more for the Lead-Deadwood community and the Hills, the area as a whole,” Flanagan said. “This is what I would call a minor expansion, compared to what’s existing. It seems to follow right in line with what they’re doing in trying to extend the life of the mine. Of course, there are going to be some impacts to folks up there. It does look like it will be short-lived, fortunately.”

Commissioner Randall Rosenau said he supports the expansion because he believes that Wharf is a community business, in its own sense.

“I recognize that there are some issues with some individuals in that area, but beyond that, there’s a lot more benefit,” Rosenau said.

Commissioner Randy Deibert said if he had a suggestion for Wharf, it would be to work more with their neighbors that are right up against their fence.

“I support the expansion. It’s a relatively small expansion, compared to the overall life of the mine,” Deibert said, adding that the reclamation done so far at the Wharf mine looks good.

Matt Zietlow, environmental manager for Coeur Wharf addressed the commission with a presentation prior to the CUP approval.

“No new pit, no new mine operations, all on Wharf property,” Zietlow said. “It truly is more of the same.”

There will be no change to the mining or processing methods, no new facilities, the same equipment will be used, workforce maintained, and the area is an extension of the current permitted pit.

Zietlow said more than 10,000 samples were taken within the Boston Expansion area and that no groundwater or surface water is present within that area.

“On the blasting side, we, of course, only blast during daylight hours,” Zietlow said. “Backup alarms. We’ve done some work to try to reduce the impact of that. You’re more able to hear those when mining operations are right at the surface. We are required to have those loud enough to where ground traffic around the equipment be able to clearly hear them.”

Four seismographs are stationed along the property boundary and every blast is monitored by at least one seismograph.

“The US Bureau of Mines are the criteria we follow on that,” Zietlow said. “And make sure that our blasts do not exceed that damage threshold. Three-quarters of an inch per second is that criteria. That is actually the criteria they set for potential damage to plaster.

Wharf employs 250 full-time workers.

“Our annual payroll is over \$24 million a year,” Zietlow said.

To read all of today's stories, [Click here](#) or call 642-2761 to subscribe to our e-edition or home delivery.