

page NovaCopper will gain \$20 million with Sunward Resources merger

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The weekly mining newspaper for Alaska and Canada's North

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### **NEWS NUGGETS** Compiled by Shane Lasley

#### Whistler project deal falls through

Alternative Earth Resources Inc. April 28 reported that it has decided to terminate its previously announced deal to acquire Kiska Metals Corp.'s Whistler copper-gold project in Southcentral Alaska. Under a non-binding agreement reported by Mining News on April 19, Alternative Earth was to acquire full ownership of Whistler in exchange for issuing Kiska 24.5 million of its shares, which would represent half of the company's shares upon completion of the exchange. Alternative Earth, which has been seeking the right project to jump into mineral exploration sector, said that it continues to assess various projects from mineral exploration to development stage. Kiska said the holding costs for Whistler has been reduced to a manageable level, allowing the company to maintain the asset as it continues to seek joint venture or other arrangements on this prospective advanced stage exploration project.

#### All Bokan rare earths split with MRT

Ucore Rare Metals Inc. April 28 reported the separation of samarium and gadolinium, the final two rare earths needed to be split by way of the cutting-edge molecular recognition technology. The MRT process is designed to bind selectively with ions based on multiple parameters such as size, chemistry, and geometry. Using a pregnant leach solution prepared from material taken from Ucore's Dotson Ridge deposit in Southeast Alaska, IBC Advanced Technologies developed a three-step process for creating nearly pure rare earths. In early March, Ucore reported the successful separation of all the individual rare earth elements except for samarium and gadolinium, which were bound together. Samarium and gadolinium have now been separated into individual salts, each with 99.2 percent purity. "We look forward to completing pilot-scale testing of this promising nano-technology," said Ucore President and CEO said Jim McKenzie.

#### Critical minerals bill in the House

Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Nevada, April 22 introduced the "National Strategic and Critical Minerals Production Act of

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# AMA calls out Jewell

Secretary cites 'much' mining on Alaska's federal lands; miners disagree

#### By SHANE LASLEY

Mining News

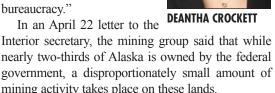
laska miners are taking U.S. Department of Alaska miners are taking out.

Interior Secretary Sally Jewell to task over recent comments she made that suggest mining is prolific on federal lands in Alaska.

Following a speech to the Center for American

Progress, a liberal think-tank based in Washington, D.C., Jewell told Alaska Public Radio Network Correspondent Liz Ruskin that "much" of mining in Alaska is done on federal lands.

Alaska The Miners Association said this assertion contradicts what is actually happening in the Far North SALLY JEWELL State and seized the "opportunity to clarify the actual amount of mining activity on federal lands and point out why there isn't more – massive areas currently closed to mineral entry and more proposed to be added, permitting delays, and other circumstances of



This is the latest exchange in an ongoing row between those advocating for resource development in Alaska and the department managing a large swath of the state's public lands.

While Jewell's comments on mining activity on federal lands have raised some questions about how much is 'much,' AMA does not see two of six largescale mines and roughly 18 percent of placer operations fitting the Secretary's description.

"For Secretary Jewell to say 'much' of Alaska's mining activity is on federal lands is an overstatement at best," according to AMA statewide board of directors President Jason Brune.

The mining association points out that the two large mines operating on federal lands in Alaska -Coeur Mining's Kensington operation and Hecla Mining's Greens Creek Mine, both in Southeast – are on U.S. Forest Service lands that do not even fall under the administration of the Interior Department.

Of these, Kensington was only developed after a lengthy legal battle between Coeur and another federal agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, which was only resolved when the U.S. Supreme Court decided in favor of the mine developer.

Much of the reason for the dearth of mines on federal lands in Alaska, however, is that many companies familiar with the landscape sidestep exploration on federally administered lands whenever possible.

Mineral companies, however, are reluctant to publically express this discontent because of needing to deal with the Department of Interior and other federal agencies as a normal course of business - no matter whether it is state, federal or Alaska Native lands in which they are exploring or developing.

"Personally, we avoid working on federal lands," one such mining representative told Mining News.

This is particularly true at the exploration stage, according to a mining executive.

"Working on federal lands in Alaska is way more difficult than working on state lands, in terms of getting permits for exploration," he said.

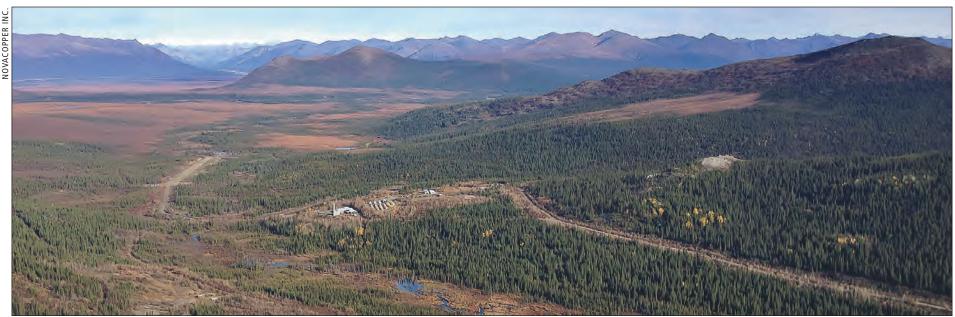
While Millrock Resources Inc. CEO Greg Beischer said his company would not turn down the chance to evaluate a promising mineral prospect on federal lands, the prospect generator's extensive portfolio in Alaska does not include any federal claims.

Beischer said that, due to the perception that it is



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Looking over the Bornite camp and deposit, NovaCopper's Arctic project lies in the Schwatka Mountains about 16 miles to the northeast. As engineers complete a feasibility study for Arctic, they will be looking for potential synergies with Bornite, including a single tailings facility and mill that can be used for both of these copper deposits in the Ambler Mining District.

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

# NovaCopper arranges creative financing

Junior offers to buy out cash-rich Columbia-focused explorer; directors, major shareholders of both companies sign off on deal

#### By SHANE LASLEY

Mining News

n a move that provides the cash needed to advance a L feasibility study for the Arctic project in Northwest Alaska, NovaCopper has agreed to purchase Sunward Resources Ltd., a Vancouver, B.C.-based mining exploration company with a copper-gold asset in Columbia and roughly US\$20 million in the bank.

Over the several weeks leading up to the April 23 announcement of the potential merger, the value of Sunward's stock has hovered at roughly US\$13 million, substantially less than the cash in the company's treasury, not to mention the value of its Columbia asset.

"The market had basically discounted the cash they had in the bank, so that provided an opportunity for us, particularly since we have a couple of shareholders in common," NovaCopper President and CEO Rick Van Nieuwenhuyse explained.

For Sunward shareholders, the deal provides an opportunity realize a benefit to the cash by continuing the **RICK VAN** exploration and development of a NIEUWENHUYSE large Alaska project with nearly 10 billion pounds of copper identified to date.

"The combination of Sunward and NovaCopper pro-



vides shareholders a single company with a strong balance sheet to advance critical path objectives at our high quality Arctic and Bornite copper-zinc assets in Alaska," said Van Nieuwenhuyse.

The merger – which already has the support of directors, management and major shareholders of both companies is expected to get the go-ahead when the proposal comes to a vote in this summer.

#### Pre-approved

To complete the deal, NovaCopper will issue Sunward shareholders 0.3 NovaCopper shares for every Sunward

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#### **NOVACOPPER DEAL**

share held. This comes to a value of US18.65 cents per Sunward share based on the 20-day volume weighted average price of the NovaCopper shares on the NYSE MKT exchange through April 22.

Sunward has roughly 142.33 million shares outstanding, making the deal worth about US\$27.6 million. At the end of 2014, the Columbia-focused exploration company had US\$20.95 million in cash and cash equivalents.

NovaCopper pitched the idea of merging with Sunward last year, and after shopping around the junior decided to accept the offer early in 2015.

Haywood Securities Inc., on behalf of NovaCopper, and Cormark Securities Inc., on behalf of Sunward, deemed the deal financially fair to the shareholders of both companies.

The proposed merger also won unanimous approval from the board of directors of both companies. The two directors that sit on the boards of both companies – Novagold Resources President and CEO Greg Lang and Electrum Group President Igor Levental – abstained from voting.

NovaCopper Chairman Thomas Kaplan also abstained from voting due to his relationship with Electrum Strategic Resources L.P., which owns about 27.8 percent of NovaCopper's issued and outstanding shares, and an Electrum-affiliated fund owns roughly 18.2 percent of Sunward's issued and outstanding shares.

Sunward's four largest shareholders – including Gold First Investments Ltd., Electrum Strategic Acquisitions LLC and Paulson & Co. Inc. – which hold roughly 70 percent of Sunward's issued and outstanding shares, have agreed to vote in support of the arrangement at Sunward's special meeting of shareholders expected to be held in June or July. This exceeds the 66.66 percent shareholder majority needed to approve the merger.

Together, Electrum and Paulson & Co. also hold about 42 percent of NovaCopper's shares.

Once pertinent approvals are in place, the merged company will be run by current NovaCopper management and its board of directors will be expanded from seven to nine members to accommodate two nominees by Gold First Investments, Sunward's largest investor.

#### Columbia copper

In addition to a substantial bank account, Sunward brings Titiribi gold-copper project in Columbia to the merger. The company, however, has not completed any significant exploration on the property since 2012.

"We are not acquiring the company for its asset, and Titiribi is the only asset they have," said Van Nieuwenhuyse.

NovaCopper, however, does sees value in the Columbian property.

Titiribi has an NI 43-101-compliant measured and indicated resource of 285.8 million metric tons averaging 0.5 grams per metric ton (4.63 million ounces) gold and a relatively small amount (654 million pounds) of copper. Additionally the project has 349.4 million metric tons of inferred resources averaging 0.53 g/t (6.53 million

oz) gold.

"There is good exploration potential there for a big porphyry system, but it is not something we are going to spend a lot of our own dollars on," Van Nieuwenhuyse told Mining News.

Instead, NovaCopper plans to re-evaluate the geology and seek a partner to continue the exploration of Titiribi. Thanks to very low holding costs, the company can afford to be patient with its re-interpretation and marketing of the property.

#### **Arctic feasibility**

For NovaCopper, the merger is basically a US\$20-million financing. Combined with the nearly US\$4 million the company already had in its coffers, the merged entity would have plenty of cash to complete a feasibility study for the Arctic deposit, the next step toward developing mines at the world-class copper projects underway in the Ambler Mining District of Northwest

In 2011, NovaCopper cut a deal with NANA Corp., the Alaska Native regional corporation for Northwest Alaska, to explore a large swath of land in the Ambler District. Known as the Upper Kobuk Mineral Project, the lands being advanced by this partnership cover the copper-rich Arctic and Bornite deposits, and a number of other prospects on public and NANA lands

NovaCopper intends to carry out an US\$8 million to US\$10 million program this year that will focus primarily on infill resource and geotechnical drilling at Arctic. Continued environmental and engineering studies for the feasibility study and work at the Bornite deposit also are planned.

A preliminary economic assessment for developing an open-pit mine at Arctic was completed in 2013.

This scoping level study outlined a 10,000-metric-ton-per-day mill at Arctic that is anticipated to produce roughly 1.5 billion pounds of copper, 1.8 billion lbs. of zinc, 289 million lbs., of lead, 30.5 million oz of silver and 349,000 oz of gold over a 12-year mine-life.

The open-pit for Arctic encompasses an indicated resource of 23.85 million metric tons averaging 3.26 percent (1.71 billion lbs.) copper, 4.45 percent (2.34 billion lbs.) zinc, 0.76 percent (400 million lbs.) lead, 0.71 grams per metric ton (550,000 oz) gold, and 53.2 g/t (40.8 million oz) silver. Additionally, Arctic has an inferred resource of 3.63 million metric tons averaging 3.22 percent (239 million lbs.) copper, 3.84 percent (285 million lbs.) zinc, 0.58 percent (43.2 million lbs.) lead, 0.59 g/t (60,000 oz) gold.

According to the PEA, it will only take about 4,400 meters of drilling to upgrade the inferred resources at Arctic to measured and indicated categories. Another roughly 4,000 meters is needed to gather the geotechnical, hydrological and metallurgical data needed to complete the feasibility study.

#### **Bornite synergies**

While the 2015 program will primarily focus on advancing Arctic to a project that can be presented to banks and permitting agencies, NovaCopper intends to continue

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### NORTHERN NEIGHBORS,

Compiled by Shane Lasley



#### **Stakeholder nabs Ryan's expertise**

Stakeholder Gold Corp. April 23 reported that renowned Yukon Territory prospector and innovator Shawn Ryan has agreed to join its exploration advisory committee. Ryan will provide guidance for exploration of Stakeholder's Ballarat gold property and other strategic initiatives in the White Gold District, Yukon. "Shawn Ryan is an experienced and proven discoverer of gold deposits in the Yukon, and the company he founded, GroundTruth Exploration Inc., has developed some of the most advanced and cost-effective methods of exploring for mineral assets - particularly, but not exclusively, gold occurrences," said Stakeholder CEO Chris Berlet. Located 75 miles (120 kilometers) southeast of Dawson City, Ballarat is situated between Kaminak Gold Corp.'s Coffee Property and Kinross Gold Corp.'s Golden Saddle Property. Stakeholder and others have completed some exploration at Ballarat, including a five-hole drill program completed in 2011. GroundTruth is reviewing geological data for furthering exploration at Ballarat. "We are happy to be involved with the Ballarat project, which we believe hosts meaningful potential for discovery of another economic gold deposit in the Yukon," said Ryan. GroundTruth will be applying its industry leading technologies such as the GT Probe, the GT RAB Drill and the exploration applications developed for the UAV Drone – to the exploration of Ballarat and for other exploration projects in the White Gold District.

#### **Evrim cuts deal for B.C. copper project**

Evrim Resources Corp. April 27 said it has signed an agreement with Paget Minerals Corp. to acquire the Ball Creek project, an early-stage exploration project in northwestern British Columbia considered prospective for copper-gold-molybdenum porphyry and epithermal gold-silver deposits. "The project is central to the Galore Creek and Schaft Creek deposits to the west and the Red Chris Mine to the northeast," said Evrim President and CEO Paddy Nicol. The Ball Creek porphyry system contains at least four distinct mineralized zones. Past drilling at the Main zone has cut 231 meters grading 0.21 percent copper and 0.54 grams per metric ton gold. Evrim said there is significant potential to expand the area of mineralization to the south. Two other porphyry prospects and three epithermal systems identified at Ball Creek have limited exploration. Evrim Resources is prospect generator with a number of exploration projects in northwestern Mexico. To acquire full ownership of Ball Creek, Evrim has agreed to pay Paget C\$150,000 upon closing the agreement; issue 1.25 million Evrim shares, or cash equivalent, in stages; and pay Paget a percentage of payments received as part of any future partnership agreements reached on the property.

#### Kennady reports kimberlite results

Kennady Diamonds Inc. April 23 reported further diamond recovery results from the 2014 summer/fall drilling of the Kelvin kimberlite at its Kennady North diamond project, Northwest Territories. A 1.83-metric-ton sample from the Kelvin South Lobe averaged 3.64 carats per metric ton of diamonds greater than 0.85 millimeters. The four largest diamonds recovered from the Kelvin South Lobe sample

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#### **NOVACOPPER DEAL**

to investigate the viability of mining the near-surface portion of Bornite, a large copper deposit situated about 16 miles south of Arctic.

The potentially open-pittable portion of Bornite contains indicated resources of 14.1 million metric tons grading 1.08 percent (334 million pounds) copper and inferred resources of 109.6 million metric tons grading 0.94 percent (2.3 billion pounds) copper; and the deeper, potentially underground minable portion of Bornite contains inferred resources of 55.6 million metric tons grading 2.8 percent (3.4 billion pounds) copper.

NovaCopper expects that the re-sampling of roughly 13,000 meters of core drilled by Kennecott Copper Co. between 1957 and 1976 will translate to a substantial increase in the indicated resources at Bornite.

While developing a mine-plan for

Arctic, engineers also will be contemplating how Bornite will fit into the overall scenario to the maximum benefit of both projects

"Hopefully, we can find out that there are true synergies, and we find out we can have a single tailings facility and can have a mill that can be used for both deposits," Van Nieuwenhuyse explained.

If such synergies are identified, engineers will be tasked with finding the best location for such shared facilities and begin formulating ideas about when to phase in Bornite production in relation to Arctic.

Van Nieuwenhuyse said it currently looks like the best scenario is to start mining at the higher-grade Arctic deposit and phase in Bornite production, but at what point would most economical remains an open question.

"Where does Bornite fit in best to maximize the value out of both assets?" he asked, summarizing the trade-off studies that engineers are eyeing as they consider developing the first two mines in the Ambler Mining District.

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#### **NORTHERN NEIGHBORS**

are: 1.36 carat off-white, transparent, macle (twinned) with inclusions; 0.68 carat off-white, transparent, broken tetra-hexahedron with inclusions; 0.44 carat off-white, transparent, fragment with minor inclusions; and 0.44 carat off-white, transparent, octahedral with inclusions. A 47.62-kilogram sample from the Kelvin Sheet averaged 5.95 c/t of diamonds greater than 0.85 millimeters. The largest diamond recovered

from the Kelvin Sheet sample is described as a 0.12 carat white-colorless, transparent octahedral with minor inclusions. Kennady noted that the number of transparent white-colorless and off-white diamonds is very high. Another 2.73 metric tons of kimberlite from the Kelvin North Lobe is now being processed and results are expected by the end of the second quarter. Processing of a 436-metric-ton bulk sample collected from Kelvin over the winter is expected to begin by the end of May. •

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### **NEWS NUGGETS**

2015," which is intended to address American dependence on foreign minerals and to enable the United States to more efficiently develop its own mineral supplies. "It's not hyperbole to say our national defense and way of life depend on mineral production," said Amodei. "From military technology, such as aircraft and missiles used by service men and women to defend our country, to the cars, smartphones and televisions we use every day, they all contain strategic and critical minerals such as rare earth elements, gold and silver, to name a few." This legislation, H.R. 1937, enjoys the support of 29 original co-sponsors. It would require the U.S. departments of Interior and Agriculture to more efficiently develop domestic sources of strategic and critical minerals and mineral materials, including rare earth elements. The bill aims to facilitate a timely permitting process for mineral exploration projects by clearly defining the responsibilities of a lead agency; and setting the total review process for issuing permits to 30 months. The legislation also aims to ensure American mining projects are not indefinitely delayed by frivolous lawsuits by setting a 60-day time limit to file a legal challenge to a mining project; limiting injunctive relief to what is necessary to correct the violation of a legal requirement; and prohibiting the payment of attorney's fees, expenses and other costs by the U.S. taxpayer. Amodei said H.R. 1937 respects and upholds all environmental laws while setting timelines that ensure these laws do not become tools for lawsuits or

bureaucrats to block or delay responsible projects. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, introduced a similar piece of legislation, the "American Mineral Security Act of 2015," to the Senate in March.

### Zazu raises US\$2M of working capital

Zazu Metals Corp. April 22 said it is proceeding with a non-brokered private placement of US\$2 million through the issuance of up to 10 million shares at a price of C25 cents, or US20 cents per share. The company intends to use the proceeds from the financing for property development expenditures and general working capital purposes. Completion of the private placement is subject to regulatory approval. A preliminary economic assessment completed for the Lik South deposit in 2014 envisions a 5,500-metricon-per-day mill producing 234,000 dry metric tons of zinc concentrate (53 percent zinc) and 55,800 dry metric tons of lead concentrate (61 percent lead) annually over a nine-year mine-life. In total, 17.1 million metric tons of ore milled at an average grade of 7.7 percent zinc, 2.6 percent lead and 47 g/t silver is expected from the Lik South open pit. Zazu holds a 50 percent operating interest in the Lik zinc-lead-silver deposit in Northwest Alaska and Teck Resources Ltd. owns the remaining interest. Zazu has the exclusive right to increase its interest in Lik to 80 percent by investing US\$25 million (pre-inflation adjusted) by 2018. Adjusting for inflation, Zazu estimates this spending commitment will be roughly US\$45 million, leaving a balance of around US\$22 million remaining to earn the 80 percent ownership interest.

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harder to get permits for projects on federal claims, his company tends to prefer Alaska Native and state lands.

This avoidance results in fewer mineral projects on federal lands in Alaska being explored to a point that they can be proven feasible for future development.

Jewell's comment on mining was not the only problem that the AMA had with what the Interior Secretary had to say.

During the same interview with APRN,

Jewel advised, "I do think if I was in Gov. Walker's situation, I'd be looking to diversify my sources of revenue for the state."

AMA contends that federal policies that prevent resource development need to be eased before Alaska can fully diversify its

"Alaskans would love to diversify its revenue streams, if the federal government would allow us to do so," said Brune.

From policies to block development of the oil-rich Arctic Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to similar plans to place large swaths of the Fortymile Mining District off-limits, the federal government has increasingly been at odds with Alaska's government and resource sectors over the best use of lands in the Far North State.

"You need to look no further than recent decisions to permanently block drilling in the coastal plain of ANWR, permanent prohibitions on oil leasing in the North Aleutian Basin, delays for drilling in the OCS (outer continental shelf), closure of the most resource-rich areas of NPR-A (that's entirely closed to mineral entry), actions to obstruct the Pebble Project from entering the permitting process, the staggering reduction of timber sales and harvesting in

Southeast, and mineral closures through ACECs (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern)," said AMA Executive Director Deantha Crockett.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management announced plans to designate 685,000 acres of the historic Fortymile mining district in eastern Alaska as an ACEC, a move that would put this area in a conservation unit that is off-limits to mining.

In its letter to Secretary Jewell, AMA contends that this withdrawal breaks a promise the federal government made to Alaska in 1980, when it placed 106 million acres of federal lands in Alaska in conservation units as part of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

In brief, ANILCA promises that the federal government will not withdraw more than 5,000 acres of Alaska public lands without an act of Congress.

Many Alaskans see the use of ACECs as a way to skirt this promise and further debilitate resource opportunities on BLM lands in Alaska

"The Fortymile ACEC, and the proposal of others in the western and northern regions of the state, closes off opportunities for mining on federal lands to expand in the future," AMA inked in its letter to Jewell.

Despite diverging views of the best use of Alaska public lands, the miners association encourages the Interior Secretary to help diversify Alaska's economy through policies that encourage development of the state's rich mineral resources.

"Mining on 'much' of Alaska's federal lands will occur only when a stable and predictable permitting process is in place and land is managed in a way that incentivizes business investment," Executive Director Crockett said. "AMA looks forward to that day and stands ready to help Secretary Jewell make her statements a reality."

