

## Zephyr Gold Exploration

# Fremont County Planning Commission OKs permit

By **Carie Canterbury**  
The Daily Record

The Fremont County Planning Commission on Tuesday approved by majority vote a major modification to a conditional use permit for continued exploration of precious and base metals by Zephyr Gold USA Ltd.

Commissioners voting against the request for expansion were Chairman Byron Alsup and Larry Brown. Alsup said his main concern was for the potential impact on the wildlife in the area.

The request next will go to the Fremont County

Board of Commissioners for final approval.

The modification will modify the CUP boundary to encompass an additional 1,169 acres to the west of the existing CUP boundary that encompasses about 593 acres, according to the application. The eastern boundary is located south of County Road 3 east of the Dawson Ranch Subdivision, the western boundary is located near CR 28 and the Glen Vista Subdivision.

Because of the rugged and remote nature of the area, exploration equipment and personnel will be trans-

ported to the drill sites by helicopter.

The State Land Board lease restricts activity to occur between July 1 and Oct. 30 of each year to be protective of wildlife, additionally, the Bureau of Land Management will conduct its own environmental assessment.

Will Felderhof, the executive chairman and director for Zephyr Minerals, said the area of focus is the El Plomo area and three to five, 2,000-foot drill holes. Dr. Angela Bellantoni of Environmental Alternatives, Please see **ZEPHYR**, 3A



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Inc, who represents Zephyr, said the drilling will only be 24/7 when the drill rig operates each location.

"I am really excited about this drill site at El Plomo," Felderhof said. "I will be honest with you – I think it is the most exciting time I've had in my 40-year career, but at the end of the day, the drill is going to tell the story. ... We can conceivably hit 100 meters of solid mineralization and that would be a home run. That's why we are in there. This is a very unique and special location – you would not find a target

like this in Australia – this is very rare."

Gary Peterson, the chairman of the Royal Gorge Preservation Project, said there are two pending lawsuits involving Zephyr and legal access, and he said Zephyr appears to be "close to being broke." He added that Fremont County has no established procedure in place to monitor and evaluate Zephyr's adherence to the requirements placed on them by the CUPs.

"Final plea: for God's sake commissioners, let's at least let the dog catch up with its

tail," he said. "Hold off on the consideration of authorizing a tripling of Zephyr's exploratory plans, at least until Zephyr gets its act together."

Bellantoni said the project is not actually "tripling."

"It may be tripling the boundary because BLM guided Zephyr to extend the boundary 100 percent because they said they have to do an environmental assessment and it will be a big project for them," she said. "Even though that boundary looks huge, the word 'tripling' is a bit mis-

leading because there are 7.8 acres currently disturbed in a 563-acre area. There are over 9 acres bonded – all Zephyr is asking for is three acres and that is a temporary disturbance because, at the end of the day, everything has to be put back and returned – Zephyr has already proven they already do this because they have had these ongoing inspections last seven years. Wilderness and wildlife have been studied and will be studied further."

Three other individuals voiced their opposition, including Steve Kaverman,

who said he has been concerned about the project since he first learned about it two years ago.

"It is my belief that the Fremont County Planning Commission should use this opportunity to justify putting the brakes on exploratory efforts, make expansion of the project very unlikely if not impossible, and signal to Zephyr that barriers to achieving their ultimate goal of mining for gold or any other mineral are now, and in the future will be, too great to continue."

Former Fremont County Commissioner Ed Norden

spoke neither in favor nor opposition but to remind the commissioners of their obligation.

"You do not have a mining application for a conditional use permit, you have an application for expansion of exploration," he said, adding that they do not consider the negative comments about the future impacts of mining or the positive impacts of economics that Felderhof addressed. "You're considering an application of expansion for exploration – those are the issues that are before you to consider, not the impacts of mining."