

THE BUSINESS POST

'High time to do it'

Freeport's Brenda Clark is hoping time and tides are right for Hutton beaches project

With its environmental approval in hand, Freeport Resources will test methods for loading sand at the garnet rich Hutton beaches in northern Labrador this summer.

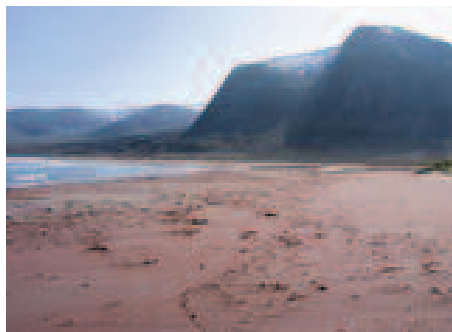
The work involves measuring tides and manoeuvring barges onto the beaches.

Freeport president Brenda Clark said she and other officials also plan to hold a meeting in Nain this summer to inform local residents about the company's plans. Though it is located some 360 kilometres south of the beaches, Nain is the closest community in Labrador. George River, in Quebec, is some 155 kilometres away.

Clark said it's important to keep the local community apprised of the company's intentions.

The beaches from part of a northern Labrador coastline known as the Iron Strand. The three beaches that Freeport hopes to surface mine for their garnet rich sand are all "bayhead" beaches in that sands collect naturally between the headlands. The South Beach hosts sands that contain an average of 60 per cent garnet, with accumulations as high as 75 per cent in places. That's about four times higher than the concentration of garnet mined at Emerald Creek in Idaho. North Beach is larger, but with a lower concentration of garnet - about 25 per cent on average. Clark figures disturbing just a few acres will be enough to accomplish full scale mining each year.

Garnet is used in waterjet cutting. A 5,000 tonne bulk sample taken previously has confirmed the garnet is of high quality. What remains to be settled is the best way of extracting it and where to refine it. The



company is not yet at the point where a feasibility study is required to obtain financing for a commercial operation. But it's getting there. This season's work entails studying the best way to capture the garnet rich sand. Freeport is considering a tugboat and barge system. That's why nailing down the tidal information is important.

"It's very specific to the location," explained Clark, who plans on bringing along a marine surveyor this summer to assist with the work. "The configuration of the shoreline has a big impact on the tidal range. There are tidal stations in the region, but they often lose the gauges... We have some knowledge of the tides but it's good for the marine surveyor to check it out himself, because when they are loading barges six inches can make a difference... It's an art that people would never know about."

Clark plans on taking another bulk sample this summer too.

Freeport has been exploring the Hutton garnet beaches for at least 13 years. The project is among several the company has been advancing in stages, including the Spanish Mountain gold property, the Q fluorspar and molybdenum property, and



Freeport Resources' Hutton garnet beach, left, and company president Brenda Clark, above.

the Red Rose play, which features a former tungsten, gold and copper mine. All three of those properties are located in British Columbia.

"But the Hutton is our number one priority because it's more seasonal," Clark noted.

Most of the employment connected with this season's work, and any future mining, Clark said, will go to local workers. Clark figures there is enough garnet on South Beach alone for 20 years worth of mining.

The other object of this season's work is to determine the most environmentally friendly ways of mining the sand.

"This will be the first time that we're coming in with a barge, so it will be good to see how that works," Clark said. "We're

not being terribly ambitious with our expectations. We'll do what we can do and learn a lot. And of course the weather plays a big role in all of it."

Whatever the company learns this summer, it is progress as far as Clark is concerned.

"It is pretty exciting because it took so long to get through everything (the regulatory process) and now we've finally got it through the environmental registration, which is really great," Clark said. "The project has been reviewed in great detail by many people in many areas. The plan has been approved and I think it's high time to do it."