

Board, council opposing mine

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SANDPOINT -- Revett Minerals' plan to mine beneath the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness is garnering political support next door in Montana, but local officials in Idaho are still opposing the project.

The Bonner County Commission is sticking to a previous board's resolution objecting to the project and is passing on Revett's offer to give a presentation on the copper and silver mining proposal near Noxon.

"We said, 'Thanks, but no thanks,'" Commissioner Joe Young said of the board's response to Revett's presentation offer.

Commissioner Karl Dye said the commission remains unconvinced that the project does not pose a threat to the environment in Idaho.

"We feel it could be the best presentation in the world, but the county really has nothing to gain and everything to lose," he said.

Dye said his opposition to the mine has roots in the 1872 mining law, which he contends was geared toward small-scale mining concerns and is out of step with an industry now dominated by corporations with big plans.

The city of Sandpoint is also reaffirming its objections to the project and also declines to hear Revett's pitch.

"They wanted to make a presentation to the council. I polled the council to see if they were interested and they weren't," Mayor Ray Miller said.

The city has opposed the mine via resolution since at least 1993. It reaffirmed that resolution in 1996 and adopted a new opposition resolution in 2003.

Revett has spent the last six months on an extensive public outreach campaign aimed at informing people exactly what they intend to do at Rock Creek. The company has criticized media coverage of its proposal as being lopsided, misleading and inaccurate.

"There's a lot of misconceptions that came out," said Revett President and CEO William Orchow.

Revett officials said they discovered on their publicity tour that some thought cyanide would be used to process ore and that it would be an open-pit mine. Others believed the mine tailings would be toxic, but Revett said the material would be inert and consist mainly of sand.

County commissioners in Lincoln County, Mont. have voiced support for the mine and Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer has said there is promise in Revett's proposal because the company is thoroughly addressing environmental concerns.

"We believe the mine can be developed safely, cheaply and economically, and benefit everybody," Orchow said.

