

Town of Emily considers proposed manganese mine

EMILY, Minn. (AP) — Officials in the north-central Minnesota town of Emily have something to think about: whether to allow a proposed manganese mine in the community.

Crow Wing Power made an informational pitch to the City Council this past week. And as the project progresses there are expected to be several public hearings. Emily doesn't allow mining and its ordinance would need to be amended.

"You better believe it," Mayor George Pepek said when asked by an audience member if there would be a chance for public input later. "This is just the first step, seeing what's there. We have a lot to look at."

Mike Zipko, a spokesman for Cooperative Mineral Resources, a subsidiary of Crow Wing Power created for the manganese project, told the council the manganese deposit is the largest in North America and is located on 5 acres of a 12-acre site about a half mile off Highway 6 between Ruth and Anna lakes.

"It's very valuable and unique because it's in a small place and it's easy to get to," Zipko said. "It's a significant

amount of manganese on a small site."

Manganese is used in making alloys such as stainless steels and in batteries, among other uses.

Zipko stressed that the proposal first needs to be proved feasible, environmentally and technologically.

There will be no open pits or chemicals used to extract the manganese, he said. Instead, wells would be drilled and high-pressure groundwater would be pumped to recover the manganese. The water would be filtered and returned back into the ground. The recovered manganese would be processed in Coleraine.

"We looked for ways that are environmentally friendly," Zipko said.

Brad Moore, a senior adviser at Barr Engineering Co., said there would be only a few wells in operation at any one time, with drilling 200-400 feet down into the ground. He said the operation wouldn't be visible from Highway 6 and the slurry would be contained.

Cooperative Mineral Resources intends to work this spring with state and federal agencies on an environmental worksheet. Ground-

water in and around the site also will be tested.

If the plan meets environmental standards and the city of Emily amends its ordinance to allow mining, a demonstration well would be drilled to determine if pressurized-water extraction of manganese works.

"Every question you can think of has got to be addressed before we can move forward," Moore said.

If the demonstration works, Crow Wing Power says commercial extraction could start in about two years and the project would bring in an estimated \$20 million to \$25 million in tax revenue.

Zipko said Crow Wing Power bought the property because several foreign investors had shown interest. Crow Wing Power, he said, wanted to protect local interests.

After Tuesday night's presentation, several residents said they appreciated that Crow Wing Power would be the responsible party.

"It's going to be restrictive no matter who is doing it," Lovell Baker said. "I feel a lot better about that than a New York mining conglomerate or a foreign country coming in here."

Steve Blomberg, who lives about a quarter of a mile away from the site, said he's not concerned.

"It's going to be done right I believe," Blomberg said. "I don't think we're going to have any problems there."

