

Eden officials: Necessary precautions taken

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Dayton residents concerned about the safety of a soil processing plant in an industrial center near their homes, got another chance Wednesday night to comment and ask questions.

About 60 people attended a public hearing hosted by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection at Dayton High School.

Eden Research's civil engineer Andrew Hammond, of Dyer Engineering, gave an overview of all the precautions taken by Eden at its Dayton Industrial Park plant to satisfy requirements of various environmental permitting processes, including the water pollution control permit for which the Wednesday public hearing was held. Eden claims to have a proprietary process to chemically break down soil and release hundreds of trace minerals that can then be made into a product that is purported to increase plant production and nutrition.

One of the chemicals to be used in the processing is sodium cyanide, which has alarmed residents who fear there could be a spill.

Also generating confusion for residents was the fact that the extraction of gold and silver was not mentioned in the initial permit from Lyon County in 2007.

Eden's chief executive officer Mary Mains said that the company had not planned to extract precious metals, but that because Nevada's soil contains more trace elements than any other place in the world, gold and silver would be among the elements that would be released by Eden's process.

"That was a later thought," Mains said. "Plants don't benefit from precious metals."

She has said that any money made from the sale of gold and silver would be used to "help pay the bills" of the soil product.

However, because precious metals were involved in the process mentioned in Eden's application, the company was compelled to meet requirements for a water pollution control permit from NDEP's regulation branch of the Bureau of Mining Regulation & Reclamation.

"Eden has met the requirements to process 36,000 tons of ore per year," said Bruce Holmgren supervisor of the regulation branch.

Rob Kuczynski, the permit writer for the branch, said Eden is not only required to monitor the ground water, but that the containment area – in the event that chemicals were spilled – would hold three times the size of the chemicals stored there and was "more than adequate."

Betsie Diamond, who lives in San Francisco but bought a home in Dayton for her retirement, asked whether Eden was planning to mine gold and silver or to make a soil amendment.

"It doesn't matter to us what the purpose of the business is," Holmgren said, explaining that the only purpose of the mining regulation branch was to issue the permit and monitor compliance.

"We will be out there quarterly to inspect," Holmgren said, "but there is nothing to stop us from doing spot checks."

NDEP's public comment period for the permit ended July 31, but written and oral comments from the meeting will be used in the permitting process.