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Bauxite Resources appeals EPA decision

31-March-10 by Rebecca Lawson

Bauxite Resources says it will appeal a decision made by the state environmental watchdog, which this week decided to assess the company's Bindoon mine at one of the highest levels available.

The Environmental Protection Authority this week decided to put Bauxite Resources' stage two plans for the bauxite operation in the Darling Range up for a six week public review period.

Stage two involves mining 1.2 million tonnes of ore between July and December this year from the same property as the trial mining operation, which started late last year.

Stage two will help to fulfil the company's sales contracts it signed recently.

Bauxite Resources today said after taking advice and considering its options, it has decided to appeal the EPA decision.

"The Board considers the decision is irregular and disproportionate and that there are strong grounds to seek a review of the EPA decision," the company said in a statement.

"In particular the EPA decision appears to have been taken on the basis of BRL's potential future projects, rather than by reference to the relatively small scale minimal impact mining project referred to the EPA for consideration (23 hectares on parkland style farmland)."

The company has wrapped up the interviewing process for an additional 30 employees that would be needed for stage two and has awarded major contracts to local suppliers, subject to the start of mining.

"If this decision to set the level of assessment based on future aspirations is allowed to stand, it would put in jeopardy the timing of numerous resource development projects in Western Australia. It would certainly undermine confidence in the regulatory system," Bauxite Resources managing director Dan Ternardi said.

"If new projects are assessed at such a high level on the basis of potential future expansion plans not currently before the EPA, industry would be looking at approvals taking an average of 2.4 years for every proposal referred.

"Such an approach would unacceptably constrain and burden the entire resources industry - it would cause unnecessary delays and increase the costs of obtaining primary environmental approvals in WA."