



Brock Hires/The Chronicle

Officials from across the state gathered Thursday in Republic to discuss the looming closure of the Buckhorn Mine.

Mine shut down to be detrimental

By Brock Hires
The Chronicle

REPUBLIC – The closure of the Buckhorn Mine near Chesaw will be detrimental to the economies of both Okanogan and Ferry counties.

That was the message delivered to the Legislative Committee on Economic Development and Lt. Gov. Brad Owen on Thursday morning. The state officials were in town to discuss the economic impact of closure.

The mine employs 230 people and 130 contractors.

Kinross Corp.'s Buckhorn gold mine near Chesaw has operated since 2008. Company officials say it is reaching the end of its life cycle and is expected to close when its reserves are depleted sometime in late 2015.

"In Ferry and Okanogan County, there's been more gold extracted from the earth than if you add up the Alaska and California gold rushes combined. That's how much mining means to our local area here," state Sen. Brian Dansel, R-Republic said.

"We've got a real tough situation right here in the place I call home since I was born," he said. "We're looking at closure of a mining operation, but it's so much more than that. Kinross is directly attributable to a large percentage of our economy. A lot of people are employed (by) or contracted with Kinross. The

entire economy in Ferry County and northern Okanogan County benefits from Kinross."

Republic Chamber of Commerce president Jim Milner talked about the realities the chamber has been facing.

"Talking to the local business owners, I hear the effects that they are facing as far as losing the good-paying jobs so people come and shop at their stores. It is a huge thing," he said. "Some people are of the opinion that the moment Kinross closes down, we might as well leave Republic, turn off the lights. Then we have the other extreme.

"It amazes me how many people I talk to that say, 'it's closed down before and we've always gotten by just fine.' We're determined to find answers and make this work, but at the same time we can't downplay the significance of this."

Milner said the chamber is working with volunteers and community members to create new events and attraction.

He said a video production crew is working to create a marketing campaign, too.

Along with marketing, the community is gearing up to put in a bicycle rest area, horse hitching post and bring new events and shows into town.

Owen offered words of encouragement and support, giving options such as extended unemployment benefits, Department of Health and

Social Services programs and waiving community college tuition for mine workers and their spouses.

"The closure of the mine and supporting operations will obviously have a major impact on the northeast Washington area," he said. "On a comparative local scale, it would be as if the Boeing Co. were to leave the Puget Sound area or Microsoft were to leave Redmond."

Frustrations were also a topic. Those attending noted the time it takes to obtain all the necessary state and federal

permits to dig core exploration samples for possible future mining.

Rep. Norma Smith, R-Olympia, said community members are facing the issue right now, and asked Jesus Sanchez from the governor's Office of Regulatory Innovation and Assistance if he would be willing to host a community forum with higher elected officials.

"Would you be willing to do that for this community?" she asked.

Sanchez replied: "Absolutely."

Animal Hospital of Omak welcomes Terry Jenkins to our family.



Terry is a veterinary technician and graduated from Penn Foster College with an Associates Degree in Veterinary Science.

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