Environmental Protection Act 1986

Section 43A

NOTICE OF DECISION TO CONSENT TO CHANGE TO PROPOSAL DURING ASSESSMENT

PERSON TO WHOM THIS NOTICE IS GIVEN

(a) Venturex Resources Limited (ACN/ABN: 122 180 205)
Level 2, 91 Havelock Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005

PROPOSAL TO WHICH THIS NOTICE RELATES:

Sulphur Springs Zinc-Copper Project
Assessment No. 2120

Pursuant to section 43A of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act), the Environmental Protection Authority consents to the proponent making the following changes to the proposal during assessment without a revised proposal being referred.

The proposed changes are to:

- Replace the dewatering operational element (mine dewatering of 0.64 gigalitres per annum (GL/a)) and water supply operational element (water abstraction of up to 0.32 GL/a) with a single water supply/dewatering element with a total value of 0.94 GL/a. This change includes a minor reduction in the overall amount of groundwater to be taken for these purposes of 0.02 GL/a (reduced from 0.96 GL/a to 0.94 GL/a) to that which was referred.
- Reduce the maximum footprint of the waste rock dump from 79.6 hectares (ha) to 78.6 ha to ensure the overall disturbance for the proposal remains at 313.6 ha.

EFFECT OF THIS NOTICE:

1. The proponent may change the proposal as provided for in this notice.

RIGHTS OF APPEAL:

There are no rights of appeal under the EP Act in respect of this decision.

Dr Tom Hatton
Delegate of the Environmental Protection Authority
CHAIRMAN

24 March 2020

Environmental Protection Act 1986

Section 43A

STATEMENT OF REASONS

CONSENT TO CHANGE PROPOSAL DURING ASSESSMENT

Proposal: Sulphur Springs Zinc-Copper Project

Proponent: Venturex Resources Limited

Decision

For the reasons outlined below, the EPA has determined to consent to the proponent changing the proposal outlined in Schedule 1 attached to this Statement of Reasons.

Background

On 14 December 2016, the proponent Venturex Resources Limited referred the proposal to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) under section 38 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act). The proposal involves the development of an open pit and underground mining operation to extract and process ore from a volcanogenic massive sulphide copper-zinc deposit at Sulphur Springs. The proposal includes:

- A valley fill tailings storage facility for the storage of potentially acid forming material.
- A water supply borefield.
- Mine dewatering to allow safe mining of the underground operation.
- An ore processing plant.
- A waste rock dump to be utilised to encapsulate approximately 8 million tonnes of potentially acid forming waste rock.
- An accommodation camp.
- Water management infrastructure.

The EPA determined to assess the proposal at the level of environmental review – no public review on 13 July 2017.

Two changes to the proposal have been approved by the EPA and the environmental review document includes these changes. These changes were approved on 5 July 2018 and 28 November 2019.

In advance of the EPA finalising a report on the outcome of its assessment of the proposal, the proponent has sought the EPA's consent to the proponent making a further change to the proposal.

Relevant Statutory and Administrative Provisions

Section 3.8 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Part IV Divisions 1 and 2) Procedures Manual 2016 guides what information the EPA requires from a person wanting to change its proposal during assessment.

In considering the request for consent, the EPA considered the:

- details of the proposed change
- statement of the significance of the change and
- rationale for the change.

Materials considered in making this decision

In determining whether to consent to the proponent changing the proposal the EPA has considered the following:

1. Venturex Resources Limited Sulphur Springs Zinc-Copper Project (Assessment No. 2120) Request for Change to Proposal.
2. Venturex Resources Limited Sulphur Springs Zinc-Copper Project Environmental Review Document Revision 6 (February 2020).
3. The approved environmental scoping document (endorsed 2 October 2017).
4. Change to the proposal under s 43a approved 5 July 2018.
5. Change to the proposal under s 43a approved 28 November 2019.
6. Relevant EPA policy and procedures.

Consideration

1. Nature of the proposed change

Change 1: Replace the dewatering operational element (mine dewatering of 0.64 GL/a) and water supply operational element (water abstraction of up to 0.32 GL/a) with a single groundwater abstraction element with a total value of 0.94 GL/a. This change includes a minor reduction in the overall amount of groundwater to be taken of 0.02 GL/a to that which was referred.

The primary source of water for the proposal is the dewatering of the mine, with additional proven sources of groundwater to be sourced outside the mine catchment within the development envelope (including utilising abstraction bores located within the development envelope that are licensed to Atlas Iron Limited under the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914*).

This change provides flexibility to source required groundwater from within the development envelope in the event mine dewatering does not yield sufficient supply, or in the case of early project construction, is not yet operational.

This change to a combined value for these activities is not considered significant as the change does not result in an increase to the overall value for the taking of groundwater for the purposes of water supply and dewatering.

Change 2: Reduce the footprint of the waste rock dump by 1 ha (79.6 ha to 78.6 ha) to ensure the sum of disturbance for all operational elements equals the total

disturbance of 313.6 ha for the proposal The current sum of disturbance areas for all operational elements is currently 314.6 ha.

This change does not affect the total overall disturbance for the proposal and therefore is not considered significant. This change will allow the sum of disturbance for the operational elements to match up with the total disturbance for the proposal.

The proponent has provided the revised elements of the key characteristics table which describes the location and proposed extent of the physical and operational elements of the changed proposal.

2. Stage of the assessment process

At the EPA meeting of 20 February 2020, the EPA agreed to recommend that the Sulphur Springs Zinc-Copper Project may be implemented, subject to the recommended environmental conditions. At the meeting, the EPA also resolved that the EPA Chairman prepare and approve the final EPA report and recommendations on the Sulphur Springs Zinc-Copper Project and give that report to the Minister, pursuant to section 44 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*.

3. Currency, relevance and reliability of the information, including submissions

EPA Services of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation considers the currency, relevance and reliability of the information provided in the section 43 a application to be satisfactory.

4. Community engagement

During the preparation of the environmental scoping document and environmental review document, consultation was undertaken with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation. The overall amount of groundwater to be taken (for the purposes of dewatering and water supply) is to marginally reduce as a result of this change.

5. Level of public concern

There has been limited public concern in relation to the Sulphur Springs Zinc-Copper Project. One comment was received when the referral information for the proposal was advertised for comment.

Consideration of Whether the Change is Unlikely to Significantly Increase Any Impact that the Proposal May Have on the Environment

The following were considered:

a) Values, sensitivity and the quality of the environment which is likely to be impacted

The approved environmental scoping document lists the following preliminary key environmental factors for the environmental review:

- Flora and Vegetation
- Subterranean Fauna
- Inland Waters Environmental Quality
- Terrestrial Environmental Quality.

The change gives no cause for additional environmental factors to be considered key environmental factors for the purposes of the assessment.

b) Extent (intensity, duration, magnitude and geographic footprint) of the likely impacts

A marginal reduction in the overall amount of groundwater to be taken for the purposes of dewatering and water supply has been requested and how these activities are described in the key characteristics of the proposal. The primary source of water for the proposal is the dewatering of the mine, with other water to be sourced by abstracting groundwater within the development envelope, including utilising abstraction bores licensed to Atlas Iron Limited located within the development envelope.

The change does not result in a change to the overall disturbance for the proposal (313.6 ha). A change to the indicative disturbance footprint for the waste rock dump results in a reduction of 1 ha (79.6 to 78.6 ha). This change does not affect the total overall disturbance for the proposal and therefore is not considered significant.

The changes described above are not considered significant.

c) Consequence of the likely impacts (or change)

The change to the proposal does not alter the types of impacts associated with the proposal. The consequence of the likely impacts on the environment are not expected to significantly increase as a result of the proposed change.

d) Resilience of the environment to cope with the impacts or change

The EPA considers the resilience of the environment to cope with the change to the proposal remains unchanged from that of the original proposal, should it be implemented.

e) Cumulative impacts with other projects

The mine area is located on unallocated crown land with the northern section of the development envelope (access road, accommodation village) intersecting the Panorama and Strelley pastoral leases. Cumulative impacts with other projects are not expected to increase as a result of the proposed change, the total clearing for the proposal remains unchanged at 313.6 ha.

f) Connections and interactions between parts of the environment to inform holistic view of impacts of the whole environment

The proposed change is not expected to significantly increase the impacts to groundwater and surface water compared to the current proposal. The overall value for taking groundwater for the purposes of mine dewatering and water supply is to marginally reduce from 0.96 GL/a to 0.94 GL/a.

This change to a combined value for these activities is not considered significant as the change does not result in an increase to the overall value for the taking of groundwater for the purposes of mine dewatering and water supply.

g) Level of confidence in the prediction of impacts and the success of proposed mitigation

The proponents study area in which environmental investigations have been undertaken remains unchanged. The proponent has undertaken investigations to inform the assessment and the level of confidence in the predicted impacts, and the success of the proposed mitigation measures remain unchanged.

h) Public interest about the likely effect of the proposal, if implemented, on the environment, and public information that informs the EPA's assessment

The proposal is being assessed at the level of environmental review – no public review, which reflects the limited public interest in the proposal.

Schedule 1
Change to Proposal

Table 1: Summary of the proposal

Proposal title	Sulphur Springs Zinc-Copper Project
Short description	Venturex Resources Limited proposes to develop and operate a zinc-copper mine and processing plant in the Sulphur Springs area, located 57 km west of Marble Bar and 144 km south-east of Port Hedland, in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

Table 2: Location and proposed[1]

Column 1	**Column 2**	**Column 3**
Element	**Location**	**Proposed extent**
Physical elements		
Mine and associated infrastructure	Figure 2	Clearing of no more than 313.6 ha within the 889.2 ha development envelope.
Operational elements		
Tailings storage facility (TSF)	Figure 2	A 42 ha conventional valley fill TSF to dispose of no more than 8.8 Mtpa of tailings.
Processing plant	Figure 2	A processing plant (up to 1.5 Mtpa) and associated facilities covering an area of 71 ha. Area includes the footprint of a HDPE lined storage/evaporation pond (south pond).
Waste rock dump	Figure 2	One ~~79.6~~ **78.6** ha permanent waste rock dump (WRD) with no more than 17.5 million loose cubic metres in the permanent WRD.
~~Dewatering~~	~~-~~	~~Mine dewatering of 0.64 GL/yr, all to be used on site (no water to be discharged).~~
~~Water supply~~	~~-~~	~~Water abstraction of up to 0.32 GL/yr.~~
Water supply / dewatering	**-**	**Total groundwater abstraction / mine dewatering within the development envelope up to 0.94 GL/a (no water to be discharged).**
Open pit and supporting infrastructure	Figure 2	Includes the open pit, accommodation camp, borrow pits, topsoil stockpiles, abandonment bund, sediment pond, water management infrastructure, access roads, haul roads, communications, pipelines and powerlines covering an area of 122 ha.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Element	**Location**	**Proposed extent**
		Includes a HDPE lined storage/evaporation pond (north pond).

Note 1: Additions are shown in bold text and deletions shown in strikethrough.