

UPTON'S RARE EARTH PROCESSING PLANT

Among Projects Prioritized by Trump Administration



**By Assistant Publisher/Editor
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Some great discussion concerning the Rare Element Resources (RER) Processing Plant in Upton was held during the April 1st meeting of the Weston County Commissioners. RER, a publicly-traded rare earths mining and processing company, has partnered with General Atomics to mine critical rare earths from Crook County's Bearlodge Mountains, which will be processed at the pilot RER Processing Plant in the Upton Logistics Center. The demonstration plant is nearing the end of its testing phase, after which several tons of rare earths-rich testing material will be processed. Once that testing material is processed, RER's stated intention is to construct a much larger commercial processing plant, which has been proposed to be constructed across Buffalo Creek Road from the demonstration plant's current location.

The first bit of discussion concerning RER during the meeting was a request from the County Road & Bridge Department to deploy County Road Funds (CRF) for contract trucking to gravel Buffalo Creek Road #20 south of Upton, which passes next to the RER demonstration plant, and to also apply a stable base foundation to the gravel surface layer.

"I checked it out. It's bad," Chairman Nathan Todd told his fellow Commissioners. "But a lot of county roads are bad right now."

As for the request to use the CRF line item in the budget on Buffalo Creek Road, Commissioner Marty Ertman explained that in the future she'd like to see a dollar amount attached to the requests.



The complex infrastructure and highly-specialized scientific equipment housed in the Rare Earth Resources' (RER) Upton Demonstration Processing Plant (pictured above) is at the cutting edge of the rare earths industry, using chemistry for rare earths processing the world hasn't yet seen. Once Upton's RER demonstration plant runs all its testing material and proven its science, RER has proposed building a much larger long-term commercial processing plant next to the smaller site of the demonstration plant. (Photos courtesy of RER)

Commissioner Garrett Borton moved to allow Road & Bridge to use CRF funds for contracting trucking, gravel, and foundational base for Buffalo Creek Road #20. Vice Chairman Ed Wagoner seconded the motion.

"Do we want to do this without a price attached?" Chairman Todd asked.

"I'm uncomfortable with that," responded Commissioner Ertman.

The Chairman agreed with Commissioner Ertman.

RER Representative Roger Connett was present and explained the demonstration plant was looking at six to eight trucks of material coming in each day.

Road & Bridge Foreman Jim Hansen was present for the discussion, and he explained to the Commissioners that it would be difficult to come up with a cost estimate for the work without knowing in advance what trucking bids will be for hauling the gravel. He gave a ballpark estimate of \$150,000 for trucking and under \$100,000 for gravel.

Commissioner Borton amended his motion to include a \$250,000 ceiling for the project. The motion carried.

Connett then gave the

Commissioners a general update on what's going on with Upton's RER plant. Connett began his update with the good news that a federal bank, EXIM, had submitted a letter of interest to provide \$550 million for RER's expansion. In an RER press release, Ken Mushinski, RER's CEO, remarked, "EXIM's expression of interest is one financial option to pursue as we consider funding and collaborative opportunities, especially in light of the recent Executive Order for full project development."

Connett stated, "We're most pleased about the Trump administration setting a priority for this project."

Connett explained that RER officials had been spending a lot of time in Washington, D.C. lately and even had an upcoming meeting in the West Wing of the White House. "There's a lot of interest in fast-tracking this project," Connett informed the Commissioners, adding that President Trump's executive order emphasizes the criticality of stateside rare earths mining and processing so that the United States and its allies aren't reliant

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