CRP welcomes EPA clarification on status of staff report

Chatham Rock Phosphate today welcomed a clarification issued by the Environmental Protection Authority regarding its staff report issued yesterday.

The EPA in its announcement today said the process for considering the application was still at an early stage. “Further information on the application and its effects is to come from both the applicant, and in the form of evidence and submissions from other parties. Our assessment of that information has the potential to alter the recommendations made in our current Staff Report,” EPA General Manager of Applications and Assessment Sarah Gardner said.

She went on to say the staff report was not the decision on the application and the Decision-making Committee appointed by the EPA Board to hear and decide the application may make a different decision to that recommended by EPA staff.

Managing director Chris Castle reiterated yesterday’s comment that the staff report was premature and would have had more value had the information requested by the EPA been provided and taken into account. Having said that, Mr Castle acknowledged that CRP is in a statutory process and it imposes pressures on everyone involved, including the EPA.

Mr Castle said CRP was in the process of completing evidence and providing responses to 62 questions – some of which required detailed consideration and further research.

He noted the staff report was a snapshot, based on the information available at the time. The cut-off for the information was 1 August and so it did not include considerable information that has since been supplied and was continuing to be gathered.

“Based on the information we are amassing, and the evidence that is near completion, we remain confident we can provide a compelling case for the grant of a Marine Consent later this year. We also note the EPA’s comment that the staff are not the decision makers – the Decision Making Committee is.

“We believe we have provided and will provide the necessary information to address all of the issues raised in the report, and that the Decision Making Committee will have the evidence it requires to enable a Marine Consent to be granted.”
Mr Castle said CRP remained confident the company has done the work to show it can undertake its mining operations in a sustainable way, and the Marine Consent process would demonstrate this.

The EPA media release follows:

**EPA issues preliminary report on Chatham Rock Phosphate application**

The Environmental Protection Authority has issued a preliminary report on the marine consent application by Chatham Rock Phosphate Ltd (CRP) for its phosphate mining project on the Chatham Rise.

The report, which is an input into the decision-making process for determining the application, evaluates the information that CRP has provided to the EPA as at 7 August 2014.

It provides the EPA’s staff view on the potential adverse effects of the proposed mining operations and discusses the matters which should be addressed by the Decision-making Committee when making its decision on the application.

EPA General Manager of Applications and Assessment Sarah Gardner said it was important to note that the process for considering the application was still at an early stage.

“Further information on the application and its effects is to come from both the applicant, and in the form of evidence and submissions from other parties. Our assessment of that information has the potential to alter the recommendations made in our current Staff Report.”

Mrs Gardner said that on the face of the application at this time, and without all of the information requested of CRP yet being available, the EPA was currently unable to recommend that the application be granted.

“However, this is not the decision on the application and the Decision-making Committee appointed by the EPA Board to hear and decide the application may make a different decision to that recommended by EPA staff.”

The hearing on the CRP application by the Decision-making Committee is scheduled to start on 25 September with a decision due around 18 December 2014.

**Background notes:** On 10 July, the Hearing Procedures issued by the Decision-making Committee stated the Staff Report would be released on 4 August. Following a request from CRP the EPA agreed to delay the release of the report to 18 August. The EPA advised all parties on 11 August that it would be released on 18 August.

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