

NOTICE OF DECISION AND STATEMENT OF REASONS

Section 55 of the *Environment Protection Act 2019* (EP Act)

Regulations 58(1)(b) and 63 of the *Environment Protection Regulations 2020* (EP Regulations) for a decision on proponent initiated EIS referral

Name of proposed action	Rover 1 Project
Proponent	Castile Resources Pty Ltd
NT EPA reference	EP2023/030
Description of proposed action	<p>Development and operation of an underground iron oxide copper gold mine to produce copper, gold, cobalt and magnetite, approximately 70 km southwest of Tennant Creek in the Barkly local government area. The proposed action is located on NT Portion 3556 and the land tenure is Aboriginal freehold.</p> <p>The proposed activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • land disturbance of approximately 177 ha • a decline box cut and underground workings • above ground facilities and infrastructure, including a waste rock dump, processing plant, paste plant, tailings storage facility, run-of-mine pad, raw water dam and supporting infrastructure including an onsite accommodation village • estimated groundwater extraction of up to 4.4 megalitres per day from the underground workings and a groundwater borefield • ore processing of up to 500,000 tonnes per annum, with the products hauled to Tennant Creek for further transport via train, airline and marine vessels • upgrades to the existing Kunayungka Road and minor roads • sewage (treated) irrigation to land • potential development of a gas-fired power station and a 40 km long gas pipeline connecting to the Amadeus gas pipeline (location and total footprint to be confirmed). <p>The estimated operational life of the mine is approximately 10 years, followed by 5 years of rehabilitation.</p>
Nature of proposed action	Mining
Decision	<p>Standard environmental impact assessment is required in accordance with section 55 of the EP Act and regulation 58(2)(b)(i) of the EP Regulations.</p> <p>Assessment by environmental impact statement to be the method of environmental impact assessment in accordance with regulation 58(2)(b)(ii).</p>

Person authorised to make decision

Dr Paul Vogel AM – Chairperson, as delegate of the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA)

Signature



Date of decision

9 January 2024

Matters considered under EP Regulation 56

The NT EPA has considered the following:

- the accepted referral (including the referral form, referral report and appendices, proponent terms of reference, and proponent statement of reasons)
 - submissions received in relation to the accepted referral.
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Consultation

Submission period 5 October to 15 November 2023

Submissions received:

- government authority submissions: six
- public submissions: two

The referral indicates the proponent has engaged with stakeholders on four occasions during 2020, 2021 and 2023, as follows:

- stakeholders consulted include the Central Land Council, Tennant Creek Chamber of Commerce, Traditional Owners, leaseholders of nearby Tennant Creek Station and government agencies.
- issues raised during the recent consultation held in Tennant Creek on 12 July 2023, relate to opportunities for future employment and local business development.

Public and government authority submissions received in relation to the referral identified potential impacts and risks to threatened flora and fauna (listed under the *Territory Parks and wildlife Conservation Act 1976* and Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*), sensitive and significant vegetation, hydrological processes, inland water quality, air quality, community and economy, and culture and heritage.

All submissions received are available on the NT EPA website.

Statement of Reasons

Overview

The NT EPA considers that the proposed action has the potential to have a significant impact on environmental values associated with eight environmental factors¹.

LAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrestrial environmental quality - There is potential for significant impacts on soil quality from: loss of hydrocarbons or other chemicals (such as cyanide); mine dewatering; and handling and storage of mine waste including potentially acid forming, waste rock and tailings. The magnitude and extent of these impacts are uncertain. • Terrestrial ecosystems - There is insufficient information to assess the significance of impacts from vegetation clearing, mining and dewatering operations on sensitive or significant vegetation and threatened species, particularly the Greater Bilby and Grey Falcon.
WATER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydrological processes - There is insufficient information to assess the significance of impacts from groundwater drawdown on environmental values including terrestrial ecosystems and other water users. • Inland water environmental quality - There is potential for significant impacts on inland water quality resulting from changes in groundwater quality due to acid, neutral or saline discharges from mining infrastructure (the tailings storage facility, waste rock dump and stockpiles), hydrocarbon and other chemical spill, irrigation of treated sewage onsite, and dewatering operations. The magnitude and extent of these impacts are uncertain.
AIR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air quality - The proposal has the potential to generate air pollutants (such as nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter and trace gases) from onsite power generation that may potentially impact local sensitive receptors. Insufficient information is available to determine the significance of impacts on air quality. • Atmospheric processes - There is insufficient information to assess the significance of impacts from the proposal on atmospheric processes, primarily due to the uncertainty regarding the source and supply of power to the mine site during operations.
PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and economy - There is uncertainty around the potential for significant benefits for the regional community and economy, and potentially significant impacts particularly from groundwater drawdown. • Culture and heritage - There is potential for significant impacts to known and unknown Aboriginal sacred sites, heritage sites and objects from the proposal. The magnitude and extent of these impacts are unknown.

Justification

A standard assessment by **environmental impact statement** is required having regard to:

- Regulation 59 (a) the significance of the potential impacts of the proposed action as described above.

¹ [NT EPA Environmental factors and objectives](#)

- Regulation 59 (b) the need to improve the NT EPA’s level of confidence in predicting potential significant impacts of the proposed action taking into account the extent and currency of existing knowledge, particularly in relation to:
- potential impacts from mining activity and generated mine waste on terrestrial and inland water quality
 - sensitive or significant vegetation and threatened species in the area and the potential impact to these, including from groundwater drawdown
 - potential impacts on air quality and atmospheric processes
 - cultural values in the region (including sacred sites) and potential impacts to these.
- Regulation 59 (c) the level of confidence in the effectiveness of the proposed measures to avoid, mitigate, or manage potential significant impacts with respect to:
- potentially acid forming mine waste
 - groundwater extraction
 - Aboriginal sacred sites and other cultural values.
- Regulation 59 (d) the need for extensive community engagement, including with Aboriginal people and communities, in respect of the proposal.
- Regulation 59 (e) the need for appropriate communication methods to enable communities and individuals likely to be affected by the proposal to access and understand information about the proposal and its potential significant impacts.
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Conclusion

The NT EPA considers that the proposed action has the potential for significant impacts on eight environmental factors, and that environmental impact assessment is required. The method of assessment will be environmental impact statement.

In making its decision under EP Regulation 58, the NT EPA has considered:

- the objects of the Act in section 3 of the EP Act
- the purpose of the environmental impact assessment process in section 42 of the EP Act
- the matters under regulation 56 of the EP Regulations
- the matters relevant to a consideration of the method of environmental impact assessment in regulation 59 of the EP Regulations.