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# The Humboldt Sun



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Pershing Gold Project Manager **Jerod Eastman** said the trio of 30-year-old pits will eventually become one big pit when gold mining continues at the Relief Canyon Mine north of Lovelock.

## Relief Canyon Mine expansion under review

**New mine construction could start Oct. 1**

By Debra Reid  
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Seven years after acquiring Relief Canyon Mine, Pershing Gold Corporation officials told county officials that construction needed to reopen the mine could start early next month. A requested letter of support for the long-anticipated mining project was approved by Pershing County commissioners.

Idle for 30 years, the mine was expected to re-open after it was purchased by Pershing Gold in 2011. Meanwhile, the company has expanded the land package, water rights, mineral resources and permits are in place for three years of mining known as Phase I. Phase II, if approved by the BLM, would expand the mine and extend the “life of mine” by another three to six years.

Last year, land was cleared for expansion of heap leach pad facilities below the gold mine’s trio of open pits but more new construction is needed before active mining begins, possibly next year. That new construction could begin Oct. 1, a Pershing Gold official said last week.

Permits are in place and Phase I has been authorized but approval for Phase II is needed before the pit can be deepened and expanded, taking it below the water table. “Minor” pit dewatering will be required and there would be a post-mining pit lake. The water will allegedly be safe for birds and other wildlife due to “benign” limestone that will not leach acid or metals.

“The lake is predicted to be a hydrologic sink with no appreciable outflow and have water quality that meets all Profile III Nevada Reference Values,” the BLM

states. “Consequently, the pit lake will be safe for terrestrial and avian wildlife.”

Other modifications would be new waste rock and leach pad facilities, a third process pond, electrical power upgrades, a dewatering conveyance pipeline and Rapid Infiltration Basins.

Water removed from the pit will be used for heap leaching and other permitted consumptive uses. Left-over pit water will be re-injected into the aquifer at up to 900 gallons per minute and will be better quality than the existing groundwater, according to the BLM and Pershing Gold.

“The dewatering water is expected to be of higher quality than the receiving groundwater quality,” states the BLM letter calling for public input on the project. Leaching of exposed pit walls has caused long-term water quality issues at other pit lakes

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## Granath no longer on-call for OB after Jan. 6

**Frale asks board for guidance in physician recruitment**

By Ashley Maden  
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At the Humboldt General Hospital (HGH) board of trustees special board meeting on Tuesday, Dr. Bradford Granath, MD announced he wouldn’t be taking obstetrician (OB) call shifts after Jan. 6, 2019, urging a lengthy discussion regarding physician recruitment and the future of OB services at HGH.

Granath said he is currently not retiring, closing his practice or stopping obstetrics and would love to continue delivering his own patients and not be on the OB call schedule, although he

said he’s not sure how that could work with the current schedule model.

Granath said he hopes to continue care of his OB patients due in Jan. and Feb. and urged the hospital to look at alternatives to the current labor and delivery coverage model to make it less taxing on doctors, along with taking the reins in the search for his eventual replacement, which he said has mainly been his responsibility for the past few years.

“On the one hand I have very much appreciated the hospital’s support in my efforts, but in the past it’s been mainly my burden to find my replacement with the hospital playing sort of a supporting role. Now I’m at a point in my season of life that there has to be a changing of the guard.”

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## Boys & Girls Club facility wins award of excellence

By Shanna Cummings  
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Winnemucca’s Boys & Girls Club (BGC) building received an Award of Excellence from the Metal Building Contractors and Erectors Association (MBCEA) in the Educational and Recreation category. J&M Steel Solutions from

Lehi, Utah, the company responsible for erecting the building’s steel structure, submitted the project.

BGC Executive Director Chad Peters said that from the start he didn’t want the facility to look like the typical BGC building. “Most of the time Boys & Girls Clubs are pretty plain-Jane,” he said.

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Winnemucca Boys & Girls Club an Award of Excellence from the Metal Building Contractors and Erectors Association in May.

## CLUB

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"We tried to mix it up a bit, tried to make it something that's a little more appealing."

"We knew we were going to host some big events and do some things here for the community, and we wanted to make sure it didn't look like you were just strolling into something kind of generic. The architects did a great job of making sure we had a little more idealistic, modern look, kind of moving into the future," Peters said.

Mike Sheppard from Michael Clay Corporation said the process of finding a suitable design within budget took about three months. Sheppard and other contractors from CORE Construction, Nucor Building Systems, Northern Nevada Concrete and RHP Mechanical "worked with Chad Peters and his design team (SH Architecture) to work with a building design that could be built within the budget and still have dramatic appearance that it possesses," he said.

There were some structural

challenges during the building of the 36,224 square-foot facility. "Just by looking at building, you can tell that it was a challenge to design and erect," Sheppard said. The building also had a short turnaround time, Sheppard said. Construction began in Feb. 2017, and the club opened only a few months later, in May. Sheppard said the building will need little to no maintenance over the course of its life.

Construction of the building included several local businesses, including Michael Clay Corporation, Hunewill Construction and Gamma Electric. The owner of Northern Nevada Concrete, Dave Elizondo, is also a native of Winnemucca.

The cinder block and metal exterior is also uncommon for BGC buildings, Peters said. Initially, the exterior cinder block walls were to be painted white. Peters, though, said he preferred the look of the natural cinder blocks. "I liked the way it looked so much,

I just decided never to paint it. I liked the randomness of the brick. Because it kind of has all the colors of our country out here, our habitat." The roof line also reflects the mountains in the background.

Peters said of Michel Clay Corp., "It's cool that a local construction outfit could get some recognition."

"Everyone that was a part of the project uses this project and this building as a 'Hey, look what we did! Look what we built out in Winnemucca.' Even the ones who aren't from here are showing it off. They like the way it looks, they like the way it turned out," Peters said.

"To achieve this award, it has to have a pretty dramatic outcome. So, for us to receive that (award), that's pretty impressive for Winnemucca, Nevada and for Chad and his team and the rest of us here," Sheppard said.

More about this year's MBCEA awards can be found at [www.metalconstructionnews.com/articles/mbcea-selects-top-projects](http://www.metalconstructionnews.com/articles/mbcea-selects-top-projects).

## GRANATH

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said Granath. "It must be that the hospital leadership takes this rich opportunity to have the principle burden of solving this community's need and I'm going to play the supporting role."

Granath said he has been searching to find a partner for the OB practice for the last four years, turning out with two promising candidates who ended up taking positions elsewhere where the workload was lighter.

One promising candidate had completed a fellowship in Winnemucca and is now a faculty member in Reno where she can deliver her own patients and does not have to work OB call shifts.

The second candidate was considering relocating to Winnemucca from a rural town in Kansas, where she had been delivering babies and performing cesarean sections for the last four years.

Granath said she interviewed for the position and said she liked Winnemucca, but that the workload was too much with the call schedule. She accepted a position in New Mexico where they operate under a system in which four OB doctors are on staff, minimizing the need to work call schedules in addition to normal shifts.

Granath said doctors such as himself, Perkinson, Kracaw and Ingle were a "dying breed" regarding the workload they can endure with just two obstetric doctors practicing at a time locally.

"The mold has been broken for guys like this and we are a species on the verge of extinction," said Granath. "The model of two FPOBs (family practice obstetricians) providing the care is not going to endure, I don't think that's a reasonable plan for you."

Granath said he has had conversations regarding the current OB coverage model and long-term sustainability of OB services at HGH with former CEO Jim Parrish, interim CEO and Chief Nursing Operator Darlene Bryan, hospital board members and current CEO Art Frable in which he has



Dr. Bradford Granath

offered suggestions for change in the model.

Granath said there is worry that HGH could lose maternity services if a plan isn't brought forward to labor and delivery, although he doesn't anticipate that here. He said the last ten years have shown a trend in rural hospitals losing maternity services, correlating to deteriorating health measures following the loss.

Granath has been delivering babies in Winnemucca since 2004, when he joined Dr. Richard Ingle, nine months following the departure of Dr. Kurt Kracaw. He and Dr. Leonard Perkinson are currently the only two doctors providing OB services in Winnemucca, including rotating OB call schedules.

Perkinson said he is very concerned regarding Granath's announcement.

"The prospect of being the only person covering call for any amount of time is terrifying," said Perkinson. "When you're getting two to three calls in the morning a few times a week if it's a busy time, it gets to be very taxing and when we're on call that's not all we do. We have very busy practices and we see those patients during the day, too."

He described a time last year in which he was the only one on call for three weeks in a row when Granath was on vacation.

"It's physically, mentally and

professionally draining, whether there are calls or not. You're constantly enslaved to the phone and waking up wondering whether you missed a call," said Perkinson.

Granath's presentation to the board was Frable's gateway to ask the hospital board of trustees to go on record and state their position with physician recruitment and finances relating to such. Frable stated the matter has been repeated on the agenda throughout the summer without much having been done regarding the issue.

Trustee Bill Hammargren said Granath's announcement was a shocker, even though he knew it was coming. He asked for further clarification from Frable regarding the board's support in recruiting physicians.

"When you're asking for a commitment from the board, I have never heard of this board of anybody say that we shouldn't be recruiting, we should always be recruiting," said Hammargren.

Frable said his concern came regarding the typical \$30,000-\$50,000 in recruiting agency fees and whether he was authorized to make that decision.

At Frable's request, the board of trustees passed a motion publicly stating that physician recruitment is a priority for the hospital, specifically agreeing that recruiting a doctor that would practice obstetrics was a priority during this time.

"I just want to make sure that when people understand what I do, it's at board instruction and board guidance," said Frable.

Frable said he was comfortable taking responsibility to the financial aspect of recruiting, but wanted to ensure the board was also comfortable with it and that he is still learning what the board is comfortable with.

All board members were in agreement the hospital would continue to move forward with physician recruitment, specifically for obstetrics as a priority. Trustee Michelle Miller was the only trustee not in attendance during the meeting.

## MINE

(Cont. from Page One)

after mining has ceased.

Pershing Gold officials were asked if mine water rights would account for pit lake evaporation.

"We anticipate the state engineer's office will require us to convert some of the water rights we already have to accommodate for pit lake evaporation," Pershing Gold Consultant Debbie Struhsacker told county leaders last week. "That's our anticipation."

The mine is in the Carson Desert-Packard Valley Hydrographic Basin and pit dewatering will have no impact on surface or groundwater in the Humboldt River Basin according to Pershing Gold. Mine officials said there will also be no impact on springs or other water rights in the area.

During the presentation to Humboldt County commissioners on Sept. 4, commissioner Jim French asked about the mine's pit lake and plans to reclaim the pit's high wall after closure. He said the high wall of the pit lake of Sleeper Mine in Humboldt County presented a hazard to the public.

"It limited the access to the public to the Sleeper Project initially because, not just with regard to stuff falling off that high wall and people there floating below, but it also created a hazard in terms of people trying to get around that height," French said.

Struhsacker said the high wall would be the highest part of the pit. Jerod Eastman said the lower part of the pit would be backfilled and would create a kind of beach.

"The Relief Canyon pit that is there right now has been standing there for about 30 years, and it's pretty good solid rock. So we may have an opportunity...but in this case, that pit wall that is there that is existing, has been pretty stable," Struhsacker added.

Eastman said the new mine plan might include a shallower slope.

Humboldt County commissioners approved moving forward with a letter of support.

"Mining is always important to this county as well as the other rurals," commission chair Ron

Cerri said.

When the mine is in full operation, it will generate about 210 "family-wage" jobs with an average annual salary of \$88,000 as well as a number of indirect jobs according to the report. Mine workers could be local residents as well as commuters from Humboldt and Churchill counties.

"The Phase II operation would contribute approximately \$18.5 million per year in estimated local wages and, for the six-year life of the mine, almost \$111 million in salaries and benefits," Struhsacker said. "Mines also spin off a lot of jobs in the community. Our studies estimate 280 indirect jobs will be created by the Relief Canyon project."

An initial capital investment of \$28 million is needed to get Relief Canyon Mine off the ground and mine financing arrangements are still being finalized, Struhsacker said.

If the Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act is passed this year in the U.S. Senate, Pershing Gold will be purchasing public land bordering the mine, Struhsacker said.

"We won't be able to write the check fast enough but there will be a process," she told county leaders. "The BLM will still evaluate that but they are supposed to approve that purchase within 180 days of us submitting an application to make the purchase."

The new construction needed before Relief Canyon Mine reopens could start next month.

"As soon as we get financing, we have about a six to eight month construction period," said Project Manager Jerod Eastman. "Right now, we're using October 1 as a possible start date."

According to the BLM letter dated Aug. 15, 2018, the public has had 30 days to comment on the mine expansion for the BLM's environmental review of the proposed Phase II modifications. The public scoping period for the NEPA document ended this week on Sept. 14.

## The Humboldt Sun

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