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Phosphate miners get enviro clearance

October 19, 2016

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by Staff Reporter



Windhoek

Namibia Marine Phosphate (NMP), a firm linked to local businessman Knowledge Katti, has received a letter from the Office of the Environmental Commissioner in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) granting the firm environmental clearance for three years.

The company is also linked to Mohamed Al Barwani, one of Oman's richest men, who has in recent years been courting investment in Namibia. Al Barwani is now Katti's partner in a venture that is pushing for marine phosphate mining in Namibia, despite dissent from environmentalists and conservation lobby groups who argue it would destroy the country's marine life.

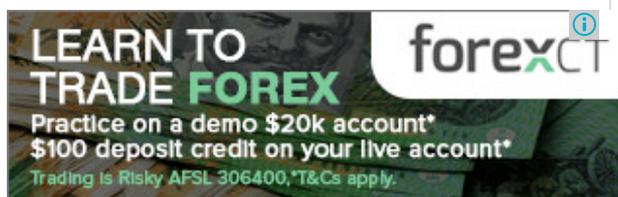


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Katti and partners argue that there are economic benefits to marine phosphate mining, including much-needed jobs for locals.

The environmental clearance will serve as a key step towards initiating NMP's Sandpiper marine phosphate mining project off the Namibian coast. The receipt of a mining license from the Ministry of Mines and Energy in June for an area covering 2 000 square kilometres, in water depths between 190 and 345 metres, the clearance puts NMP a step closer to commencing with its Sandpiper project, some 60 km offshore from Meob Bay along the central Namibian coast, about 120 km southwest of Walvis Bay.

The authenticity of the letter from Environmental Commissioner Teofilus Nghitila, dated September 5, 2016, was confirmed by MET official Damian Nchindo. It says the Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management Plan submitted by NMP are sufficient for environmental management of the marine mining project.

"This letter serves as an Environmental Clearance Certificate for the project to commence. However, this clearance letter does not in any way hold the Ministry of Environment and Tourism accountable for misleading information, nor any adverse effects that may arise from this project's activities. Instead, full accountability rests with Namibia Marine Phosphate and their consultants," the letter reads.

"This environmental clearance is valid for a period of three years from date of issue, unless withdrawn by this office," it stipulates.

The MET cautioned that "because the marine phosphate mining project is located in an environmentally sensitive coastal area, the

MET reserves the right to attach further

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legislative and regulatory conditions during the operational phase of the project.”

NMP’s Sandpiper project is projected to yield 1.8 billion tonnes of phosphoric sand. NMP is 42.5 percent owned by Mawarid Mining and 42.5 percent by Sea Phosphates (subsidiaries of Mawarid Mining LLC, an Omani company) and Havana Investments, a Namibian firm that holds 15 percent.

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