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Western Areas streamlines with Micromine

Tuesday, 27 May 2008

Alex Forrest

ADVANCED nickel explorer Western Areas has teamed up with mining software and consulting company Micromine, which will supply the prospective miner with a production monitoring system called DOME Plod for its Flying Fox mine.

Flying Fox is around 400km east of Perth, where Western Areas is developing a high-grade nickel mine.

Western Areas last week released details of the T4 deposit at Flying Fox, which the company says contains a mineral resource of 315,200 tonnes at an average grade of 4.1% nickel, for 12,810t of nickel.



The addition of the T4 deposit increases the total combined mineral resources at Flying Fox by 14% to some 104,650t of nickel, a figure which Western Areas is keen to increase to 150,000t by the end of this year.

Development at Flying Fox is moving quickly, and Western Areas is expecting to have the main decline accessing T4 in place in the December quarter 2008.

Once that is in place, Western Areas said only minimal additional capital expenditure would be required to bring T4 into production.

With production imminent, the need has arisen for a mine production control system and new grade control technology.

Specifically, Micromine's DOME Plod has been commissioned to work across several sections on the ground, tracking the movement of material from the time it is extracted through to its movement through the production facility.

According to Micromine, implementing the technology at Flying Fox will improve the monitoring of the mobile fleet, auxiliary equipment and personnel.

Micromine's technical services manager, Nathan Jolly, told *MiningNewsPremium.net* that by implementing DOME Plod at Flying Fox, Western Areas will be able to accurately track actual production against production targets, effectively manage temporary underground stockpiles, and simplify the end of month reconciliation process.

He said useful KPI data could be extracted from the new system such as more accurate tracking of material movement.

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Aspermont Limited

Street Address 613-619 Wellington Street, Perth WA Australia 6000

Postal Address PO Box 78, Leederville, WA Australia 6902

Head Office Tel +61 8 6263 9100 Head Office Fax +61 8 6263 9148

e-mail contact@aspermont.com website www.aspermont.com ABN 66 000 375 048



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Jolly said this included complexities such as separating development from production KPIs, moving material through temporary stockpiles, tracking multiple material types, and recording consumables used during development.

"Flexible reporting – allowing production to be summarised against individual equipment, vehicle models, fleet types, operators, crews, or any other recorded information – enables users of timesheet systems to gain a real understanding of where production efficiencies might be gained, without requiring real-time collection of data," Jolly said.



Micromine said that one of the main reasons DOME Plod was selected by Western Areas was its ability to be scaled up from the current paper-based Plod system to a real-time mine production control system such as Micromine's PITRAM system.

"Because DOME Plod shares its reporting engine with our real-time production system, PITRAM, we provide a more extensive library of continually updated production reports, and greater flexibility in reporting, than competing timesheet-based systems," Jolly said.

Micromine said that with effective tracking of production data, Flying Fox will benefit from significant improvements in the time taken to prepare, plan and run shifts.

"Similarly, DOME's Grade Control module provides powerful reconciliation and grade control functions that can be used by both real-time and timesheet-based operations.

"Finally, scalability underpins the decision of many sites to use DOME Plod for data collection," Jolly said.

"Every client's investment in a DOME Plod system will not be lost if their system grows to a size where real-time production control is required."

With DOME Plod, production data is manually recorded on shift or Plod sheets and entered into the production management system DOME at the end of the shift.

Jolly would not comment on whether there were any contracts with Western Areas planned for the future, or the value of the current contract.

Micromine is based in Perth and has offices in 12 countries.

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