Potential acid-forming rocks to be buried

BY TAMARA PENNIKET

GOLD mining company Vista Gold will bury potential acid-forming rocks in the centre of a waste dump at Mt Todd and cover it with 800mm of clay to stop long term sulphuric acid seepage.

About 510 million tonnes of waste rocks would be left behind if mining were to recommence at the mine site north of Katherine, theDraft Environment Impact Statement states.

Vista Gold would expand the base of the rock pile by more than three times from the current 69 hectares to 241 hectares, and reach a height of 350m.

The broken rocks contain sulphur and when filtered with rainwater, turn into sulphuric acid and dissolve a range of heavy metals.

Vista Gold general manager, Brent Murdoch, said expert advice based on independent company, Teratech's research, had concluded “there will be no sulphuric acid seepage as a result of the engineering solution we are deploying.”

He said the waste rock needed oxygen to form sulphide minerals, but would be starved of anaerobic oxygen if encapsulated in clay.

“No rain water will be able to transport any sulphide affected acid water from the waste rock dump,” Mr Murdoch said.

However, former owners, Zappan, also said they would bury the high sulphur waste rock deep within the site, more than a decade ago.

“Problematic acid formation can be prevented,” it said in a draft EIS in 1992.

But it failed, and the Northern Territory Government was left to clean up the mine site.

Mr Murdoch said it was highly unusual for any open pit mine to replace waste rock back into the pit at the end of the mine’s life.

“If the gold bearing ore was flat lying like Ilmenite or coal then we would backfill with the waste rock from today into the hole we dug yesterday,” Mr Murdoch said.

“Mr Todd has a vertical hole so we can’t ‘fill as we go’.

He said once mining begins, water will be a maintained completely within the boundaries of the site, unless it is cleaned up via the water treatment plant.

“In the long term there is no need to treat the water after the mine has closed as the potential acid forming material is locked away.”

The draft EIS is open for public comment until August 12.

Puss in Boots goes walkabout for two years

FELINE GG was only six to eight weeks old when Katherine local Tanea Rudder and her husband Steve adopted the kitten from the RSPCA.

“Our last cat had passed away and our other cat felt lonely, so we wanted a new kitten,” Mrs Rudder said.

“We got GG on Melbourne Cup day and every time we’d open the gate, she’d be off racing, like a bloody racehorse.

“That’s how she got her name.”

Kitten GG settled in nicely at her new home and enjoyed climbing up the fly screens and on top of cupboards, but there was so much more to be explored - beyond the walls of the Rudders’ home.

“We had a great time and lots of fun and GG would get herself into all sorts of kitten trouble - and then she disappeared.

Age only nine months, little GG saw her chance to explore the world when a door at her home was left open for a split second.

“We put food and a baby monitor outside, which would alert us if she returned, we went spotlighting and bought night vision goggles, we put up posters, did letter box drops, placed ads in the paper and searched for weeks,” Mrs Rudder said.

“We did everything we could possibly do - and in the first few months there were a few sightings in Katherine East and we received a few calls from Tindal, but we couldn’t find her.”

“We gave up hope, wondering what had happened to our little kitten.”

But two weeks ago a call from a local vet turned the Rudders’ lives around.

“The vet rang and said the RSPCA had picked up a stray cat and when he scan the cat’s microchip it was GG.

“I thought he was kidding.”

After one year and 11 months GG returned home to her excited owners.

“It’s like she’s never left the house.”

“Her mannerisms are the same, she just lost her kitten pounce now that she’s a bit older.

“And she’s not feral at all, someone must have looked after her.”

Toastmasters Club celebrates community group’s new Charter

KATHERINE’S Toastmasters celebrate the Charter of its community club along with the grand opening of the new Escarpment Restaurant on Friday night.

Toastmasters Katherine are excited to announce the very first Charter for the Katherine Region and have an exciting year ahead planned, offering the Katherine community a chance to develop their public speaking confidence and leadership skills.

If you are preparing for a public event, it might be Toastmaster as a wedding, professional presentation or training or even getting ready to MC the Debutante Ball, Katherine Toastmasters can support you.

Each meeting is well structured and efficient and offers every member a chance to develop their skills and confidence according to their capacity.

The Katherine Toastmasters Club come together every second Wednesday night at the former Katherine River Lodge - now The Escarpment - at 6.15pm and Tuesday morning at McDonalds at 7.15am.

For more information just email toastmasterskatherine@gmail.com.