
An article in The State, an online news source for South Carolina, reported the opposition of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to the creation of a very large gold mine near Camden, South Carolina.

The proposing company, Romarco Minerals, wants to reopen the Haile Gold mine. The Haile Gold Mine began mining operations in the early 1800s and was periodically mined until circa 1990. Romarco feels that they could expand this historic mine to reach and extract small amounts of gold that previous efforts were not able to obtain.

If the plans are approved, this would result in the “largest gold mine east of the Mississippi River” and include a pit that would be almost a mile wide and 900 feet deep. It would employ approximately 300 permanent workers for the mining operations (and related) and about 500 temporary (construction) workers in this economically depressed area. This area was affected by the closing of the textile mills 20-plus years ago. Romarco already owns approximately 8,000 acres near this site.

The EPA noted, reflecting on many questions from federal and state natural resource agencies, that the mining project had the potential to “‘have a significant level of direct impacts to a wide variety of natural and human resources.’” The concerns included the effects of excavating or filling many streams and wetlands (up to 7 miles of creeks and 162 acres of wetlands) along with a lack of an adequate plan to offset some of these losses. There are also worries about the potential for contamination of local drinking water and creeks by mining-caused pollutants.

The EPA advised federal regulators to turn down a necessary wetland permit. Romarco cannot move forward on this mine without this permit. However, the EPA allowed for reconsideration with further studies that would address some of the environmental concerns.

Source: