

# NYCO Finishes Test Drilling In Jay Mountain Wilderness

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NYCO Minerals has finished test drilling in the Jay Mountain Wilderness and now plans to assess the quality of the wollastonite found on the site.

Brian Glackin, the mine manager, said the company ended up drilling at only eight sites, though it had originally been permitted to drill at twenty-one. "At the first three holes there was nothing. That was a big gulp," Glackin told me Tuesday when I visited Lot 8, the 200-acre parcel that NYCO hopes to acquire from the state.

After this initial disappointment, NYCO found wollastonite at the other five test sites. The mineral is used in plastics, ceramics, paints, and other products.

Ordinarily, industrial activity is not allowed on the Forest Preserve, but last fall voters approved a ballot measure allowing NYCO to acquire Lot 8. In exchange, NYCO would give the state land of equal or greater value. Also, Lot 8 eventually would be returned to the state.



NYCO conducted test drilling from early January to late April to determine whether the parcel contains a sufficient amount of wollastonite to make the land swap worthwhile. After analyzing the quality and quantity of the wollastonite, the company will decide whether to go forward with the deal. That decision is likely to be made in three to six months, Glackin said. Glackin, however, said he was encouraged by the wollastonite found in the test bores. "It was a good showing," he said.

I encountered Glackin after hiking to Lot 8 to take photos of the access corridors and drill sites created by NYCO. He had heard from a co-worker that I was on the site and came to meet me.

Lot 8 lies about a half-mile from Seventy Road, a dirt road that dead-ends in the Jay Mountain Wilderness. To reach the parcel, I bushwhacked along the property line. I then angled south and stumbled across a drill-pad site at the end of an access corridor.

I'd guess the site was thirty to forty feet wide. It was cleared of all trees. NYCO had placed several "sediment logs" – long bags of straw encased in mesh – on the site to control erosion.

Much of the access road was covered in straw. Glackin later told me that the straw was put down in the spring to keep snow and ice from melting – an attempt to minimize the damage to the soil caused by moving heavy equipment.



I followed the corridor to a split. Going left, I soon arrived at NYCO's existing mine. It was here that I ran into Glackin's co-worker. After chatting with him, I returned to the junction and followed the left corridor.

Sawn logs and brush lined both corridors. Glackin said NYCO plans to strew the debris in the corridors to facilitate their return to natural conditions (at least those sections that are not mined). I also saw a dozen plastic bags filled with clay used to fill the drill holes. Glackin later told me the bags – as well as colorful survey tape fixed to trees – will be removed.

Lot 8 is mostly a hardwood forest, though the second corridor passed through a small stand of evergreens. When I got to the end, I turned around, and on the way back I encountered Glackin.

There was a third corridor, off the first, that I did not follow. Glackin told me that it led to three drill-pad sites that were cleared but not used, due to the difficulty of dragging the drilling rig up the slope. In addition, there were three drill-pad sites along the edge of the property that I did not see.

In all, Glackin said, NYCO cleared eleven sites but drilled at only eight. Of those eight, five yielded evidence of wollastonite reserves beneath. Glackin said the area disturbed by the test drilling was confined to the eastern third of Lot 8.

Four environmental groups – Protect the Adirondacks, Adirondack Wild, the

Sierra Club, and the Atlantic States Legal Foundation – had sued the state and NYCO in attempt to block the drilling, but they abandoned the suit after a judge ruled against them.

Opponents of the land swap contend that it sets a dangerous precedent for the Forest Preserve. NYCO contends that it needs to expand its existing mine to save jobs and that the Forest Preserve will benefit as well.

In February, NYCO's parent company, S&B, was bought by Imerys, an international company that bills itself as a world leader in industrial minerals.

The news release announcing the sale was issued from Paris.

*Photos by Phil Brown. The top and bottom photos show access corridors. The middle photo shows a section of bedrock left over from one of the bore holes.*