

Solid Energy starts Cypress extension at Stockton mine

4 May 2009 - Solid Energy is about to start preliminary works developing the Cypress extension of Stockton opencast coking coal mine in Buller.

The new \$60 million mining development will add approximately 5 million tonnes of high-quality coal to Stockton's production over 10 years.

Two new mining pits and associated infrastructure will be built extending Stockton mine's operations to the east into the upper Waimangaroa mining permit area.

Solid Energy expects to begin the large-scale development work at Cypress in 2010 with the aim of taking first coal from the northern Cypress pit in late 2011.

An extensive resource drilling programme, begun in the area this summer, will run for a year.

Solid Energy chief executive, Dr Don Elder, says the company now needs to move on with the 30-month development programme so that coal from the Cypress extension is available to blend with other coals from the Stockton Plateau to ensure continuity of supply to meet customer demand.

"This is critical for the ongoing life of Stockton mine over the next 20 years," he said.

Dr Elder said a substantial environmental monitoring and data collection programme, to provide baseline information about a range of site environmental conditions, is due to begin within the next three months.

This work includes mapping animal populations, predator and weed control, water quality and climate monitoring and biodiversity work. They are required to meet the extensive conditions of the resource consents for the development.

Solid Energy holds all necessary resource consents for the proposed development and operation of the Cypress extension and the appropriate land access arrangements and authorities to enter from the Crown.

Work will soon begin to upgrade and extend an existing four-wheel-drive track to allow easier access to the site by light vehicles.

With the start of these works imminent, Solid Energy considers it essential to close part of the land to the public for their own safety and for workplace health and safety purposes.

A public exclusion zone has been designated covering about 480 hectares (16%) of the 2,932 hectare Upper Waimangaroa mining permit area. Dr Elder said he believes the public will respect the exclusion area.

Source: Solid Energy and Lindsay Clark