

NEWS

Rosselló nixes mining project by signing bill

By the STAR Staff

A mining proposal for Adjuntas was buried Friday when Gov. Rosselló signed a bill prohibiting open pit or strip mining on the island.

"This is a very special day for me," said Rosselló. "This project, this vision, will be positive for the island."

But Sen. Rubén Berríos, PIP-at large, said the bill doesn't completely prohibit companies from exploiting Puerto Rico's mineral resources because they can always use other methods.

"A bill was approved that only prohibits open pit or strip mining — giving way to other possibilities of exploitation," Berríos said.

Rosselló "can pretend that he can make the country believe that the exploitation has been prohibited. The governor hasn't read or understood what this mining project entails," he said.

Other mining opponents, on the other hand, welcomed the news.

"We think this is a historic moment. It's a very significant victory," said Alexis Massol, spokesman for CasaPueblo, a community group that has been battling the proposal.

CasaPueblo formed to battle an earlier, more extensive mining proposal for the same area, which it defeated.

The current Legislature has strongly supported the bill introduced by Sen. Freddy Valentín, chairman of the Natural Resources Committee.

"I congratulate the governor for doing this," Valentín said Thursday, after confirming that it was his bill the governor would be signing.

The Senate passed the bill unanimously earlier this month, with the House following suit last week.

Southern Gold Resources had proposed to extract 379,000 tons of copper and close to 600,000 ounces of gold using the open pit method. The plan called for operations to cover 360 acres of land nestled in the Adjuntas mountains.