

## Cape prospecting plans dropped

12 Mar 2010 by Jancis Robinson

You may remember our article [Cape winelands under threat](#) about the mining prospecting proposed in some of South Africa's most beautiful wine country published on Thursday last week.

We have just received this very heartening message from Gary Jordan of Jordan wine estate, who was co-ordinating the protests over these proposals:

'Just to keep you in the loop regarding the mineral prospecting applications - even up until late afternoon yesterday (and despite the [Business Day report](#) yesterday morning), African Exploration Mining and Finance Company (AEMFC) were adamant that they were still going to put in their environment management plan which would have taken a minimum of another two to three months to fight in court. This was confirmed by their consultants too until I received a call from the Department of Minerals and Energy late yesterday afternoon, advising me that they had asked AEMFC to withdraw their applications.

'I have included their press release to that effect [in italics below] where they say that they withdrew their applications for 'strategic business reasons'. Literally thousands of opposition registrations were received in the space of a week, unprecedented I think, but with the local and international community gelled into action, we recorded over 2,500 applications via the Facebook site 'STOP Mining our winelands' in the first few days alone. That excluded those put in by more seriously affected parties and neighbours as well as the greater conservation community, producer groups and their databases.

'Thank you so much for highlighting the issue by publishing the story with all the added links on your site. This undoubtedly helped publicise the issue and ensured that we received an incredibly wide support base from all over the world in a matter of days.

'Hopefully we can now close an unnecessary chapter of the 2010 Cape vintage - it's bad enough trying to fight heatwaves and thunderstorms so I'm certainly looking forward to the first 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon this morning!'

### **PRESS RELEASE - AFRICAN EXPLORATION WITHDRAWS PROSPECTING APPLICATION**

*African Exploration Mining and Finance Corporation (AE) has decided to withdraw its application to prospect in the Western Cape for strategic business reasons, the company's Chairman, Mr Mputumi Damane announced today.*

*'We have just completed an extensive process of reviewing our corporate plans. One of the key outcomes of that process was a decision to reprioritise the areas around the country where we plan to devote our energies.*

*'Like any other business we operate with limited resources, and part of the business plan review process was to shorten the list of areas where we are going to deploy our corporate resources going forward.*

*'On the basis of the adapted strategic trajectory, we have decided to withdraw the application to the Department of Mineral Resources for prospecting rights in the Western Cape,' Mr Damane said.*

*AE had undertaken a study which revealed that there are industrial minerals occurring in certain areas of the Western Cape. As part of a quest to understand the geology of the area the Company had decided to apply for a prospecting right which would give it legal access to the identified areas for geological investigations.*

*'It needs to be pointed out that a prospecting right is not a mining right. The purpose of the application was to secure rights to undertake an intensive study of the mineral deposits in the area. During the process there would be no disturbance to the activities taking place in the neighbourhood, and AE had no intentions to degrade any of the areas in any way,' Mr Damane said.*

The news that the 'strategic trajectory' has been well and truly 'reprioritised' away from Cape winelands is truly excellent. Now South African wine farmers can breathe a sigh of relief and concentrate on the grape harvest currently underway. It also, I would argue, provides some evidence of one of the more beneficial effects of the speed and ease of social networking. I am certainly not taking any major personal credit for this volte face on the part of AE/ AEMFC, but I'm sure that quite a few of those who registered their protest will have become aware of the proposals by visiting JancisRobinson.com directly or by being directed to our article, with its pointers to the relevant page on Facebook, by me or others on Twitter. Brownie points for [The influence of Twitter?](#)