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Nation's largest steelmaker interested in St. Lawrence County



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By **Keith Benman** | May 29, 2019 at 4:34 PM EDT - Updated May 29 at 7:47 PM

BENSON MINES, N.Y. (WWNY) - A thousand people once worked along the road at Benson Mines. Now, the nation's largest steel producer has an exclusive option to lease mineral rights there. Interest like that is giving people in Star Lake hope.

“Anything that would bring an economic boom to our area certainly would be appreciated,” said Walter Todd, owner of Todd’s True Value.

There is no doubt that Benson Mines occupies a special place in the lore of the region. From County Route 60 you can see some of the rubble left. Now largely water-filled, it was once the largest iron-ore pit mine of its type in the world.

“There’s been a lot of people in the whole St. Lawrence County area, Franklin County, Jefferson County, that worked in that mine. It’s touched a lot of people,” said Mark Hall, Town of Fine water superintendent.

7 News tracked down a memo on the Nucor option at the county Clerk’s Office. It was filed under the name Greenland Acquisition. But state business records list Greenland’s chief executive as R. Joseph Stratman. He’s a Nucor vice president. Its address is Nucor headquarters.

When contacted, Nucor issued a statement reading in part: “We don’t comment on potential mergers, acquisitions or joint venture activity. Like most companies, we are constantly evaluating unique market opportunities.”

The county has struck a separate deal with the company Benson Mines. It gives Benson Mines the exclusive right to purchase the 58-acre J&L site. J&L and the 3,000-acre mine make up the largest industrial-zoned area in the Adirondack Park.

\$10 million has already been spent to improve the Carthage-Newton Falls rail line. Some work was done specifically to serve Benson Mines.

“We have industrial sites in the community between the paper mill and the Benson Mines site. And the rail runs to those properties. So that’s all been done with the idea it brings us opportunity,” said Hall.

The Nucor option gives the company the exclusive right to close a deal on leasing mineral rights at Benson Mines through 2023. The Benson Mines option with the county runs through 2024.

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