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Epithermal Gold Discoveries in the New Khundii Metallogenic Province, Southwest Mongolia

Michael A. MacDonald¹, Gendenjamtsyn Bat-Erdene², Michael X. Gilles³, Peter J. Dalton³, Jeffrey W. Hedenquist⁴

1. Independent, Dartmouth, NS, Canada, 2. Erdene Resource Development Corporation, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 3. Erdene Resource Development Corporation, Dartmouth, NS, Canada, 4. Independent, Ottawa, ON, Canada

Exploration in an underexplored region of SW Mongolia since 2005 has defined a porphyry Mo-Cu deposit (measured and indicated resources of 218 Mt at 0.057% Mo and 0.069% Cu) and discovered two epithermal gold deposits. This emerging Khundii metallogenic province, ~5000 km² in area in a Carboniferous-Permian island arc, is ~700 km WNW of the Oyu Tolgoi porphyry Cu-Au deposit.

After definition of the granodiorite-hosted Zuun Mod porphyry Mo-Cu deposit (297±4.8 Ma), a regional exploration program over 110,000 km² included compilation of geologic, geochemical, geophysical and satellite imagery information, followed by ground exploration with stream, soil, and rock chip sampling plus geologic and alteration mapping. A prospect discovered in early 2011 led to a 400×400-m soil survey that identified a Pb-, Zn-, and Au-in-soil anomaly over 1.5×5.5 km. The first drill hole within the soil anomaly discovered the Altan Nar Au-polymetallic epithermal deposit, with veins of quartz-adularia (309.7 ± 0.5 Ma), base metal sulfides, and Ca-Mg-Mn-Fe-carbonate gangue.

The Bayan Khundii gold deposit, discovered in 2015 from prospecting ~16 km SE of Altan Nar, led to adjacent deposits at Kar Mori and Ulaan SE also being discovered (<https://erdene.com/>). Epithermal quartz-adularia-gold veins (336.8 ± 0.5 Ma) with colloform bands and minor pyrite plus variable arsenopyrite have illite halos. Epithermal veins in the area overprint an early, unrelated alteration of residual quartz and pyrophyllite±dickite±diaspore-kaolinite. Northwest of Bayan Khundii ~3 km at Ulaan, K-feldspar and magnetite plus quartz-white mica-pyrite, related to the top of a porphyry deposit with Cu-anomalies, was eroded to the base of a lithocap and overprinted by gold-bearing epithermal veins; the porphyry prospect has yet to be drill tested at depth. The Bayan Khundii deposit has 0.5 Moz of shallow ore at 4.0 g/t Au in reserves; production is slated to start in 2025, with drill testing of adjacent deposits continuing.