



Usk cryptomine gets conditional use permit

By Thomas Clouse

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The first major regulatory hurdle has been crossed for a California-based company trying to convert the shuttered Ponderay Newsprint mill in Northeast Washington into one of the nation's largest cryptocurrency operations.

A hearing examiner approved a conditional use permit allowing Allrise Capital Inc., which formed Merkle Standard and a half dozen other subsidiaries, to run a large computer bank on the 927-acre site of the former paper mill, which closed due to bankruptcy in 2020.

The land is technically zoned R-5 Residential, which only allows a home on 5 acres.

The new owners needed the conditional use permit to allow it to run up to 30,000 servers, which are expected to consume about 100 megawatts of electricity as they processed data to earn cryptocurrency.

In his Friday decision, hearing examiner Christopher Anderson gave the green light

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to company plans despite concerns raised by some local residents about potential impact to wildlife.

Anderson ruled that Pend Oreille County considered environmental factors "in a manner which amounted to prima facie compliance with" the provisions that prohibit mining further mining operations.

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