

CITATION ON THE MINERAL RESOURCES OF NASARAWA STATE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Nasarawa State, which has land mass of 1200 square kilometers is located in the middle belt of the country and has a climate typical of the tropical zone. The State has a land mass of 27,862 km² with a population of 1,863,275 people as was recorded during the 2006 provisional census.

The State is made up of 30 ethnic groups, each with a distinct heritage; the Gwandara, Alago, Eggon, Gbagi, Egbira, Migili, Kantana, Fulani, Hausa, Kanuri, Tiv, Afo, Gade, Nyankpa, Koro, Jukun, Mada, Ninzam, Buh, Basa, Agatu, Arum, Kulere, Ibo, Yoruba etc. People from other parts of the country co-exist peacefully with the indigenes.

The State is structured into 13 Local Government Areas (LGAs) namely Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Karu, Keffi, Kokona, Lafia, Nassarawa Eggon, Nassarawa, Obi, Toto and Wamba.

GEOGRAPHY

Nasarawa State lies between latitude 7° and 9° North and longitude 7° and 1° East, and is accessible through Benue State to the South and Kogi State to the West. The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja to the North-West, Kaduna and Plateau States to the North – East, and Taraba States to the South-East.

TOPOGRAPHY

The physical features of the State are largely mountainous. It covers a very large portion of the State, most of which are rocky and of undulating highlands to average height of about 1,400m above sea level.

Areas such as Nasarawa, Nasarawa Eggon Wamba, Keffi and Akwanga are generally hilly and rocky, while areas such as Lafia, Doma, Awe and Keana are fairly of plain terrains. The River Benue, one of the famous river Africa and its tributaries cover most part of the State.

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CLIMATE

The State has a climate typical of the tropical zone because of its location. Its climate is quite pleasant. It has a maximum temperature of 81.7° F and a minimum temperature of 16.7° F. Rainfall varies from 131.73cm in some places to 145cm in others. The months of December, January and February are cold due to harmattan wind blowing across the State from the North-East. It is characterized by two distinct season: dry and wet. The dry season span from November to February, where the rainy season is from March to October.

SOIL

The sediments generally comprise of sandstones, siltstones and subordinates inter-bedded clays all of cretaceous age. Alluvial soils are found along the flood plains which are always swampy in nature due to availability of water all the year round. The forest soils which are rich in humus and laterite soils which are found in most parts of the State and is very good for crop production.

NATURE RESOURCES

Given its vast abundance and resources which range from soil based, ecotourism, agriculture, all that is needed for economic transformation is entrepreneurship, credit facilities and enhanced massive influx of foreign investment.

The State also has a vast arable land for commercial farming, fishery development, wild-life and forestry conservation. Agriculture therefore is the mainstay economic of the State with over 70% of the population involved in subsistence farming.

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Nasarawa State is “Home of Solid Minerals”. On behalf of the Government and People of Nasarawa State, I wish to reiterate our support for the ongoing reforms in the Solid Minerals sector and I hereby emphasize that there is every reason to believe that the nation will rank amongst the best 20 economies in the world before the year 2020.

As we seek to develop our solid minerals sector for national rebirth, we shall do this carefully to align with the change agenda of the Federal Government as enunciated by His Excellency, The President of Federal republic of Nigeria, General Muhammadu Buhari CFR.

Nasarawa State is endowed with abundant mineral resources like no other State in the Federation. The three major geological components that make up the geology of Nigeria, namely, Basement Complex, Younger Granites and Sedimentary Rocks are all exposed in Nasarawa State.

All known minerals that occur in Nigerian Geological environments are available in Nasarawa State. The rocks in Nasarawa State are the host to Gold in Wamba; Baryte at Azara, Wuse and Alosi; Coals (of the highest rank in Nigeria) at Obi, Jangerigeri, Jangwa and Shankodi; Large Marble deposits at Ugya and Gadabuke/Toto; Tin, Columbite and Tantalite at Afu, Udege Beki, and Wamba; Gemstones in Keffi, Garaku, Andaha, and Nasarawa Eggon; Copper deposit in Akiri, Azara and Rafin Gabas; Salt in Rib, Keana and Awe; Limestone deposits at Jangerigeri and Tunga; Clay deposits in Shabu; Glass sands in Lafia and Doma; Granite rocks at Karu, Keffi, Akwanga, Nasarawa Eggon, Nasarawa etc; and many more too numerous to be listed here.

The issue of solid mineral extraction, processing and environmental sustainability is an issue of great concern because most of the activities are carried out illegally in many parts of the state and in the country as a whole. Creating wealth for the people from the mineral resources that occur

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naturally within the state is good, but it has to be done in a way that will safeguard the lives and fortunes of our future generations.

It is against this backdrop that the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources is carrying out ecological study of the State to assess the impact of mining activities (and other agents of environmental degradation) for effective reclamation and utilisation by the host communities.

Available records show that mineral products exported from the state and other states of the Federation have minimal value addition and this implies increasing the value addition of these land-based resources to achieve sustainable development.

It is on this note that the State Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Cooperative as a path of sustainable development of the state natural resources has put in place value added programmes in the area of gemstone cutting and polishing thereby contributing significantly to the well-being of the citizenry.

It is important however, to point out that the presence of mineral resources in a state or country does not automatically translate to wealth or economic progress for its people. There may be indications of the availability of certain

mineral resources in a state, but to turn them into reserves that can be economically exploited requires having many things in place.

First of all, a reasonable geological and geophysical exploration effort is required to characterize and map the ore deposits. The technology in use must be right and appropriate for the mineral being searched for. The fiscal regime and legislation in place must be such that encourage individuals and companies to enter into the industry without fear of losing their money or wasting their time. Leases to explore and subsequently mine must be made available and the conditions for acquiring licenses should be transparent and attractive.

It is not enough to report occurrences of a mineral (e.g. tourmaline, aquamarine or emerald) in parts of Keffi, Nasarawa Eggon, and Kokona Local Government Areas without having some detailed geological and geophysical data on these and other mineral ore occurrences. Reliable

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geoscience data constitute an essential driver of the minerals and metals sector of any economy and provide the right foundation for mineral exploration and development.

The acquisition, management, storage, interpretation and communication of geoscience information is absolutely vital to promoting our resource potential and encouraging investment in detailed mineral exploration by the private investor.

In order to forge ahead with “grassroots exploration” the state government some years back engaged MECON Geology Nigeria Limited to carry out Mineral Survey of Limestone and Salt as well as inventory of Marble and Baryte. The survey was aimed at establishing information on limestone for the establishment of a mini cement plant in the state.

The first phase of the survey was completed and effort is on to commence the second phase of the survey to determine the reserve which would form the basis of discussion with interested investors. The Ministry is equally working towards selecting some parts of the state to produce detailed maps of the mineralized zones so as to encourage investment and subsequent exploitation of known ore occurrences. Mine development as we may know requires good geological data for success to be ensured.

Nasarawa State is desirous to venture into developing the solid mineral sector but the economic melt-down has been a major challenge considering the capital intensive nature of mining/mineral projects. The melt-down makes it difficult for most states in the Federation to invest and address the issue of how to generate and maximise value from these God-given resources.

For now, mining activities are dominated by artisanal and small-scale mining operations that are mainly informal. Most of the people work with rudimentary methods and have limited or no technical training at all. A large number of these small-scale miners also pay little or no attention at all to environmental considerations.

Nasarawa State is therefore strategically placed to benefit greatly from the development of the solid mineral sector. We intend to empower the small scale artisanal miners who form themselves into cooperative groups to

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enable them operate legally and also compete favorably with other players in the sector.

We therefore call on Local and foreign investors to come and invest in the exploration, mining and development of the solid mineral resources of the State. The State is ready to work with all investors as partners and competitors without usurping any undue advantage. There exists an official Nasarawa State website from which information on solid minerals available in the State, among other information can be accessed and downloaded.

In consultation with relevant Federal Government agencies such as Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission, Ministry of Mines and Steel Development etc., we are working to entrench and re-stress the principles of derivation and equally ensure that the interest of the community is adequately protected. We also have ensured that plans for adequate Reclamation and proper Decommissioning have been embedded in the legislation.

We must all have faith in the progress made so far by the Federal Government and give the process a chance to succeed. The mining of solid minerals may not be so volatile or crises-ridden as is the case with oil, but can be so if not properly handled. It is necessary that all stakeholders must be carried along.

Permit me at this point to let you all know that marble deposits occur abundantly in Gadabuke-Abaka-Ugya axis of Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The extent of the marble deposits is large enough to be exploited as raw material for cement manufacture and on the alternative for the production of dimension stone and or lime. Also to mention is the Baryte and copper deposits that abound in Azara and Wuse area of the State which is a major component in oil drilling and other industrial applications.

Nasarawa State lies at the heart and centre of the nation, next to Abuja the Federal Capital Territory. The market for cement or any other product produced from the marble deposits is therefore extremely large considering

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the ever increasing construction activities and expansion of the Federal Capital Territory and urbanization of the surrounding States.

Cement demand and consumption in the northern part of Nigeria are met by supply from those produced from the Benue Cement Company of Gboko, Obajana Cement Factory in Kogi State, Ashaka Cement Company in Gombe State and Cement Company of Northern Nigeria in Sokoto State. A cement company in Nasarawa State will fill the gap in demands by consumers located in between the long distances of the already existing cement companies. I therefore use this opportunity to warmly invite the private sector to come and partner with us in this business opportunity.

Furthermore, we equally invite investors to partner with us or on a 100% private sector ownership for enterprises on small and medium scale coal briquetting on Obi-Lafia, Agwatashi, Jaangwa and Shankodi coal deposit to supply the coal briquettes for domestic cooking all over Nigeria; Baryte processing and marketing at Azara; Salt mining and beneficiation at Keana and Awe; small and medium scale Tantalite and associated minerals mining in Keffi, Nasarawa, Nasarawa Eggon and Wamba; and Gemstone mining, processing and marketing at strategic localities in the State, and in particular the establishment of jewelry factories.

CONCLUSION

In view of the current approach on the development of the solid minerals sector by the Federal Government through the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development, Nasarawa State stand a chance to benefit. The benefit could be through direct participation, derivation and downstream ancillary industries that will ensure employment generation and socio-economic transformation. Investors are hereby advised to take advantage of the opportunities to partner or on a 100% private sector ownership for different solid minerals-based business enterprises that exist in the State.

His Excellency

Umaru Tanko Al-Makura

Governor, Nasarawa State

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Fig. 1: Artisanal miners engage in Tantalite mining at Nasarawa LGA



Fig. 2: Chinese Investors on reconnaissance survey of pink marble sites at Ugya - Toto LGA

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Fig. 3: Artisanal Marble mining and processing at Ugya-Toto LGA

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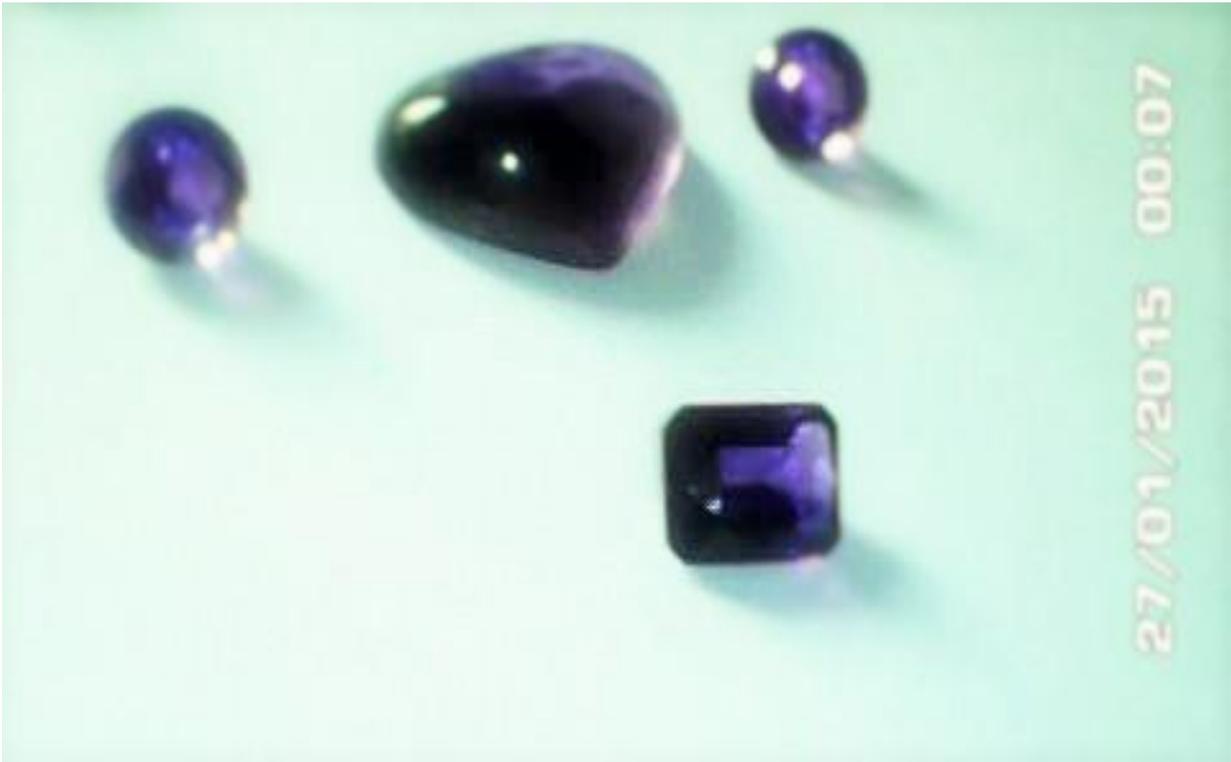


Fig. 4: Cut and polished gemstones (Amethyst)

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Fig. 4: Rough gemstone (Aquamarine) mined from Nasarawa State



Fig. 4: Facetted gemstone (Aquamarine) cut and polished in Nasarawa State