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Marathon Arkaroola clean-up due to start

CAMERON ENGLAND

MARATHON Resources will start cleaning up three sites where it dumped uranium drilling samples as soon as next week.

The Adelaide-based company said yesterday it had received approval from the Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia for its rectification plan for the site in the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary.

The company's drilling activities in the northern Flinders Ranges were suspended indefinitely by the State Government in February, after the company was found to have disposed of drilling samples and waste inappropriately.

The company was then asked to prepare a rectification plan for the sites, which it submitted to the State Government in June.

Marathon chairman Peter Williams said there were still some final details to be sorted out over the next couple of days.

Hope we could start next week

"This has been a difficult process for everybody, including PIRSA, because it really hasn't happened before," Mr Williams said.

"We will be meeting with PIRSA over the next two days and hope that we could start next week. The plan that we've submitted to them will take probably 10 weeks."

Mr Williams said extraneous rubbish such as plastics would be removed from the three sites in question, while drill cuttings would be returned to the pits they are currently in.

He said the company would look at having its drilling rights reinstated by

the State Government once the clean-up process had been completed.

"The process is, and we accepted that straight from the start, that we couldn't contemplate doing anything until all the rectification had been done to their satisfaction," he said.

"It will be towards the end of September I guess, that we will be submitting new plans for the Government to consider for a return to the drilling program that we have in place."

Marathon is currently operating without a chief

executive after the departure of former chief executive Stuart Hall last year.

Mr Williams said the company was operating well with Ian McRae as project executive for the Arkaroola operation, but had started looking for a chief executive which would be necessary as the company progressed towards the mining stage.

A Supreme Court case, in which Mr Hall is suing Marathon for breach of contract, and Marathon is counter-suing, claiming Mr Hall was incompetent, is currently ongoing.

IN FOCUS:
An aerial view of Arkaroola Sanctuary and, right, Peter Williams.

