

Altan Rio Begins First-pass Drilling Program at the Khavchuu Gold Project, Northern Mongolia



March 5th, 2012 - Vancouver, British Columbia - Altan Rio Minerals Limited, TSX.V: AMO ("Altan Rio" or the "Company") today announces the initiation of the first drilling campaign at the Khavchuu gold exploration project ("Khavchuu"), which the Company currently has an option to acquire 100% interest in, covering 71.4 km² in Tov Aimag, northern Mongolia. The project contains significant geophysical and

gold-arsenic geochemical anomalies in a Boroo mine type orogenic gold setting and has never been drilled. The planned reconnaissance drilling is designed to test a large tract of geology over an area of approximately 5 x 6 km, searching for key structural features such as low-angle fault zones. Six holes encompassing 1,800 meters of diamond core drilling are planned.

GEOLOGY

The general geological setting at Khavchuu is very similar to Boroo and surrounding deposits such as Ulaan Bulag. This geology is characterized by large areas of Kharaa formation units (siltstone, sandstone, argillite) of probable Middle Cambrian to Early Ordovician age, intruded by Middle-Late Ordovician Boroo Complex granitoids and later probable Devonian units.

Economic gold mineralization in the district is dominated by large tonnage quartz-sericite-sulfide (pyrite, arsenian pyrite and arsenopyrite dominate) alteration zones, commonly known as "QSP", in granitoids. The QSP alteration is readily imaged by IP surveys which show chargeability highs, and magnetic surveys which show coincident moderate low zones (magnetite destruction). Where bodies are exposed geochemistry shows robust gold and arsenic anomalies; where covered the anomalies become very subtle.

RECENT WORK

Altan Rio performed rock sampling and detailed soil geochemical grids (~1,200 samples) in 2011 in the northwestern quarter of the project. This work showed robust arsenic anomalies

coincident with IP chargeability highs, over several NW oriented structures. Low-level gold anomalies were also present. This combination – coincident gold, arsenic and IP highs – is fundamental to all economic deposits discovered thus far in the Borooogol District. During sampling, the team also discovered a small zone of quartz veining hosting visible gold.

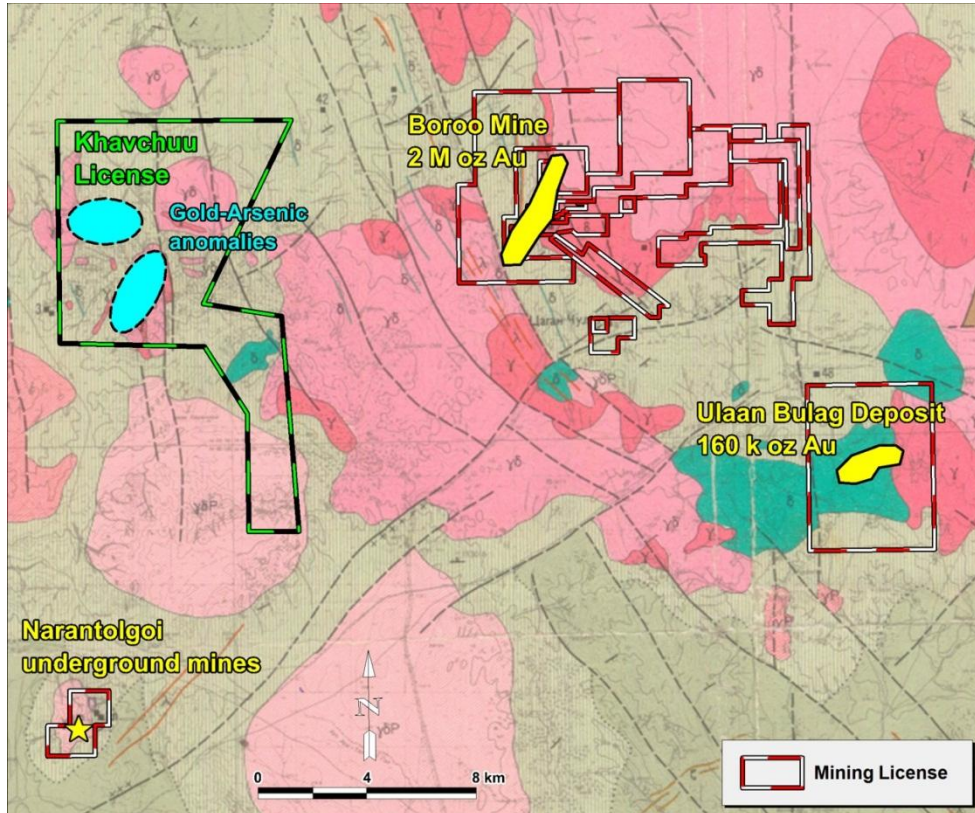


Figure 1. Location of the Khavchuu license and geochemical anomalies, showing other important gold mines in the Borooogol district. Note location of Boroo gold mine, approximately 12 km to east.

THE TARGETS

Three main areas will be drilled in our first effort to gain knowledge of the subsurface stratigraphy and structure:

A – Target area A in the northwest part of the project has recently been investigated by a large soil geochemical grid, producing Au and As soil anomalies coincident with IP chargeability of both prospective amplitude and promising size, therefore achieving a first-priority target status. Near-vertical quartz veins in the area locally host visible gold and a gently east-dipping low-angle fault zone has been mapped in the vicinity, which projects at depth into the IP chargeability anomaly. Rock samples in the area reach 0.11 ppm Au and 842 ppm As. Two holes are planned for about 600 m of drilling.

B – Target area B in the northeast quarter, another prospective IP feature, has been rock chip sampled where strong sericite alteration exists along a high-angle structural fabric. The objective is to track the high-angle fabric down structure to a possible intersection with a near-horizontal fault zone. Rock samples in the area reach 0.15 ppm Au and 177 ppm As. Two holes are planned for about 600 m of drilling.

C – Target area C in the south part of the project appears similar geologically to target area A, also hosting gold-bearing quartz veins, and represents a very prospective IP feature in a Boroo complex granitoid – which has proven thus far to be the preferred host unit for large gold deposits in the district. A north-dipping near–horizontal structure has been mapped just south of the area, and therefore projects at depth into the IP feature. Rock samples in the area reach 0.14 ppm Au and 564 ppm As. Two holes are planned for about 600 m of drilling.

Drilling is scheduled to begin in early March with two diamond core drills, and be finished in about a month.

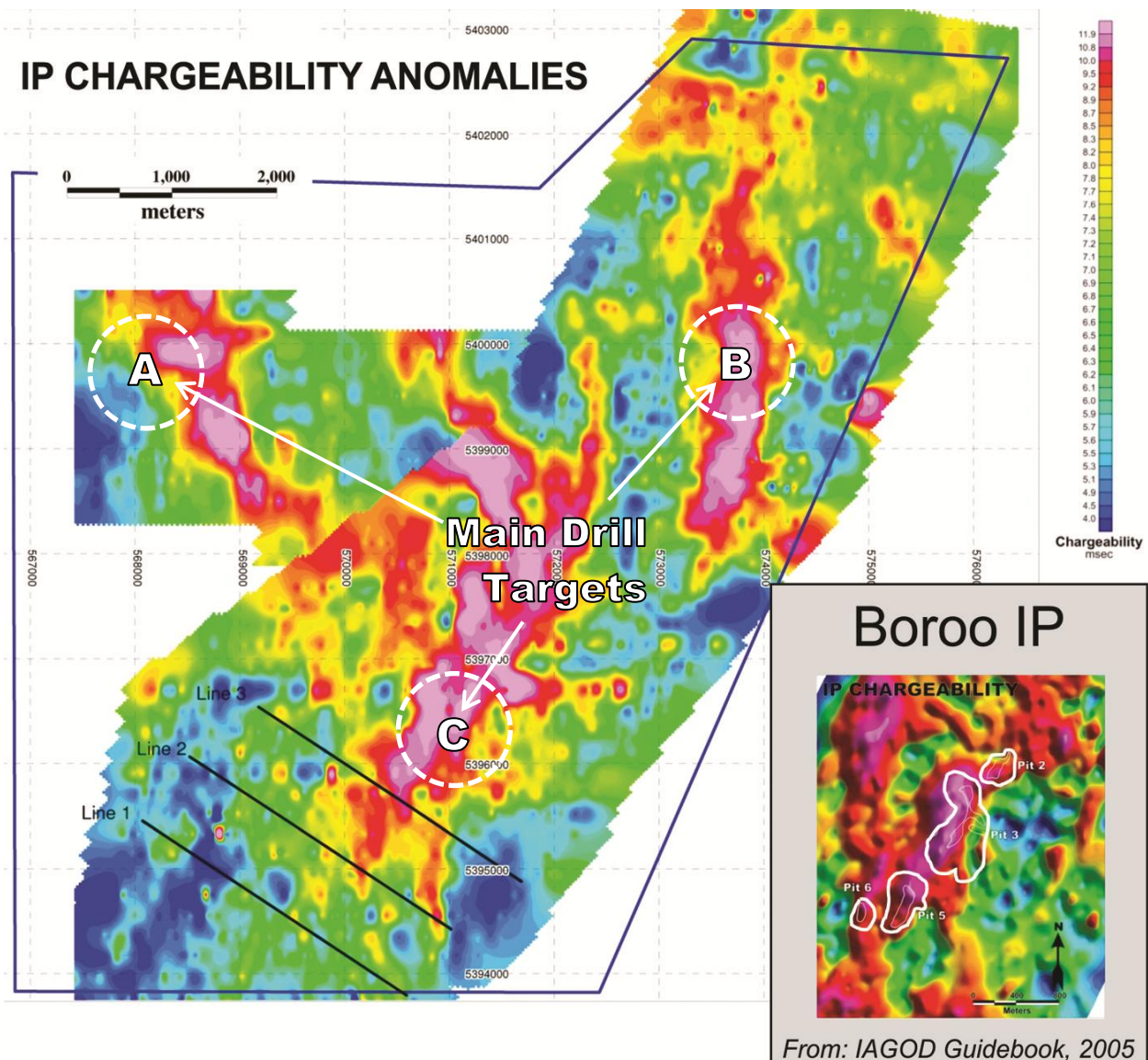


Figure 2. Geophysical compilation map showing IP chargeability anomalies at Khavchuu. Area of 2011 soil grid survey shown in dashed outline. Inset shows relevant IP anomalies over the main open pits at the Boroo mine, to scale.

About Altan Rio

Altan Rio, founded in 2007, is based in Vancouver BC, Canada. The company explores large-scale gold and copper projects in one of the world's most prospective mineral regions: Mongolia. The Company's license holdings in Mongolia, which total more than 153,310 hectares (378,873 acres), contain significant zones of newly identified primary gold and copper mineralization across a very large area of unexplored ground.

Competent Person Statement

J. Kelly Cluer, a Qualified Person as defined by National Instrument 43-101, has reviewed the preparation of the scientific and technical information in this press release in respect to the Chandman-Yol Project.

On behalf of Altan Rio Minerals Limited,

"Evan Jones"

Evan Jones,
President & CEO

For more information please contact:

Kelly Earle
Corporate Communications Manager
Altan Rio Minerals Limited
Tel: +1 604 639 5899 ext. 220
Email: info@altanrio.com
Web: www.altanrio.com

This press release may contain forward looking statements including those describing Altan Rio's future plans and the expectations of management that a stated result or condition will occur. Any statement addressing future events or conditions necessarily involves inherent risk and uncertainty. Actual results can differ materially from those anticipated by management at the time of writing due to many factors, the majority of which are beyond the control of Altan Rio and its management.

Neither the TSX Venture Exchange nor its Regulation Services Provider (as that term is defined in the policies of the TSX Venture Exchange) accepts responsibility for the adequacy or accuracy of this release.