

Test drilling OK'd for Oregon's first proposed lithium mine

By JORDAN RANE

Columbia Insight

McDERMITT, Nevada — A lithium-mining boom could be in the works in Southeastern Oregon. That's according to an Australian mineral exploration company targeting a site in Malheur County for the coveted battery metal that fuels cell-phones, laptops and electric vehicles.

Perth-based Jindalee Resources Ltd. announced this month it will test drill for lithium deposits on the edge of a volcanic caldera near the community of

McDermitt (pop. 126 or so), which occupies both sides of the Oregon-Nevada border.

The area is known to be naturally rich in sediments of the soft, silver-white element.

Lithium — the world's lightest pure metal, No. 3 on the periodic table — is famous for being able to float on water and stabilize human moods. But even more so these days as a vital global commodity for powering electronic devices, renewable energy storage and recent federal mandates to increase domestic production of it and reduce foreign

dependence.

Approval for Jindalee's McDermitt Lithium Project test drilling — 39 planned holes in all — was granted by the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries.

According to an Oregon Public Broadcasting report, this is the first known application received by the Mineral Land Regulation and Reclamation office to explore for lithium in the state.

Just how much lithium could be hiding beneath this largely unpopulated part of the country?

Over 10 million tons, notes a Jindalee press release after a preliminary scoping study. This would make it one of the largest lithium deposits in the United States, according to the company.

"An absolute monster" is how Jindalee executive director Lindsay Dudfield described the area (as it pertains to untapped lithium) on the financial media network Proactive.

Global market surging

Currently, a single lithium mine operates in the United States (in Nevada).

It produces just over 1% of the world's lithium supply, according to Forbes.

Australia, the world's top lithium supplier, produces nearly 53%, followed (distantly) by Chile, China (by far the world's top lithium consumer) and Argentina.

But this needle could shift over the next five years with global lithium production expected to almost triple due especially to a surging electric-vehicle market.

U.S. production is expected to grow following an executive order issued by the Biden administra-

tion for an in-depth analysis geared toward strengthening the domestic lithium supply — including mining raw materials for lithium-battery production.

"With the global lithium-battery market expected to grow by a factor of five to 10 by 2030, it is imperative that the United States invests immediately in scaling up a secure, diversified supply chain for high-capacity batteries here at home," stated a Department of Energy report in February, following Biden's "100-Day Battery Supply Chain Review."

Brown extends state of emergency due to the omicron variant

Declaration in effect until the end of June

The Oregonian

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown on Tuesday, Dec. 21, extended Oregon's declaration of a state of emergency until June 2022, citing the emergence of the omicron variant to the coronavirus.

"As Oregon prepares for what could be our worst surge in hospitalizations during this pandemic, I know that this is not the beginning of the new year any of us had hoped for," Brown said. "Time and again over the last two years, Oregonians have proven that we will stand with each other in our most difficult times. Your actions have saved lives, and it is because we have worked together to keep each other safe that Oregon still has some of the lowest infection and mortality

rates in the nation. Please, do your part again — get vaccinated, get your booster shot, and wear a mask."

Extending the state of emergency declaration maintains Oregon's ability to access federal relief funds, such as enhanced SNAP benefits, Brown's announcement said.

The governor noted she had moved away from managing the COVID-19 pandemic mainly through executive orders and mandates toward more standard regulatory tools as it became clear the pandemic needed long-term management, such as using existing state powers to implement masking and vaccination rules.

The state of emergency declaration does provide her with flexibility around activating medical and other resources, she said. The order remains in effect until June 30 unless rescinded or modified.

Online meltdown leads to resignation

League of Oregon Cities' leader resigns, days after flaming Beaverton mayor on Twitter

By ROB DAVIS

The Oregonian

PORTLAND — The League of Oregon Cities' executive director submitted his resignation Monday, Dec. 20, days after posting inflammatory comments on Twitter, sending profane messages to Beaverton's mayor and subsequently deleting his Twitter account.

Mike Cully, who has led the league since 2017, will immediately be put on paid administrative leave, where he will remain until March 20. The league represents Oregon's 241 cities at the Legislature. He previously worked as an economic development official in the San Diego area and as a manager at car-sharing company car2go.

"Mike Cully can no longer lead the organization," Sherwood Mayor

Keith Mays, the league's president, said at a hastily called Dec. 20 meeting. Mays said Cully's social media outburst "in no way reflects the mission, vision or values" of the league.

The league's board unanimously accepted the terms of Cully's resignation letter, giving him until Dec. 23 to agree to waive any claims against the league or face termination. Cully requested to be paid the unspecified balance of his accrued vacation time and executive leave as well as an unspecified lump sum to cover the costs of continuing health insurance coverage until the end of June "to ensure the medical needs of my family are met."

The issue erupted publicly Dec. 17, when Cully tweeted that he doesn't tip for fast food.

"That's what your paycheck is for," Cully wrote at 5:41 p.m. Dec. 17 in a subsequently deleted tweet. "Dissatisfied? Get an education and a better job."

Beaverton Mayor Lacey Beaty condemned Cully's remarks, tweeting, "If you don't want to tip during a global pandemic you should make your food at home."

Then Cully sent five direct messages to Beaty, Beaverton's first female mayor, according to a complaint Beaty filed Dec. 18 with the league.



Beaty



Cully

At 6:36 p.m.: "Hey Lacey — instead of putting me on [expletive] BLAST you bully. Talk to me." "You have NO SOUL," he added.

At 6:58 p.m.: "Talk to ME. A white male who has NO agenda with YOU."

At 7:31 p.m.: "[expletive] HATE weak people Lacey."

At 9 p.m.: "You are WEAK"

In her complaint, Beaty questioned Cully's refusal to apologize and called his behavior inexcusable.

"Can we make progress on improving the gender diversity in local government leadership in Oregon when men who hold posi-

tions of power speak to female leaders this way?" she asked.

Cully publicly apologized Dec. 19 for his remarks, the day after Beaty's complaint was filed.

"I am not above recognizing and acknowledging when I am wrong. Nor do I feel exempt from issuing an apology for posting insensitive and disrespectful remarks. I own that I did this to" Beaty, he wrote, inadvertently tagging another person with a name similar to the mayor's.

"In the strongest way possible," he wrote, "I apologize to the Mayor."

Cully did not respond to requests for comment. He deleted his Twitter account moments after The Oregonian/OregonLive's initial request for comment was sent.

He didn't address the controversy in his resignation letter, saying: "It has been both an honor and privilege to work with you and service the great leaders and cities here in Oregon since 2017. I wish you all continued success as you continue your standards of excellence."

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