



## NEWS NUGGETS

Compiled by Shane Lasley



Coated spherical graphite is the primary anode material in most rechargeable lithium-ion batteries that power electric vehicles, home energy storage units and other rechargeable electrical devices.

### AIDEA finds potential sites for Alaska-based graphite refinery

Graphite One Resources Inc. May 17 said that it has received a report from the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority that assess potential locations for a facility to refine graphite from its Graphite Creek deposit in western Alaska into advanced-materials such as coated spherical graphite used as an anode in lithium-ion batteries. In its report, AIDEA identified Homer, Kenai, Port Mackenzie and Seward as potential Alaska-based sites for the graphite refinery. The report comes on the heels of a memorandum of understanding between AIDEA and Graphite One to explore opportunities to collaborate on the development of the Graphite One project. "Tapping AIDEA's expertise in helping us assess potential refinery sites is the first step towards making Alaska a key player in the clean-tech energy sector," said Graphite One CEO Anthony Huston. "The AIDEA report confirms the considerable interest Alaska localities have in serving as a base for our advanced-material spherical graphite refinery." Homer, Kenai, Port Mackenzie and Seward are all Southcentral Alaska locations with year-round ports with barge landings, docks, and container handling capacity. From these ports, refined graphite could be delivered to the Lower 48 states, generally via the ports of Seattle and Tacoma. These potential sites also "have the capacity in-place to meet the refinery's power needs," according to AIDEA. As for power costs, the AIDEA report notes that "while Alaska can't directly compete on power generation costs, there are potential accumulated benefits to the location criteria that will help balance the overall capital and operating costs of the project." Each potential site offers available industrial zoned land for the project. A number of property, sales, and other special taxes on commercial and industrial activities within the municipal areas of the four locations, however, must be taken into consideration when evaluating the costs of operating a graphite refinery at each. Graphite is a critical material for electric vehicle batteries and energy storage systems. The U.S. is presently 100 percent import-reliant for graphite, a critical ingredient in the lithium-ion batteries that power electric vehicles and other electronic devices.

### CopperBank funds Pyramid drilling

CopperBank Resources Corp. May 12 reported the closing of a C\$1.4 million non-brokered private placement that included the issuance of 17.5 million common shares at C8 cents each. In April, CopperBank announced plans to carry out a roughly US\$750,000 exploration program at Pyramid, a copper-molybdenum-gold project on Aleut Corporation lands on the Alaska Peninsula. The program, slated for mid-2017, is expected to include 1,500 meters of drilling. The

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PEBBLE LIMITED PARTNERSHIP



Field work at Pebble, such as this drilling at the project in 2010, provided jobs to many residents near the world-class copper deposit. Successfully settling its dispute with EPA, the Pebble Partnership is now planning the first field program at Pebble in several years.

### EXPLORATION & DEVELOPMENT

# Pebble door opens

EPA agrees to lift pre-emptive restrictions, allowing normal permitting

By SHANE LASLEY  
Mining News

After five long years of battling inside and outside of the courtroom, Pebble Limited Partnership and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have negotiated an agreement that opens the door for the enormous Pebble copper-gold-molybdenum project in Southwest Alaska to enter the permitting process unencumbered by pre-determined restrictions.

"This settlement represents a major step forward for the Pebble project," said Pebble Partnership CEO Tom Collier. "It allows us to start advancing Pebble to the next phase of development and provides us with the opportunity to initiate the normal permitting process for this project."

A sentiment reflected by EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt.

"We are committed to due process and the rule of law, and regulations that are 'regular,'" said the former Oklahoma attorney general. "The agreement will not guarantee or prejudge a particular outcome, but will provide Pebble a fair process for their permit application and help steer EPA away from costly and time-consuming litigation. We are committed to listening to all voices as this process unfolds."

While this is an important milestone for Northern Dynasty Ltd., currently the sole owner of Pebble, the outcome has implications well beyond one copper project in Alaska, or even the U.S. mining sector at large. Stopping EPA from using Section 404 (c) of the Clean Water Act to ban or restrict a project prior to permitting prevents a precedent that could have significantly expanded the environmental agency's regulatory reach.



TOM COLLIER



RON THIESSEN

### Time limits

While considered a major victory for the Pebble Partnership – a company that has some US\$750 million invested in the exploration, environmental studies, engineering and other work need to ready the world-class copper project for permitting – the settlement with EPA involved give and take from both parties.

One of the major limitations for the Pebble Partnership is time.

Under the terms of the settlement, the hopeful mine developer has 30 months to file permit applications, which initiates the permitting process under the National Environmental Policy Act, and 48 months for a final environmental impact statement to be filed by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

This time limit was included to ensure the settlement does not violate rules that would constrain the authority of a federal cabinet officer.

Pebble leaders, however, do not see the time limits as much of an impediment.

Both Collier and Northern Dynasty President and CEO Ron Thiessen told Mining News that they expect to have permit application in by the end of 2017 and have a final environmental impact statement from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by May, 2021.

As long as these two deadlines are met, the EPA has agreed not to take any pre-emptive CWA 404 (c) action against Pebble. If either deadline is missed, however, the regulator has the option to dust off and activate its previous decision.

Pebble has also agreed to withdraw its legal

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