

# Kalgoorlie Miner

## Race on to develop first potash project in Oz outback

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A sulphate of potash explorer believes saline water from an historic open cut mine in the northern Goldfields could be recycled to produce the in-demand fertiliser product.

Salt Lake Potash has signed a memorandum of understanding with gold producer Blackham Resources to pilot a SOP project on Lake Way near Wiluna.

It will complete a scoping study by the middle of 2018 before making a decision whether to develop a 40,000-50,000 tonne a year SOP pilot plant, using discharged water from the Williamson gold mine as its initial feed.

The company estimates the water in the pit includes 1.2 gigalitres of an extremely high-grade potash brine of 25kg per cubic metre. The original Lake Way brine grades about 14kg per cubic metre. As part of the deal Salt Lake will gain the brine rights on ground held by Blackham, while Blackham will acquire the gold rights to Salt Lake's tenements, covering about 290sqkm on the Lake Way paleochannel.

It also means the plant could be built on Blackham's existing mining leases, where it already has granted tenure and an existing native title agreement.

Blackham plans to restart production at Williamson by early 2019, and will need to de-water the pit anyway.

Salt Lake chief executive Matt Syme, whose company is also investigating sites for potash production at Lake Wells east of Laverton and Lake Ballard, home of the famous Gormley statues, said Lake Way was an "ideal" site for its pilot project.

"Lake Way appears to be an ideal site for our SOP demonstration plant and subsequent expansions," he said. "It appears to have the best combination in Australia of scale, brine chemistry, permitting and infrastructure access and justifies the effort to prove its potential.

"Work will continue in parallel at Lake Wells, where our mining lease application is in progress."

SOP is a fertiliser input, the use of which is growing due to demand from the Chinese middle class for high-quality produce such as fruit, vegetables and tobacco.

Salt Lake is one of the companies racing to develop Australia's first potash project in the outback, alongside emerging players such as the Mark Creasy-backed Australian Potash, Agrimin, Reward Minerals and Kalium Lakes.

Salt Lake shares were up 4.5c on the announcement to 55c.