

Media Statement

April 8th, 2019

Western Australian potash proposal recommended for environmental approval

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has recommended the State's first potash proposal for environmental approval, subject to certain conditions.

Potash is a key ingredient for fertilisers and is made from hypersaline brine, extracted from groundwater.

EPA Chair Dr Tom Hatton said Kalium Lakes' Beyondie Sulphate of Potash Project, was one of five potash proposals referred to the EPA for assessment.

"The EPA currently has three other potash proposals under assessment and last week another potash proposal was referred to the EPA," Dr Hatton said.

"While there are similarities between the proposals, each will be considered and assessed on its unique location and environmental impact.

"The Kalium Lakes' proposal is the first potash environmental assessment completed and we have recommended a number of conditions to protect the surrounding environment and native animals."

The potash which these proposals are seeking to extract is found within salt lake systems in remote parts of Western Australia. While this is the first potash proposal for which the EPA has completed an environmental assessment, the EPA has previously assessed a number of salt lake-based proposals, including gold and uranium mining proposals.

The Beyondie Sulphate of Potash proposal, located 160 km south-southeast of Newman, differs from a conventional mining operation. It relies on the extraction of hypersaline groundwater that is pumped to ponds where the water is evaporated and the salts concentrated, with the different salts (potash is a form of salt) extracted and purified.

Kalium Lakes is seeking to produce approximately 100 kilotonne per annum of Sulphate of Potash.

Through the assessment process the EPA gave particular attention to the night parrot and greater bilby, given their conservation status. While no individuals of these species were observed, evidence of the greater bilbys' habitats and burrows were recorded.

"We have recommended conditions, including environmental management plans to minimise impacts on samphire vegetation and fauna that live in groundwater, as well as pre-clearance surveys for the greater bilby to be carried out, within areas of the bilby's habitat," Dr Hatton said.

The other three potash proposals currently under assessment are: The Lake Wells Potash Project; Lake Disappointment Potash Project; and the Mackay Sulphate of Potash Project.

A fifth potash proposal, Lake Way SOP Demonstration Plant, was recently referred to the EPA and is currently out for public comment on whether to assess the proposal.

The EPA's report to the Minister for Environment is now open for a two-week public appeal period, closing 23rd April 2018. Appeals can be made at www.appealsconvenor.wa.gov.au

The Minister for Environment will make the final decision.

EPA Report 1631 is available at

http://www.epa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/EPA_Report/EPA%20Report%201631%20-%20Beyondie%20Sulphate%20of%20Potash%20Project%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf

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