

Aqua Metals' technology not limited to lead

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PITTSBURGH — Aqua Metals Inc. is considering expanding its lead refining technology to process other base metals, such as zinc and copper.

“When you think of smelting, there’s room for improvement in other metals as well,” chief commercial officer Steve Cotton told AMM, noting that the company’s hydrometallurgical method of processing lead may overlap with other metals.

Cotton noted that any expansion of Aqua Metal’s technology into other metals is still well into the future, as the company’s primary focus is commissioning its flagship commercial lead refining facility in McCarran, Nev. (amm.com, Nov. 5).

“We’re not really yet prepared to go into details. We have some possibilities that we can focus on going forward, but it’s on the horizon and that’s all we can say for the time being,” Cotton said.

The Alameda, Calif.-based company is on track to start production at the 138,000-square-foot McCarran facility in the second quarter of 2016, chairman and chief executive officer Stephen Clarke said during a March 7 conference call.

Aqua Metals will target an operating rate of 80 tonnes of lead output per day, processing 150 tonnes of spent lead-acid batteries per day, by the end of 2016.

Upon achieving this target, the company’s next priority will be to double output to 160 tonnes of lead per day by 2018, by adding 16 AquaRefining modules to the building.

The facility has already been designed to accommodate the expansion, which will help to mitigate the estimated cost, currently pegged at around \$12 million dollars, Cotton said.

Meanwhile, Aqua Metals’ production facility for lead-acid battery recycling modules is on track to manufacture up to 160 modules per year (amm.com, Sept. 8), representing approximately 800 tonnes per day of lead production, according to the company.

With these modules, the company aims to build, own or operate more recycling facilities like the McCarran operation, as well as partner, license, franchise or enter into joint ventures with other interested parties throughout the industry, Cotton said.

The company has previously outlined the goal of building up to 20 lead-acid battery recycling facilities across the United States and Europe (amm.com, Sept. 16).

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