



New Technology Will Have Big Impact on Mining Industry

“There is always a way to do it better ... find it.”

That quote by Thomas Edison appears on the Web site of 2011 Governor’s business plan finalist Blue Planet Strategies (BPS) based in Madison. BPS president, Patrick James found a better, more efficient and environmentally friendly way to remove dilute metal contaminants from effluent (waste) streams associated with mining processes and recover them as useful and salable commodities. In addition to being useful for environmental cleanup, the technology’s blockbuster application enables access to vast known reserves of copper ore, which cannot be economically processed into salable copper with current methods. With plans underway to install a prototype at a working Arizona copper mine in the next few months, BPS aims to capture accelerated industry interest and investment as it fine tunes and scales its technology for commercial introduction over the next two years.

In 2011, BPS received two phase I Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) awards from the Department of Energy and National Institutes of Health/National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) to advance the development of its technology. A Technology Assistance Grant administered by the Wisconsin Entrepreneurs’ Network (WEN) helped pay for expert assistance in securing SBIR dollars. BPS also received expert advice from WEN regional director Cheryl Vickroy, who worked with James as a mentor through the Madison Entrepreneur Resource, Learning and Innovation Network (MERLIN) Mentor program before joining WEN in 2010.



“Cheryl has helped guide my thinking and my focus on different business aspects for quite some time,” notes James, who continues to value Vickroy’s assistance in both the MERLIN and WEN director roles as he advances the company.

BPS was spun off from Tesla Laboratories in 2009. At Tesla under SBIR support from NIEHS James co-invented and performed initial technology proof-of-concept (POC) demonstration of the water treatment/metal recovery de-metallization technology, DeMET™ for short, around which BPS was formed. Though initially targeting the environmental sector, BPS now focuses on the mining industry, starting first with copper. The DeMET™ technology can extend the active life of an existing mine by 20 to 50 years, through improvements to the heap leach process which enable existing downstream infrastructure to better produce the metals from plentiful but difficult to leach low-grade ores.

Currently employing two people full time, James expects to hire additional employees as the company proves its technology at copper producers and moves into the production phase along with expanding application to other metals such as zinc, nickel, cobalt and iron.

“Once we field the prototype and have real-world data a big milestone is achieved and then everything accelerates tremendously,” says James. “I think this year is our most exciting yet as the train is leaving the station and we are rapidly gaining momentum.”

For more information on this innovative Wisconsin company, check out www.bps09.com.