

Technology Metals Report (05.30.2025): West Ramps Up Critical Mineral Processing and Nuclear Ambitions as China Tensions Mount

written by Tracy Hughes | May 30, 2025

Over the past week, governments on both sides of the Atlantic stepped up efforts to localize critical mineral supply chains. In Europe, **Less Common Metals** announced a €110 million plant in Lacq, France, to turn recycled magnet oxides into alloys by 2027, complementing partner Carester's nearby recycling complex backed by Japanese and French funding. In **Canada**, Ontario unveiled a C\$500 million **Critical Minerals Processing Fund**—part of the province's 2025 budget—to ensure nickel, lithium and cobalt mined in-province are also refined there, while German chemical group **BASF** simultaneously put its planned battery materials facility in **Québec** on hold amid cost pressures and weak electric-vehicle demand.

The strategic jostling for upstream resources continued elsewhere. **Greenland's** business minister pressed Washington and Brussels for more financing to develop the island's rare earth deposits, warning that limited Western support could reopen the door to Chinese partnerships. **Ukraine** activated a joint investment fund with the **United States** on 23 May to channel capital into 22 listed critical minerals despite battlefield disruptions, and officials in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** said they expect to conclude a U.S. minerals investment accord by the end of June aimed at legitimizing exports and reducing

dependence on Chinese buyers. At the same time, activists highlighted ongoing environmental damage from largely unregulated rare earth leaching in **Myanmar's** Kachin State, a major feedstock source for Chinese refiners.

Trade tensions sharpened around the material inputs that underpin advanced manufacturing. **Beijing's** April licensing regime for seven rare earth products has slowed magnet shipments, though Chinese media signaled possible leniency for semiconductor supply chains; Washington, for its part, halted exports of aircraft-engine and chip-design technology to China after Beijing tightened critical minerals flows to the United States. Western industry continued to pursue recycling and material-thrifting technologies, yet analysts noted that China still supplied 69% of global rare earth mine output in 2024.

Energy policy also moved to the fore. In Washington, executive orders signed on May 23rd target a four-fold expansion of U.S. nuclear-power capacity to 400 GW by 2050 and set a fast-track timetable that already cleared **Anfield Energy's** Velvet-Wood uranium project in Utah in under two weeks. Across Europe, Denmark reopened debate on its 40-year nuclear ban, Spain reconsidered reactor-closure dates after grid-stability scares, and **Germany** dropped its opposition to **France's** push for nuclear's inclusion in EU green-energy rules, underscoring a broader reassessment of baseload options alongside renewables.

The **Technology Metals Report** (TMR) is a weekly compilation of the top stories selected by the [Critical Minerals Institute](#) (CMI) Board of Directors. For access to this board, [click here](#), or to become a Critical Minerals Institute (CMI) Member and have the TMR emailed to you weekly, [click here](#)

UK rare earths company to build plant in France (May 29, 2025, [Source](#)) – Less Common Metals (LCM), a UK-based rare earths

processor, plans to build a €110 million plant in Lacq, southwestern France, by 2027. The facility will process rare earth oxides from recycled magnets into metals and alloys for permanent magnet producers. LCM is partnering with Carester, which is developing a nearby recycling plant with €216 million in funding from Japan and the French government. LCM seeks financial support from the EU and France and may raise equity or debt. The project supports France's ambition to become a rare earths hub. LCM may expand to North America and Asia in the future.

Ontario Investing \$500 Million in Critical Minerals Processing (May 29, 2025, [Source](#)) – The Ontario government is launching a \$500 million Critical Minerals Processing Fund to strengthen its domestic supply chain and processing capacity. Part of the 2025 Budget, this initiative aims to ensure that critical minerals such as nickel, lithium, and cobalt mined in Ontario are also processed within the province. The fund will support upgrading existing facilities and building new ones, fostering job creation and economic resilience. This complements Ontario's \$3.1 billion investment in Indigenous participation and its broader plan to unlock resources in areas like the Ring of Fire, while also responding to global demand and economic volatility.

Greenland Urges Western Investment, Signals Openness to China (May 29, 2025, [Source](#)) – Greenland's Minister for Business and Mineral Resources, Naaja Nathanielsen, is urging increased investment from the U.S. and Europe in the island's mineral sector, warning that insufficient Western support may lead to greater openness toward Chinese partnerships. In an interview with the **Financial Times**, she emphasized Greenland's preference for Western collaboration to develop its significant rare earth mineral reserves, which are critical to global supply chains. With a 2019 U.S.-Greenland cooperation agreement set to expire and minimal Chinese involvement currently present,

Greenland is also strengthening ties with the EU while seeking more concrete financial commitments from Western allies.

The West is recycling rare earths to escape China's grip – but it's not enough (May 28, 2025, [Source](#)) – The West is intensifying efforts to reduce reliance on China's dominant rare earth supply through recycling, alternative sourcing, and technology innovation. China controlled 69% of global rare earth mine production in 2024 and dominates processing, particularly for magnets used in electric vehicles (EVs). The U.S. has funded recycling initiatives, and Toyota invests in reducing rare earth usage. China's recent export controls add urgency; however, recycling is challenging and time-consuming. Rare earths remain critical, not only for EVs but significantly for defense applications, like the F-35 fighter jet, complicating Western efforts to fully mitigate dependence on China.

China may relax rare earth export curbs for some chip companies (May 28, 2025, [Source](#)) – China may ease rare earth export restrictions for Chinese and European semiconductor firms and their supply chains, according to state media. In April, China added seven rare earths and related products to an export control list, requiring all exporters to obtain licenses. While some licenses for rare earth magnets have been issued, the lengthy and unclear process is causing delays at customs. At a recent meeting hosted by China's commerce ministry, European semiconductor companies urged Chinese officials to speed up approvals to prevent production disruptions. The discussions signaled possible flexibility in enforcing the export curbs.

U.S. Pauses Exports of Airplane and Semiconductor Technology to China (May 28, 2025, [Source](#)) – The Trump administration has halted exports of critical U.S. technologies—including airplane engines, semiconductor software, and certain chemicals and machinery –to China, responding to China's recent restrictions

on critical mineral exports to the U.S. These reciprocal moves deepen the conflict over essential economic components, affecting industries such as aerospace, automotive, and semiconductor manufacturing. Despite a May agreement to temporarily reduce mutual tariffs, tensions persist, highlighted by visa restrictions on Chinese students in critical fields. American firms remain concerned over supply chain vulnerabilities, while China, still reliant on foreign tech, has criticized the U.S. controls as disruptive to global trade stability.

Fast-tracked US uranium project receives federal approval (May 28, 2025, [Source](#)) – The U.S. Department of the Interior has approved [Anfield Energy Inc.](#)'s (TSXV: AEC | OTCQB: ANLDF) Velvet-Wood uranium-vanadium project in Utah under a new fast-track review process, completing its assessment in under 14 days. The initiative is part of a broader strategy tied to President Trump's national energy emergency declaration and aims to boost U.S. nuclear capacity by 2050. Velvet-Wood, a past-producing site, holds 4.6 million pounds of measured and indicated U_3O_8 resources. The project, with minimal new surface disturbance, will proceed toward construction and production, alongside Anfield's efforts to ready its Shootaring Canyon mill.

Chemical giant BASF suspends Canadian EV project (May 28, 2025, [Source](#)) – German chemical giant BASF has suspended its planned battery materials plant in Bécancour, Quebec, initially announced in 2022 and scheduled to open in 2025. Citing cost-cutting measures and market uncertainty, BASF paused the project and indicated it would resume investing when market conditions improve. The company faced difficulties securing automotive partners and had already scaled back spending since autumn 2023. The suspension highlights broader challenges in Canada's EV battery sector, as similar projects by Northvolt and EcoPro have also stalled. Despite this setback, BASF maintains other

Canadian operations, including recent collaborations with the University of Toronto.

Ukraine revamps minerals sector, eyes billions in investment from US deal (May 27, 2025, [Source](#)) – Ukraine is restructuring its minerals sector to attract significant investment from a recent minerals deal with the U.S., activated on May 23, creating a joint fund to finance projects. The country holds 22 critical minerals, including rare earths, titanium, graphite, and manganese. The sector, historically hampered by Soviet-era bureaucracy, aims to reduce red tape and digitize geological data. Ongoing conflict has led to estimated losses of \$1.7 trillion, with half of Ukraine's mineral wealth now under Russian occupation. Despite challenges, Ukraine continues auctioning mining licenses, expecting similar revenues this year as last year's 2.4 billion hryvnias.

Why Europe is pivoting back to nuclear – one of its most divisive energy sources (May 27, 2025, [Source](#)) – Europe is experiencing a renewed interest in nuclear power as countries seek greater energy independence. Denmark is reconsidering its 40-year ban on nuclear energy to explore advanced technologies like small modular reactors. Spain has signaled potential delays in nuclear shutdown plans, following recent grid stability concerns. Germany, traditionally anti-nuclear, dropped its opposition to France's push for nuclear's inclusion in EU renewable policies. Despite the continued dominance of solar and wind, the high costs of balancing renewable electricity have reignited discussions on nuclear. However, financing and waste management remain major challenges to broader nuclear adoption across Europe.

Congo eyes US minerals deal by end of June, FT reports (May 25, 2025, [Source](#)) – Officials from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) anticipate concluding a minerals investment deal with the

U.S. by June, potentially securing Western investment and supporting peace efforts to end conflict involving Rwanda-backed rebels. The deal could legitimize the export of Congolese minerals, including tungsten, tantalum, and tin, to Rwanda for processing. Congo seeks to diversify away from Chinese mineral investments, blaming illegal mineral exploitation for fueling ongoing conflict with Rwanda-backed M23 rebels. The U.S. is actively facilitating negotiations for both mineral deals and regional peace, emphasizing transparency in resource supply chains and respect for territorial integrity.

The dirty secrets behind Myanmar's rare-earths boom (May 24, 2025, [Source](#)) – Myanmar's rare earths boom, centered in Kachin State, is fueled by environmentally destructive in-situ leaching techniques and poses severe health risks to local communities. Activists report widespread chemical pollution, unprotected labor, and water contamination. Since China's reduction in domestic mining, imports from Myanmar surged to 41,700 tons in 2023. Despite a 2018 export ban, mining intensified under military rule post-2021. The Kachin Independence Organization now controls much of the region, raising hopes for regulated extraction, though oversight remains limited and environmental damage continues.

Trump sets out aim to quadruple US nuclear capacity (May 23, 2025, [Source](#)) – President Donald Trump signed multiple executive orders aiming to quadruple U.S. nuclear energy capacity to 400GW by 2050. The orders focus on accelerating licensing processes, reforming the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and supporting construction of 10 new reactors by 2030. Measures include cutting NRC bureaucracy, testing new reactor designs at DOE labs, restarting closed plants for military energy resilience, and boosting uranium enrichment capabilities. The administration also announced workforce development plans, advanced fuel cycle initiatives, and international transport strategies. A pilot

program targets three reactors operational by July 2026, and NRC reforms mandate final licensing decisions within 18 months.

InvestorNews.com Media Highlights

- May 28, 2025 – Titanium's Spotlight Moment: Why a Once-Niche Metal Now Sits at the Center of Global Critical Minerals Diplomacy <https://bit.ly/43vYmMf>

InvestorNews.com Video Highlights

- May 29, 2025 – Frank Basa Triples Down on the Nord Silver Drilling Program in Ontario's Historic Castle Mine District https://youtu.be/4-_1G0wH3pA

InvestorNews.com Member News

- May 30, 2025 – Quantum Critical Metals Advances Mineralogy and Metallurgy for James Bay Projects <https://bit.ly/3FwlCBU>
- May 29, 2025 – Ontario's Half Billion Critical Mineral Processing Fund and First Nations \$3.1 Billion Fund Accelerates Nord's Plan for a Sustainable North American EV Metals Supply Chain <https://bit.ly/3FBn8Te>
- May 29, 2025 – ASM refinances Hana Bank corporate debt facility <https://bit.ly/45AZFMD>
- May 29, 2025 – Neo Performance Materials Hosts Prime Minister of Estonia at the New Permanent Magnet Facility in Narva <https://bit.ly/3Fu4XPr>
- May 28, 2025 – Coniagas Announces MCT0 Status Update <https://bit.ly/45vxkat>

- May 28, 2025 – Nord Announces MCT0 Status Update <https://bit.ly/4khwH9f>
- May 28, 2025 – Progress Update on Nord Precious Metals' Preliminary 3D Model Shows Wider Silver Mineral Intercepts Contain 55 Percent More Silver <https://bit.ly/3HdJTgJ>
- May 28, 2025 – American Rare Earths Advances Permitting at Cowboy State Mine <https://bit.ly/3FeJMAV>
- May 28, 2025 – Ucore Announces Groundbreaking Ceremony for Louisiana Rare Earth Element Processing Facility <https://bit.ly/3Sms06D>
- May 26, 2025 – Neo Announces Filing of Management Information Circular and Nominees for Annual General Meeting of Shareholders <https://bit.ly/43tM3jC>
- May 26, 2025 – Nano One Provides Annual General Meeting Results & Corporate Update <https://bit.ly/3FmcwYu>