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The State of Lithium Resources in 2026: A Deposit-Type Analysis for Supply Potential

Simon M. Jowitt^{1,2}, **Brock Moody**^{1,2,3}

¹Ralph J. Roberts Center for Research in Economic Geology, Reno, United States, ²Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, Reno, United States, ³Department of Geological Sciences and Engineering, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, United States

Demand for lithium (Li) has risen rapidly over the past decade due to the growing use of Li-ion batteries, raising concerns about long-term supply. A 4,000 metric-ton shortfall briefly increased prices in 2023, sparking debate over alternative battery technologies. Although lithium resources are considered finite, production has grown steadily due to brownfield expansions and greenfield discoveries. This study compiled internationally reported Li resources by deposit type and project for 2026. At least 202.5 million metric tons (Mt) of Li resources are reported globally across 213 brine (closed, geothermal, sedimentary basin), hard-rock (LCT pegmatites, granites, tailings), and volcano-sedimentary or VS (borate, borosilicate, claystone) deposits, with an additional 10 Mt Li in China, yielding a global minimum of 212.5 Mt Li, representing 732 years of production at the USGS defined 2026 rate of 0.29 Mt Li. Of these 213 projects, 143 were CRIRSCO code-compliant, totaling 154.8 Mt Li of measured, indicated, and inferred resources; inclusive of 53 projects that had defined proven and probable ore reserves of 18.4 Mt Li or 63 years of production. Although hard-rock deposits accounted for 119 projects, they represent only 46 Mt Li at an average grade of 0.5% Li. In contrast, 72 brine and 22 VS deposits hosted more contained Li per project, representing 111 Mt Li at 0.02% Li and 49.5 Mt Li at 0.2% Li, respectively, of total resources. Substantial resources are concentrated in the closed-basin brines of South America's "lithium triangle" (Bolivia, Chile, Argentina), in lithium-cesium-tantalum (LCT) pegmatites within Western Australia, and in VS deposits in the United States' Basin and Range province. Overall, Li resources are sufficient to meet projected demand for decades to come, if they can be turned into reserves and production. As such, future supply limitations will stem from economic, technological, or environmental factors rather than resource scarcity.