

# HARDROCK MINING IN UTAH

In 2007, Congress will be considering changes to the antiquated Mining Law of 1872 that governs how gold, silver and other 'hardrock' minerals are developed on our National Forests and national resource lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Here are some nuggets on mining in Utah.

## Mining Activities

As of 2006 mining interests have staked more than 1,480 active mining claims in Utah, covering an estimated 367,244 acres.

The five Utah counties with the most acres claimed on the public lands are:

Emery County - 64,605 acres, Beaver County - 59,969 acres,  
Tooele County - 32,449 acres, Millard - 26,252 acres,  
and San Juan County - 20,825 acres

In 2006, there were 10 active or intermittent hardrock mining operations in Utah, employing 1,402 on site, according to the Mine Safety and Health Administration, representing 0.12% of the total employment in the state of Utah.

<b>Controller</b>	<b>Mine</b>	<b>Commodity</b>	<b>Employment</b>
Denison Mines (USA) Corp.	WHITE MESA MILL	Uranium Ore	22
Kennecott Utah Copper Corp	Copperton Concentrator	Gold Ore	371
Brush Resources Inc	BRUSH MINE	Beryl-Beryllium Ore	66
Kennecott Barneys Canyon Mining	KENNECOTT BARNEYS CANYON MINING	Gold Ore	8
Kennecott Utah Copper Corp	Bingham Canyon Mine	Copper Ore NEC	754
Lisbon Valley Mining Co LLC	Lisbon Valley Mining Co	Copper Ore NEC	134
Unico Incorporated	DEER TRAIL	Gold Ore	9
Denison Mines (USA) Corp.	Pandora	Uranium Ore	10
Denison Mines (USA) Corp.	Tony M	Uranium Ore	7
Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation	North Ore Shoot and Highland Boy DG	Copper Ore NEC	21



*Above:* The Bingham Canyon Mine is the Largest Open Pit Mine in the World

## **Area of Specific Concern – Jacobs Smelter**

Historically, the Rush Lake/Stockton area was a smelting center that processed ore from several of the mines in the area. Mine tailings and smelting wastes were deposited around Jacobs Smelter and the surrounding community. Three other historical smelters in the immediate area have been confirmed.

Studies done by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality (UDEQ) and EPA found high concentrations of lead and arsenic in area soils. EPA believes exposure to high levels of lead and arsenic may pose a health risk to children and other sensitive people.

## **Abandoned Mines and the Most Polluted Mine Sites**

The Utah Department of Natural Resources estimates that there are 20,000 abandoned mines in Utah. The three counties with the most abandoned mines are: Grand, San Juan, and Tooele Counties

The state receives about \$1.5 million from the federal Surface Mining Reclamation and Control Act to fix safety hazards, such as open mine shafts. In recent years, the state has provided \$30,000 annually for cleanup.

Of the 79 mines sites identified by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency as the most polluted sites in the country or "Superfund Sites," 6 are located in Utah. The most polluted mineral related sites are:

Davenport and Flagstaff Smelters  
Eureka Mills  
International Smelting and Refining  
Jacobs Smelter  
Midvale Slag  
Monicello Mill Tailings

## **Community Health and Environmental Impacts**

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, metal or hardrock mining in Utah released over 97.7 million pounds of toxins in 2005, the most recent year for which information is available.

The mines that reported the most pollutants released into the environment are the Kennecott Utah Copper Mine Concentrators & Power Plant, the Brush Resources Inc. Mill, and Kennecott Barneys Canyon Mining Co. Utah ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> among the 17 states that reported chemical releases from metal mines in 2005.

## **Loss of Utah Public Lands to Mining Interests**

As of 2004 an estimated 230,000 acres of public land in Utah, an area two and a half times the size of Arches and Bryce Canyons National Parks combined, have already been sold to private interests for either \$2.50 or \$5.00 per acre. This subsidized sale of public lands is allowed under the federal 1872 Mining Law.

## **Utah in 1872**

In 1872 when the Mining Law was passed Utah was still a territory and would not join the Union until 1896. The territorial governor was George Lemuel Woods and as of 1870 the population was 86,786

**Times have changed. It is time to change the Mining Law.**