

HARDROCK MINING IN ARIZONA

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 Arizona.

Mining Activities

As of 2006 mining interests have staked more than 4,033 active mining claims in Arizona, covering an estimated 641,883 acres.

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

Yavapai County 106,599 acres, Pinal County 106,587 acres,
Mohave County 103,578 acres, Pima County 64,167 acres,
and La Paz County 54,073 acres

In 2006, there were 21 active or intermittent hardrock mining operations in Arizona, employing 6,042 people on site, according to the Mine Safety and Health Administration, representing 0.23% percent of the total employment in the state of Arizona.

Controller	Mine	Commodity	Employment
Phelps Dodge Morenci Inc	PHELPS DODGE MORENCI INC	Copper Ore NEC	2,672
Phelps Dodge Sierrita, Inc	Phelps Dodge Sierrita, Inc.	Copper Ore NEC	893
Phelps Dodge Bagdad, Inc.	PHELPS DODGE BAGDAD, INC.	Copper Ore NEC	689
Asarco LLC	Ray	Copper Ore NEC	630
Asarco LLC	MISSION/SAN XAVIER/EISENHOWER	Copper Ore NEC	369
Asarco LLC	Hayden Concentrator	Copper Ore NEC	196
Silver Bell Mining LLC	SILVER BELL MINE	Copper Ore NEC	146
Phelps Dodge Miami Inc	Phelps Dodge Miami Inc	Copper Ore NEC	137
BHP Copper Inc	Pinto Valley Operations	Copper Ore NEC	82
Mineral Park Inc	Mineral Park Inc	Copper Ore NEC	65
Resolution Copper Mining LLC	Resolution Mine	Copper Ore NEC	56
Phelps Dodge Safford, Inc.	Phelps Dodge Safford, Inc.	Copper Ore NEC	31
Cyprus Tohono Corp	CYPRUS TOHONO CORPORATION	Copper Ore NEC	28
Phelps Dodge Corp	Copper Queen Branch	Copper Ore NEC	19
BHP Copper Inc	San Manuel Mine	Copper Ore NEC	12
Global Timber & Resources Corp. (GTR Corp)	G T R Sand Washing	Manganese Ore	6
Copreco LLC	Copreco LLC	Copper Ore NEC	5
Gimez (Arizona) Inc.	Gimez (Arizona) Inc.	Gold Ore	3
Nord Resources Corporation	JOHNSON CAMP MINE	Copper Ore NEC	3
Carlota Copper Company	Carlota Copper Company	Copper Ore NEC	0
James Hamilton Construction Company	Portable #1	Copper Ore NEC	0



Left: Devils Canyon near Oak Flat Campground

Area of Specific Concern – Oak Flat Campground

Rio Tinto has created a subsidiary that is proposing to use a method called block caving to mine a rich copper vein more than 7,000 feet below sea level east of Superior, AZ. Block caving would cause surface subsidence. As a first step, Rio Tinto is currently shopping around a land exchange bill that would end an executive order banning mining from the area.

Concerned citizens are worried about the loss of Oak Flat Campground, a very popular recreation area. The Oak Flat area hosts the annual Phoenix Boulder Blast, which sees 2000 enthusiasts every year, many who contribute to the growing tourist economy in central Arizona. This is the largest event of its kind in the world. Also, birders, climbers, campers, canyoneers, bikers, and hikers enjoy the area throughout the year, all of whom would be greatly harmed if these lands were forever taken from public access.

Abandoned Mines and the Most Polluted Mine Sites

The Arizona State Mine Inspector estimates that there are 100,000 abandoned mines in Arizona. The three counties with the most abandoned mines are:

Mojave, Pima, and Yavapai Counties

In 1998, the state created the Abandoned Mine Safety Fund to repair physical hazards but not pollution caused by abandoned mines. State funding for the program was \$15,000 in 2001.

Community Health and Environmental Impacts

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, metal or hardrock mining in Arizona released over 39.4 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 Phelps Dodge Miami Inc. mine, the Phelps Dodge Morenci Inc. mine, and the Phelps Dodge Bagdad Inc. mine. Arizona ranks 6th among the 17 states that reported chemical releases from metal mines in 2005.

Loss of Arizona Public Lands to Mining Interests

As of 2004 an estimated 230,000 acres of public land in Arizona, an area three times the size of an area one-fifth the size of Grand Canyon National Park, 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.

Arizona in 1872

In 1872 when the Mining Law was passed, Arizona was a territory and would not join the Union until 1912. The territorial governor was Anson Peacely Killen Safford and the population was 9,658.

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

Prepared by Cathy Carlson and Jonathan Schwartz, EARTHWORKS, July 2007
For more information about the 1872 Mining Law, go to www.earthworksaction.org