

China in Control

U.S. MINERAL IMPORT DEPENDENCE PRESENTS AN UNACCEPTABLE RISK

“It’s a combination of a regulatory regime which has been attacking all kinds of mining in our country... but it’s also actions by competitors, specifically China, who’s tried to corner the market for critical minerals... We’ve got ourselves in a precarious position as a country.... We’re highly dependent on imports... and most of those we’re dependent on imports from China.”

- U.S. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum, on CNBC, March 2025

The U.S. is 100 percent import dependent for 15 minerals, and more than 50 percent import dependent for an additional 31—even though we have significant deposits of many of these minerals at home. Even worse: China is the leading producer of 30. U.S. dependence on geopolitical rivals like China and Russia is a risk to our economic and national security and our energy future.

Despite this exposure, the Biden administration enacted large-scale mineral withdrawals, and enacted other rules that serve as de facto withdrawals, blocking responsible mining projects. Specifically:

- Jan. 2023: Withdrew hundreds of thousands of acres of minerals-rich land in Minnesota.
- March 2023: Designated 500,000+ acres of federal lands as a national monument in Nevada.
- August 2023: Designated 920,000 acres adjacent to the Grand Canyon a national monument.
- April 2024: Introduced the Conservation and Landscape Health rule, which prioritizes conservation over all other land uses, impacting 245 million acres of public lands.
- June 2024: Withdrew 28 million acres in Alaska from mining and drilling, blocked the proposed Ambler Road Project, a project that previously received all of its required approvals.

Our import dependence for key mineral commodities has doubled over the past two decades and policies like these have only made the situation worse. As a result, it currently takes 29 years to bring a mine online in the U.S.—the second longest timeline in the world.

There are several actions the White House and Congress must take to bolster U.S. minerals security, many of which were addressed in President Trump’s March 2025 Executive Order on minerals. They include:

Reversing unlawful land withdrawals and restoring balance to land use. Biden administration land use regulations and policies that were unwarranted, often unlawful and were designed to block mining must be reversed.

Permitting Reform. Address existing redundancies in the permitting process, set firm timelines for reviews and limit litigation timelines that are being used to obstruct projects indefinitely.

Appointing a Minerals Czar. Use the National Energy Dominance Council as a central point of coordination for America’s mineral policy.

NEPA Reform. Minimize redundancies in requirements, clarify the threshold for when NEPA is triggered and create limitations and timelines for the judicial review process.

Addressing the Flawed Rosemont Decision. Provide certainty on ancillary use of lands that are part of responsible operation of mines in the U.S., which was disrupted by an erroneous 9th Circuit 2022 ruling in *Center for Biological Diversity v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*.

Level the Playing Field Against Market Manipulation. Provide domestic producers with loans, grants, tax incentives and other financial and trade tools to combat unfair trade practices from foreign producers, namely China.