RACHEL CARSON COUNCIL

Fact Sheet

Reshoring Critical Minerals

OVERVIEW

Critical minerals are defined in the Energy Act of 2020[1] as essential to the U.S. economy or national security and have supply chains that are vulnerable to disruptions such as international security, abrupt demand growth, and military conflict. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)'s List of Critical Minerals[2] outlines 60 minerals such as lithium, most commonly used in e-technology and rechargeable batteries, cobalt, copper, graphite, and rare earth elements (REEs), a chemically distinct group of 17 elements used for their unique magnetic and optical properties. Critical minerals are the backbone of the Clean Energy Transition, essential for electric vehicle (EV) batteries, renewable power, and energy grid construction, as well as defense systems and day-to-day electronics.

The push to reshore critical minerals to domestic facilities is a Trump administration initiative to eliminate reliance on foreign adversaries (particularly China) for materials that power domestic defense, transportation, and technology.[3] Supply chains for critical minerals, especially REEs, have been linked to multiple environmental and social concerns, including unregulated pollution, environmental degradation, and human rights violations in producing regions.[4] Critics cite the "**Twin Transition**" conundrum in which the convergence of green energy and technology requires significantly more mineral resources than traditional fossil fuel counterparts.[5]

KEY FACTS

Rare earth elements are relatively abundant in the Earth's crust. REEs **lack concentrated deposits** and are difficult to extract, requiring the processing of massive amounts of raw ore. Chemically separating one REE from another is a highly complex, energy-intensive, and therefore expensive endeavor.[6]

As of May 2026, the federal government has mobilized **over $30 billion** for critical minerals reshoring, spearheaded by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Export-Import Bank (EXIM).[7]

Bringing one mine to operational status requires an initial capital expenditure (CAPEX) of anywhere from $500 million to over $15 billion, and **up to 10 years** due to permitting regulations and extraction challenges.[8]

Mining projects on US federal lands must obtain **at least 30 permits** from federal, state, and local bodies related to environmental pollution, community interaction, and imposition on national resources.[9]

Multiple studies have concluded that long-term self-sufficiency of domestic critical mineral mining is geologically and economically infeasible.[10] The U.S. does not hold sufficient domestic reserves to meet projected long-term demand.[11] Even with successful reshoring, **the U.S. will remain heavily reliant on the global commodity markets** for long-term critical mineral needs.[12]

Landmark environmental cases such as the **Clean Air Act**[13] have lowered public tolerance for mining industries, requiring companies to surpass a higher bar of workforce and community buy-in.

RELEVANCE

As the world moves towards renewable energy in a collective effort to phase out fossil fuels, new issues related to building the infrastructure for energy and green technology emerge. The Trump administration has taken a clear stance on foreign trade and has placed a heavy emphasis on reshoring the critical mineral mining industry to protect domestic interests and strengthen the U.S.'s green energy industry. Reshoring production and manufacturing not only carries its associated environmental burdens, but also calls into question labor protections and Indigenous land rights, which are already contentious in REE mines that the U.S. has previously sourced from.

LEGISLATION LANDSCAPE AS OF THE 119TH CONGRESS

S.3511 PRIMED Act

The Permit Reform In Mining for Energy and Defense (PRIMED) Act expands federal permitting acceleration for mining and mineral-processing projects tied to the Defense Production Act (DPA) of 1950, which granted the President broad emergency powers to control domestic industries. The PRIMED Act streamlines interagency review and approvals for qualifying projects and supports mine modernization, waste reclamation, and domestic processing capacity

The PRIMED Act expedites permissions and review processes for domestic mineral projects and lowers investment uncertainty. It directly supports reshoring critical minerals and domestic extraction.

H.R. 4090 Critical Mineral Dominance Act

Hardrock mining refers to the geologic extraction of minerals. The Critical Mineral Dominance Act directs the Department of the Interior to accelerate domestic hardrock mineral production on federal lands and identifies priority mining projects for expedited approval. It removes or revises regulations and expands geologic mapping to identify lands with high extraction potential.

The Act is explicitly aimed at reducing dependence on foreign mineral imports and strengthening U.S. supply-chain resilience for manufacturing sectors. It supports upstream reshoring by expanding domestic raw-material availability.

H.R. 1366 Mining Regulatory Clarity Act

The Mining Regulatory Clarity Act is a response to the Ninth Circuit "Rosemont" mining decision, in which the U.S. Forest Service's approval of a copper mine was shut down in May 2022. It clarifies the rights of mining operators to use federal lands for ancillary, or supplementary, mining activities like disposal and storage of toxic waste and tailings (by-products) from extraction. It authorizes multiple mill-site claims and establishes the Abandoned Hardrock Mine Fund for reclamation activities.

By reducing regulatory ambiguity around mine infrastructure and land use, the bill lowers legal and operational barriers for domestic mining projects.

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, "Energy Act of 2020" (U.S. House of Representatives, December 2020).
2. U.S. Geological Survey, "Interior Department Releases Final 2025 List of Critical Minerals" (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2025).
3. Center for Strategic and International Studies, "New Executive Order Ties U.S. Critical Minerals Security to Global Partnerships" (CSIS).
4. EarthRights International, "Policy Brief: Widespread Environmental and Human Rights Damages from Rare Earth Mining in Kachin State, Myanmar Linked to Green Energy Industry" (EarthRights International).
5. World Resources Institute, "Critical Minerals Explained" (WRI).
6. Worcester Polytechnic Institute, "Rare Earth Elements" (WPI).
7. U.S. Embassy & Consulates in China, "2026 Critical Minerals Ministerial" (U.S. Department of State).
8. FinancialModel.net, "Cost to Open a Metal Mining Operation in the U.S. Supply" (FinancialModel.net).
9. Resources for the Future, "Policy Challenges for Accessing Critical Minerals for Electric Vehicles" (RFF).
10. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "Securing America's Critical Minerals Supply" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2025).
11. Resources for the Future, "Resource Nationalism and the Resilience of Critical Mineral Supply Chains" (RFF).
12. Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Trade and Critical Supply Chains" (CSIS).
13. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Summary of the Clean Air Act" (EPA).

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The Rachel Carson Council (RCC), founded in 1965, is the national environmental organization envisioned by Rachel Carson to carry on her work after her death. We promote Carson's ecological ethic that combines scientific concern for the environment and human health with a sense of wonder and reverence for all forms of life in order to build a more sustainable, just, and peaceful future. The Rachel Carson Council is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.