

Critical Conflicts

Trump Subsidizes Dirty Mining to Pad Profits
of Billionaires, Foreign Corporations
at the Expense of Public Lands



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Key Findings

- The Trump administration is working with some of the world's largest mining corporations – based in Australia, Canada, Chile and the United Kingdom – to ramp up mineral extraction on or near millions of acres of America's public lands. This new gold and minerals rush gives away public lands, skirts environmental standards, overrides tribal interests, and confers massive benefits on Trump insiders and allied billionaires.
- 13 companies seeking to mine on national public lands – including several Australian and Canadian corporations – spent more than \$8.4 million to lobby the federal agencies and Congress in 2024 and 2025 alone.
- The Trump administration's use of taxpayer money to buy ownership stakes in mining projects that are also regulated by the federal government sets up a fundamental conflict of interest, providing an incentive for the government to push mining without proper environmental, ethical and community input standards. So far, the Trump administration has signed six equity and loan deals for mining and minerals processing projects.
- Billionaires and corporate executives have already seen the value of their holdings in mining companies soar over the past year after the federal government took stakes in mining firms, leading some corporate executives and directors to sell off their shares and earn millions.
- To advance their agenda in the nation's capital, mining companies have hired lobbying firms with close Trump connections, including a firm run by Trump's former Interior Secretary, David Bernhardt and a firm run by former Republican National Committee Chair Reince Priebus.



Introduction: Dirty, Deadly Mining Titans Eye America's Public Lands

The mining industry is one of the world's [dirtiest and most exploitative](#) corporate sectors, with a lengthy track record of environmental and human rights abuses. In the United States, the mining sector operates under outdated laws that have been largely unchanged for 150 years and provide scant public protections. Under Trump's sweeping deregulatory agenda, the industry is getting an easier path to pollute public lands without paying a dime in royalties to compensate taxpayers and even taxpayer-funded investments to prop up mining companies themselves. Now, to an extraordinary extent, global mining companies are allying with the second Trump administration to threaten iconic American national parks, forests and monuments in the service of private profit.

The [Trump administration has been relentless](#) in its push to open up mining and drilling on public lands, threatening scenic views, water quality and wildlife migration in national parks, forests and monuments. The Trump administration has short-circuited environmental reviews, shut out the public, rushed through permits and promoted the [privatization of public lands](#), making it far easier for corporate interests to mine and drill on America's most treasured and iconic places, including many sacred to Indigenous tribal nations.

Interior Secretary Doug Burgum is a key player in the Trump administration's pro-mining agenda. Burgum's agency administers our national parks and public lands, including the Bureau of Land Management, which oversees 245 million acres, and the 85 million acres of the National Park System.

At his confirmation hearing in January 2025, Burgum made clear that America's treasured places are ripe for exploitation and extraction. A former [software executive](#), [real estate](#) and [fossil fuel investor](#) turned politician, Burgum referred to America's public lands and waters as "America's balance sheet," [telling Senate lawmakers](#), **"Not every acre of federal land is a national park or a wilderness area."**

Over the summer, Burgum claimed to "care deeply" about conservation and public lands but also said they should be used for private profit. **"We have western states that are being choked because they have so much public land and there's so much overreach**



by the federal government,” [Burgum said](#), while also accusing the Biden administration of “chasing an idealism around climate extremism.”

Months later, Burgum issued [permits](#) for a more than 200-mile road [across pristine Alaska wilderness](#) over the objections of Alaska Native tribes, hunters, anglers and conservation groups. Mining companies have long sought the road, known as the [Ambler Access Project](#), to reach deposits of copper, zinc, lead and other minerals. The [long-controversial](#) proposed road, [denied](#) by the Biden administration, would [cross 26 miles](#) of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, [harming](#) wildlife migration and harming Indigenous communities that rely on caribou for subsistence hunting.

The Alaska project is being developed by Ambler Metals, a [joint venture](#) between Canadian mining firm Trilogy Metals and Australian mining firm South 32 Limited. The managing director of the joint venture, [Kaleb Froehlich](#) is the [former chief of staff](#) to Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) and works for law and lobbying firm Holland and Hart, where he has worked for [numerous mining clients](#).

Trump’s corporate-controlled administration is pushing an aggressive pro-extraction agenda that is rapidly removing protections for public lands, clean air and clean water. Americans are being put at higher risks of impacts from mining’s toxic pollution so that billionaires and mining executives can profit, an astonishing demonstration of corruption.

Public Lands Suffer as Government Props Up Mining Companies

The second Trump administration has [broken strongly](#) with longstanding Republican orthodoxy, making direct government investments in private companies that would have been unthinkable for prior Republican administrations. “We should take stakes in companies when people need something. I think we should take stakes in companies. Now, some people would say that doesn’t sound very American. Actually, I think it is very American,” Trump [told the Wall Street Journal](#) “Now, some people would say that doesn’t sound very American. Actually, I think it is very American.”

Trump’s [federal interventions](#) include [an \\$8.9 billion purchase](#) of Intel Corp stock, a \$400 million investment in rare earths miner MP Materials and several other mining and minerals processing investments – with [more to come](#). The Trump administration’s



pro-mining, anti-regulation stance – combined with the extraordinary speed of the government’s actions – raises important ethical, governance, and environmental concerns.

Government investment into private companies in exchange for equity and public benefit could foster jobs and environmental protection under a [progressive green industrial strategy](#). But to be successful, such strategies require strict ethics guardrails and environmental protections, which are sorely lacking under Trump.

Under Trump’s mining policies, public funds are being directed toward highly speculative companies with little transparency around how companies are chosen, with decisions made in private with no clear criteria or public disclosure. This lack of visibility creates opportunities for favoritism, combined with lax regulation and weak oversight. For example, the Trump administration fired the inspector general for the [Export-Import Bank](#), a move that raises serious questions about accountability and oversight for mineral financing programs such as the Ex-Im Bank’s \$50 million loan to a [gold mining project in Nevada](#).

A [White House executive order](#) from March set the stage for this massive mining intervention. It specified that, in federal lands with mineral deposits and reserves, the Interior Secretary must prioritize mining as “the primary land uses in these areas” – indicating that the Trump administration plans to tilt the scale against other public lands uses, such as outdoor recreation. The order also waived caps on Pentagon financing for mineral production and pledged to expand public investment in domestic and foreign mining [through several federal](#) agencies, including the Export-Import Bank, Development Finance Corporation and Department of Energy.

The White House even granted the mining industry a regulatory favor, requiring federal agencies to waive [disclosure requirements](#) requiring mining companies to provide detailed evidence showing that their investments are economically feasible. And under the Republicans’ One Big Beautiful Bill Act, mining companies are eligible for [\\$12.9 billion in direct government grants](#), according to an analysis by Earthjustice Action, as well as [\\$355 billion](#) in loans under several government programs.

Mining companies receiving this support include Trilogy Metals, Lithium Americas, and MP Materials, and potentially more, giving opportunity for executives at these companies to turn quick profits. For example:



Trilogy Metals: Executives and directors at the Canadian mining firm [made about \\$8.7 million in profit](#) by exercising stock options during the immediate share price spike after the October 6 announcement that the Pentagon would [purchase nearly \\$36 million](#) in company stock, according to Securities and Exchange Commission filings. Trilogy Metals' chief financial officer, Elaine Sanders, exercised stock options and sold off shares for a [profit of \\$3.15 million](#) shortly after news of the federal investment broke, sending shares of the company to above \$10 per share, [up from 57 cents before Trump's election](#).

MP Materials: James Litinsky, CEO of the Las Vegas-based rare earths mining firm, has [sold off about \\$40 million in shares in fall 2025](#) after the federal investment, fetching share prices above \$60, double the share price in June. Ryan Corbett, the company's chief financial officer, [sold off about \\$3.4 million](#) in stock.

Writing for the Council on Foreign Relations, William Henagan and Ely Sandler [describe the Trump administration's approach](#) as similar to an aggressive Wall Street investor. **"The current administration behaves like a hedge fund: actively identifying, backing, and intervening in individual firms that it believes can become national champions,"** they wrote, noting that this sort of government intervention offers many potential avenues for corruption and could be subject to legal challenge. **"State intervention, particularly at the level of an individual firm, is inherently vulnerable to abuse,"** they wrote. **"The president and members of the cabinet can decide the fate of individual companies rather than a whole sector or strategic industry. That power can create immense wealth almost overnight."**

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has blamed environmental groups U.S. for rare earths supply problems and mocked the need for environmental regulations. "This rare earths problem was decades in the making, every past administration should be ashamed," [Bessent told CNBC](#). "President Trump tried to solve it in his last term but the environmentalists threw a fit, so here we are."

In response, [libertarians](#) and even some elected Republicans are concerned about the Trump administration's decision to take equity stakes in companies. Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R.-Alaska), a strong supporter of mining, has questioned whether government ownership will lead to shortcuts and favoritism. "All projects need to be able to stand on their own and be able to meet the tests that we put in place in terms of



the regulations and the environmental hurdles,” [Murkowski said](#), according to Alaska Public Media.

Despite such concerns, administration officials say they plan to make more direct investments in mining companies. Trump told [reporters with characteristic bluster](#), in announcing a rare earths agreement with Australia: **“In about a year from now, we’ll have so much critical mineral and rare earths that you won’t know what to do with them.”**

Table 1: Trump Administration Mining, Critical Minerals Investments

Date	Company Name	Project (Location)	Mineral/Facility	Deal Terms
7/10/25	MP Materials	Mountain Pass (California)	Rare Earths	Defense Department purchased a \$400 million stake in MP Materials, which owns the only active rare earths mine in the U.S., becoming the company’s largest shareholder. The Pentagon also made a \$150 million loan to the company in order to expand capacity at its mine in California.
10/1/25	General Motors/Lithium Americas	Thacker Pass (Nevada)	Lithium	Energy Department took a 5% stake in Lithium Americas and a 5% stake in the Lithium Americas-GM joint venture, restructuring a prior Biden administration loan deal
10/6/25	Trilogy Metals	Ambler Mining District (Alaska)	Copper, zinc, lead, gold silver	Pentagon agreed to invest nearly \$36 million in Alaska mining by taking a 10% stake in Vancouver-based Trilogy Metals, with the right to acquire an additional 7.5% of the previously obscure company.
11/3/25	Vulcan Elements, ReElement	North Carolina	Rare earths manufacturing	Defense Department and Commerce Department announced a plan to provide \$670 million in public loans and equity investments to manufacture



Date	Company Name	Project (Location)	Mineral/Facility	Deal Terms
				rare earth magnets, along with \$550 million in private investment.
12/15/25	Korea Zinc	Clarksville, Tenn.	Critical minerals processing	Korea Zinc, Department of Commerce , and Department of Defense and private investors partner on a \$7.4 billion critical minerals smelter in Clarksville, Tenn.
1/26/26	USA Rare Earth Inc.	Texas, Oklahoma	Rare earths mining and manufacturing	Commerce Department agreed to provide a \$1.3 billion loan and a \$277 million investment for a total of \$1.6 billion in federal funding for a mine in Texas and a manufacturing facility in Oklahoma.

Source: Trump administration, company statements, Public Citizen research

Federal investment in minerals and mining companies often causes a quick and dramatic increase in their stock price. As such, billionaires and CEOs with ties to Trump stand to reap immense profits from the government's intervention in the mining sector. The following are examples:

JOHN PAULSON: The billionaire investor [made \\$15 billion](#) betting against the subprime mortgage market in the late 2000s, then saw his hedge fund's [fortunes suffer](#) while becoming a close adviser and ally of Trump. In 2024, Paulson hosted a fundraiser at his Palm Beach, Fla home that [raised more than \\$50 million](#) for Trump and the Republican National Committee. Paulson was [considered as a potential](#) Treasury Secretary under the second Trump administration but withdrew his name.

After years of poor returns, Paulson [closed his hedge fund](#) to outside investors in 2020 and now manages his family's money. But his fortunes have turned around amid a massive surge in gold prices and the Trump administration's mining-friendly agenda. Paulson [has long been bullish on gold](#) as an investment, both in commodity prices and investments in mining companies themselves. "We really shifted our focus to mine development because that's where you can get your biggest bang for the buck," Paulson



[told the Wall Street Journal](#). “You don’t need the gold price to go up to receive high returns.”



Billionaire investor John Paulson, a major investor in gold mining projects and a close Trump ally, [criticized](#) former vice president Kamala Harris’s economic proposal on Fox Business.

In October 2025, the Trump administration announced a [plan](#) to invest nearly \$36 million in Trilogy Metals, a previously obscure Canadian mining firm planning to mine in Alaska under a joint venture partnership with [Australian mining firm South32](#), which [sold a portion](#) of its shares in Trilogy Metals to the U.S. government. The Defense Department acquired a 10% stake in Trilogy Metals, along with the right to purchase an additional 7.5% stake. News of the deal [tripled the share price](#) of Trilogy Metals, benefiting [Paulson](#), who has long owned [more than 14 million shares](#) in the company.



Trump, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, Energy Secretary Chris Wright and National Security Council staffer David Copley [speak](#) in October 2025 about mining in Alaska



In September 2025, another company [backed by Paulson](#), Perpetua Resources, received [final signoff](#) from the U.S. Forest Service to mine for gold and antimony – a [mineral](#) used in military applications, and for batteries and solar panels. That project is [located](#) in central Idaho’s Payette National Forest in an open mining pit that had been abandoned since the 1990s. It was [approved](#) at the end of the Biden administration amid concerns about the Chinese domination of the sector. The Biden administration [provided \\$60 million in Pentagon funding](#) for the project.

Perpetua said in October that it [broke ground on the project](#). It was opposed by conservation and environmental groups as well as the Nez Perce Tribe, which [has sued](#) the Forest Service over the plan, arguing it [violates their treaty rights](#). During the Biden administration, Perpetua [touted the use of antimony](#) for use in a [“breakthrough long-duration grid storage battery”](#) and signed a partnership with a battery firm, Ambri, which [filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2024](#), despite funding from Paulson and Bill Gates. Ambri has since [re-emerged from bankruptcy](#). Citing the need for antimony to produce bullets, nuclear weapons, missiles and batteries, the conservative Heritage Foundation has labeled the lack of domestic supply a [“crisis”](#) and a key defense priority.

In yet another investment, Paulson and another billionaire investor, Thomas Kaplan, [teamed up to buy](#) Barrick Gold’s stake in a gold mine in western Alaska, with Paulson spending \$800 million for a 40% stake in NovaGold Resources. NovaGold owns the [Donlin gold project](#) in western Alaska – a project that could become one of the largest gold mines in the world. It has [long been opposed](#) by [tribal nations and environmental](#) groups alike, with [six tribes in southwest Alaska challenging](#) the project. In June 2025, a federal judge ordered the government to [study the risks](#) of a proposed dam designed to contain toxic mining waste amid fears that such a spill could cause widespread environmental damage.

LUKSIC/FONTBONA FAMILY: Little-known in the U.S., the [wealthiest family in Chile](#) controls a [vast business empire](#) encompassing mining, banking, hotels, and other enterprises. One of its flagship holdings, Antofagasta Plc, controls the proposed Twin Metals copper and nickel mine in northern Minnesota just outside the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. This project, which the second Trump administration is [trying to advance](#), has long been controversial over concerns that toxic waste could contaminate one of the country’s most pristine and heavily used wilderness areas. The company has also faced environmental damage allegations in Chile, where the government sued



mining companies, including Antofagasta in 2022, alleging [irreparable damage](#) to one of the most important aquifers in the Antofagasta region.

In 2017, the [Wall Street Journal revealed](#) that Ivanka Trump and husband Jared Kushner rented a six-bedroom home in an elite Washington, D.C., neighborhood from a company controlled by Chilean billionaire [Andrónico Luksic](#), part of the family that controls Antofagasta and related companies. The family's matriarch, [Iris Fontbona](#) and other family members inherited the company in 2005 and remain in control, with her son [Jean-Paul Luksic](#) serving as Antofagasta's chairman.

Ivanka Trump's Landlord Is a Chilean Billionaire Suing the U.S. Government

President Donald Trump's daughter and her husband, White House adviser Jared Kushner, live in a Kalorama house owned by a Chilean business titan. His company is suing the U.S. over a Minnesota mine

By [Mark Maremont](#) [Follow](#) and [James V. Grimaldi](#) [Follow](#)
Updated March 8, 2017 3:26 pm ET

Antofagasta has a substantial D.C. lobbying presence, spending [\\$490,000](#) in lobbying in the first three quarters of 2025 and [\\$680,000](#) in 2024, according to data from OpenSecrets. The company's lobbyists include former Sen. Tom Daschle (D-S.D) as well as former Trump Interior Secretary David Bernhardt's lobbying firm, which employs several former Interior Department officials. House Republicans, especially Rep. Pete Stauber (R-Minn.), are enthusiastic proponents of the mining plan. Stauber and other Republicans have sent investigative [letters to three environmental groups](#) claiming that they improperly met with Biden administration officials while suing the government over the mine. In January 2026, Stauber and Congressional Republicans were working to [advance a repeal](#) of a Biden decision to impose a 20-year ban on mining in the area.

GINA RINEHART: The [richest person in Australia](#) and a supporter of [right-wing politicians](#) at home and abroad, Gina Rinehart is a major investor in mining projects around the world, under the umbrella of her company, Hancock Prospecting. Hancock Prospecting is now [the largest private shareholder](#) in the American rare mining and refining company MP Materials, owning 14.9 million shares of the company, worth nearly \$1 billion as of fall 2025, according to a [Securities and Exchange Commission filing](#). Her company has [invested in Trump's social media company](#), Truth Social, boosting her investment in the company by nearly 70% in the second quarter of 2025. Hancock Prospecting is also the second-largest shareholder of a major Australian



minerals producer, Lynas Rare Earths, which in 2023 [received \\$258 million](#) in Defense Department funding for a rare earths processing facility in Texas.



Australian mining billionaire [Gina Rinehart](#) talks [to Trump](#) at Mar-a-Lago on Oct. 31, 2025 (left). Right speaks in an [interview](#) with Sky News Australia in fall 2025.

In Australia, Rinehart is an outspoken advocate of [Trump-style deregulation](#) and a [critic of climate policies](#). “We need to cut government tape, regulations, governments’ wastage and tax burdens across Australia,” Rinehart [has said](#). “We need a USA-style DOGE that delivers action, one that helps to return dollars to our pockets and investment back to Australia. “Don’t be frightened to call for **‘make our bank accounts great again.’**” She has railed against climate action, claiming that, **“Many of our farmers and their families and farms are already suffering from net zero ideology,”** [she said](#). **“They have more than enough to worry about with devastating droughts, floods, fires”** – an oddly revealing acknowledgement of climate change damage.

A staunch supporter and ally of Trump, Rinehart [was spotted](#) at Trump’s Great Gatsby-themed Halloween party in



Mar-A-Lago fall 2025. Rinehart also has posed next to [Trump's second daughter, Tiffany Trump](#) at Trump's election-night party and bought full-page U.S. [newspaper advertisements](#) (below) praising Trump before his second inauguration.

Rinehart and several other executives at her company, Hancock Prospecting, also traveled to the U.S. for Trump's inauguration, The Australian [reported](#). According to Federal Election Commission records, Carlos De Miguel III, [general manager of Hanrine Exploration and Mining](#), a copper mining company in Ecuador owned by Hancock Prospecting, [donated \\$250,000](#) to Trump's inaugural committee. De Miguel listed his address as being in Naples, Fla.

Rinehart and other MP Materials investors saw their shares soar in value after the Pentagon, seeking a secure supply of magnets used in F-35 fighter jets (a goal [also sought](#) under the Biden administration), invested [\\$400 million](#) in the rare earths company, followed by a [\\$500 million investment from Apple](#).

Public funding from the Trump administration is intended to revive rare earths processing at the [Mountain Pass rare earths mine](#) in California, where the Molybdenum Corporation of America (Molycorp) began [extracting rare earth elements](#) in 1952. CEO James Litinsky, a 47-year-old hedge fund trader, [became a billionaire](#) after buying \$20 million in bonds issued by Molycorp, which filed for bankruptcy, leaving Litinsky the sole [owner of the defunct mine](#), which he restarted and took public in 2020.

The company is working to expand its [rare earth magnet production capacity](#) in Fort Worth, Texas. MP Materials also plans to build a [rare earths refinery in Saudi Arabia](#) with funding from the Pentagon and a Saudi mining company. However, in a conference call with investors, Litinsky sounded a general cautionary note about investor speculation in the mining sector. "The vast majority of projects being promoted today simply will not work at virtually any price," [Litinsky said](#).





MP Materials CEO James Litinsky [speaks on CNBC](#) in July 2025

James Litinsky's brother, [Andy Litinsky](#), has a personal relationship with Trump, but apparently a rocky one. Andy Litinsky was a candidate on Trump's reality TV show (The Apprentice), Trump's television producer and one of the founders of Trump's social media site, Truth Social after [pitching Trump](#) the idea for the site in 2021. After a falling out with Trump led to a [lengthy litigation battle](#), Andy Litinsky and another Truth Social cofounder [sold their stake](#) in the company in 2024.

RANDALL ATKINS: The CEO of Ramaco Resources, Randall Atkins, has won several favorable policy moves from the Trump administration and congressional Republicans. The Kentucky-based company mines for metallurgical coal used to produce steel and is developing a [rare earths mine in Wyoming](#).

Ramaco and other companies in the metallurgical coal industry [were unexpected winners](#) of the Republican tax and budget industry in summer 2025, with coal producers receiving a generous production tax credit as well as lowered royalties for coal production. Atkins also [waged a successful campaign](#) to have metallurgical coal named a critical mineral by the Interior Department

During the first Trump administration, Ramaco benefited from a favorable regulatory move by the Interior Department. The company won approval of a protection plan for a threatened crayfish impacted by the Ramaco underground coal mine near a river in West



Virginia. A Trump administration official [bragged at the time](#) that the move rescued the coal project “from bureaucratic entanglement,” calling that outcome “pretty rewarding,” even though it amounted to a political official working outside official review channels for endangered species protection.



Ramaco Resources CEO Randall Atkins [speaks on CNBC](#).

Speaking on CNBC, Atkins [said he welcomed the government's help](#). “We have got some discussions going on in back-channel with the Defense Department,” he said. “Government involvement at this point in the game is necessary.” Ramaco [hired a](#) Trump administration official from the White House’s National Energy Dominance Council, Joe Stopper, who told [Cowboy State Daily](#), “It’s clear that the government is willing and able to support this industry as it becomes more U.S.-based.”

However, Ramaco’s critical minerals mining plans in Wyoming have come under fire from geologists and a well-known Wall Street [short seller](#), who questions the company’s claim to be sitting [on a \\$37 billion deposit of rare earths](#) and argues it will be impossible for the company’s Brook Mine to operate profitably. David Hammond, a Colorado mineral economist, told [Cowboy State Daily](#) that Ramaco’s Brook Mine project in Wyoming is “**so over the top as far as its level of misleading us, and just really bogus numbers in there that no one should put any credibility on it.**”

MARK CHALMERS: Mark Chalmers, the Chief Executive Officer of Energy Fuels Inc., came to the company after managing the Kayelekera uranium project in Malawi for Paladin Africa Ltd., a subsidiary of the Australian minerals conglomerate Paladin Energy. The project was the site of a [long record of environmental violations](#), including



[dumping wastewater sludge](#) into a river that drains into Lake Malawi, a world heritage site, as well as a host of alleged [labor](#) and [human rights violations](#). Then the operation went bust, as Paladin [filed for insolvency in 2017](#). Chalmers has emphasized the company's stock market performance. "The shares went from less than a penny to eleven dollars. It was the most meteoric rise in the history of the Australian stock market," Chalmers [told Energy Fuels investors](#) in 2018. "There were a lot of people that rode that up and made a lot of money."



Energy Fuels CEO Mark Chalmers [speaks on an investing podcast](#).

After Paladin, Chalmers moved on to Energy Fuels, which has started [mining and processing uranium](#) in Arizona and Utah. Energy Fuels is a Canada-based uranium and critical mineral corporation with its corporate offices located outside Denver in Lakewood, Colorado. Energy Fuels operates the Pinyon Plain mine within the boundaries of a [newly protected national monument](#) near the Grand Canyon -- a place of deep importance to tribal nations in the southwest that is [now under threat](#) from the Trump administration. It also operates a [uranium mill](#) just outside Bears Ears National Monument in Utah.

While [speaking](#) on an investing podcast, Chalmers said that government support is welcome to support domestic rare earths producers to compete with China. "We have always built our company around that we didn't need government support but let's put it this way, it certainly would be appreciated, for the right support."



A Mushrooming Attack on Public Lands

The Trump administration has already moved to eliminate or weaken protections on nearly 88 million acres of national public lands, an [analysis by the Center for American Progress](#) found. Another CAP [analysis](#) found that eliminating national monuments would put the drinking water sources of more than 13 million people at risk, threatening 21,000 miles of rivers and streams. Many iconic public lands under threat from mining projects also provide enormous economic benefits, from [outdoor tourism and recreation](#) to providing a spawning ground for [the world's largest salmon fishery](#).

U.S. law is already extremely favorable to the mining industry – even more so than for oil and gas interests. Mining companies have long shortchanged the public, profiting off the public sphere without fair compensation for taxpayers. Under a law enacted in 1872, [mining companies extract](#) natural resources, including gold, silver, platinum and copper, without paying royalties to American taxpayers for the privilege of exploiting publicly owned resources and only paying nominal fees. The law, which contains no cultural or environmental protections, still governs public lands mining today, and is a longstanding legacy of exploitation of Indigenous lands and resources.

Under this system, which is [in dire need of reform](#), individuals and entities can assert the [right to extract minerals](#) from national public lands simply by making a mining claim. Many such claims are located inside or near national parks and monuments, putting treasured landscapes in the western U.S. and Alaska at risk of exploitation. An April 2025 [analysis](#) by the National Parks Conservation Association found more than 3,700 [mining claims](#) inside national parks or monuments, and more than 120,000 claims on national public lands within 30 miles from a park or monument.

As a result of this outdated law, mining corporations have been able to remove more than [\\$300 billion](#) in minerals from public lands over the past 150 years without paying their fair share to the government. This staggering giveaway to the mining sector exceeds even the largesse the U.S. government extends to the oil and gas sector, which recently [won a rollback of a royalty and fee increases](#) passed during the Biden era.

In May 2025, the Trump administration [set the stage](#) for what is likely to be a massive turnover of public lands to the private sector, declaring that the president can open up



land for private sector exploitation by [revoking national monument](#) designations established by former presidents to protect significant natural sites.

The Trump Justice Department’s 50-page [opinion](#) on the [Antiquities Act of 1906 flies in the face](#) of established law and gives Trump carte blanche authority to rescind national monument designations, which have often led to the creation of new national parks. Burgum has claimed that the Antiquities Act is limited in scope, [testifying in January 2025](#), that the act “states very clearly that the smallest possible area to protect those objects, be protected. Its original intention really was to protect antiquities, areas like, **I would say, Indiana Jones-type archeological protections.**” In reality, the Antiquities Act has been interpreted broadly by many presidents, starting with Teddy Roosevelt, who in 1908 established a national monument protecting [800,000 acres of the Grand Canyon](#).

While Burgum professes to admire Roosevelt’s conservation legacy, several important national monuments are at risk of being [abolished or shrinking](#) dramatically. That includes public lands in Arizona near the Grand Canyon [protected in 2023](#) after years of advocacy from tribal nations and public lands advocates, as well as [Bears Ears](#) and [Grand Staircase-Escalante](#) in Utah, which Trump [attempted to shrink](#) in his first term.

Table 2: National Public Lands Under Threat From Mining

State	Threatened Lands	Total Acreage of National Public Lands Near Project	Company/Mine Name	Mineral(s)
Alaska	Bristol Bay watershed	12,500,000	Northern Dynasty (Pebble Mine)	Copper, gold, rare earths
Alaska	Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve	8,500,000	Trilogy Metals/South 32 (Ambler Metals Upper Kobuk Mineral Project)	Copper, zinc, cobalt
Arizona	Tonto National Forest (Oak Flat/Chi'chil Bildagotee)	2,900,000	Rio Tinto/BH Group (Resolution Copper)	Copper
Arizona	Grand Canyon National Park, Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni/Ancestral Footprints of the Grand	1,200,000 (Grand Canyon) 918,000 (Baaj Nwaavjo)	Energy Fuels Resources, EnCore Energy, others	Uranium



State	Threatened Lands	Total Acreage of National Public Lands Near Project	Company/Mine Name	Mineral(s)
	Canyon National Monument			
California	Death Valley National Park	3,400,000	K2 Gold (Conglomerate Mesa)	Gold
California	Mojave National Preserve	1,600,000	Dateline Resources Ltd, (Colosseum Mine)	Rare earths
Colorado	Dolores Canyons National Monument (proposed)	400,000	Anfield Energy (West Slope Project)	Uranium/Vanadium
Idaho	Payette National Forest	2,300,000	Perpetua Resources (Stibnite Gold)	Gold, Antimony
Minnesota	Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness	1,100,000	Antofagasta (Twin Metals)	Copper, Nickel
New Mexico	Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands	1,900,000	Energy Fuels Resources, Laramide Resources	Uranium
Utah	Bears Ears National Monument	1,360,000	Energy Fuels Resources, Iso Energy; Atomic Minerals, Anfield Energy	Uranium

Source: Public Citizen research



Mining Companies Jockey for Influence With Trump

In the get-richer, quicker culture of Trump 2.0, minerals and mining firms are rushing to cozy up to the Trump administration. A Reuters review [found](#) that at least 12 mining firms have signed up with Washington lobbyists since the start of the year. Former Trump administration officials or those in Trump's orbit have been able to sign numerous mining industry clients, including [Ballard Partners](#), the former firm of White House Chief of Staff Suzie Wiles and Attorney General Pam Bondi.

In spring 2025, David Bernhardt, who was Trump's second Interior secretary in his first term, launched a new lobbying firm, Bernhardt Group, along with numerous [former officials](#) from the first Trump administration, including Bernhardt's [former chief of staff](#). Bernhardt Group quickly [signed 11 new mining clients](#), including Antofagasta Plc, Barrick Mining, Trigg Minerals and USA Rare Earth, which [received \\$1.6 billion](#) in federal loans and investments in January 2026 and [spent \\$390,000 on lobbying](#) in 2025. **"Once the U.S. government started giving money away earlier this year, every minerals boardroom in America started to think, 'What about us?'"** Ken Hoffman, a commodity strategist with Red Cloud Securities and a former mining industry consultant, [told Reuters](#).

Dateline Resources Limited, an Australian company, is seeking to restart the Colosseum Mine, a gold and silver mining operation in California's Mojave Desert National Preserve, created before public lands there were protected. Dateline [employs the lobbying firm Michael Best Strategies](#), led by [Reince Priebus](#), Trump's first White House chief of staff and former Republican party chair. One of Dateline's [lobbyists in 2025](#) is Brittan Specht of Michael Best Strategies. Specht is a [former House Republican aide](#) and a former colleague of Emily Domenech, the executive Director of Trump's National Permitting Council. Another [lobbyist for the Colosseum Mine, John Sobel of Telegraph Advisors](#), is a former Republican Capitol Hill aide who in 2015 [described presidentially-designated national monuments](#) as "second-rate monuments, because they lack the adequate support of locals and of Congress."



Table 3: Federal Lobbying By Companies Mining Key US Public Lands

Company	Corporate Headquarters	2024	2025	Total
Rio Tinto Group	London; Melbourne, Australia	\$1,330,000	\$1,100,000	\$2,430,000
Antofagasta plc	London; Santiago, Chile	\$680,000	\$490,000	\$1,170,000
MP Materials	Las Vegas, Nevada	\$520,000	\$420,000	\$940,000
BHP Group	Melbourne, Australia	\$410,000	\$480,000	\$890,000
Perpetua Resources	Boise, Idaho	\$340,000	\$430,000	\$770,000
South32 Ltd	Perth, Australia	\$152,000	\$284,000	\$436,000
Lithium Americas	Vancouver, Canada	\$0	\$400,000	\$400,000
Dateline Resources	Sydney, Australia	\$190,000	\$170,000	\$360,000
Northern Dynasty Minerals	Vancouver, Canada	\$0	\$350,000	\$350,000
Ambler Metals (Joint venture of Trilogy Metals/South32)	Anchorage, Alaska	\$160,000	\$120,000	\$280,000
Donlin Gold	Anchorage, Alaska	\$120,000	\$90,000	\$210,000
Ramaco Carbon	Lexington, Kentucky	\$90,000	\$45,000	\$135,000
Resolution Copper Co (Joint Venture of Rio Tinto/ BHP Group)	Superior, Arizona	\$0	\$60,000	\$60,000
Totals		\$3,992,000	\$4,439,000	\$8,431,000

Source: OpenSecrets, Public Citizen research

Doug's Dash for Dominance (and Prominence)

Under Doug Burgum, the Interior Department is working overtime to sell off and exploit public lands. Trump's nominee to lead the Bureau of Land Management, former GOP Rep. Steve Pearce of New Mexico, is a longtime proponent of [privatizing public lands](#). Pearce authored several pieces of legislation designed to [undermine and exploit](#) public lands for corporate interests and [advocated for the sale of public lands](#) as a deficit-reduction measure.

In general, Burgum appears far more focused on his position as chair of the newly created [National Energy Dominance Council](#) – an interagency group designed to grant



the wishes of extractive industries – than he is on the traditional job of Interior Secretary, where his duties are to protect America’s natural resources and cultural heritage. Burgum appears to have morphed his job into that of an [international fossil fuel salesman](#), mining promoter and an artificial intelligence enthusiast, [claiming that maximizing U.S. resource extraction is crucial](#) for America’s economy, regardless of the environmental consequences and launching off-base attacks on the fastest-growing forms of energy: wind and solar.



Interior Secretary Doug Burgum [touted](#) U.S. mining in a CNBC interview (left) and [met](#) with an official from the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company on a trip to the Middle East.

To do so, Burgum and other Trump administration officials have taken numerous deregulatory steps to promote mining interests, including fast-tracking permits, [eliminating regulations](#), planning a [strategic mineral reserve](#) and [guaranteeing a minimum price](#) for rare earth elements. Steps like these could indeed make sense under a progressive green industrial policy. But under Trump, they lack any semblance of environmental, labor and social standards, compensation for taxpayers or proper consultation with tribal nations.

More recently, the Trump administration has made several direct investments in mining firms, [turning U.S. mining companies into a red-hot stock market investment](#), and partnered with the government of Abu Dhabi and a New York private equity firm on a [\\$1.8 billion global investment fund for critical](#) minerals.

In November, the Interior Department added 10 new minerals, including copper, lead, metallurgical coal (used for steel production), potash and uranium on its “critical minerals” list run by the U.S. Geological Survey. Inclusion on one [several critical minerals lists](#) run by federal agencies has [numerous benefits for extractive](#)



[corporations](#). Those include making mining companies eligible for federal funding, a streamlined permitting process and a shield against foreign competition due to steep import tariffs.

For example, the CEO of copper producer Freeport McMoRan told Reuters that adding copper to a federal critical minerals list would provide more than [\\$500 million per year](#) in tax credits to the company, the largest U.S.-based copper producer. In another favor for the industry, Trump's Environmental Protection Agency granted a two-year exemption to [copper smelters](#), allowing them to avoid complying with a Biden-era pollution rule intended to limit the amounts of lead, arsenic, mercury, benzene and dioxins from copper production.

The addition of uranium to the list is especially controversial. As the Center for Western Priorities [has pointed out](#), the addition of uranium to the critical minerals list contradicts existing federal law, which specifies that minerals used for fuel cannot be included on the critical minerals list. However, the Interior Department [cited](#) a White House executive order directing the U.S. Geological Service to consider whether uranium should be on the list.

Digging for Rare Earths

Over several months, the Trump administration has gradually rolled out plans to encourage and subsidize the mining sector, especially “rare earth” elements, which are used by military contractors and technology firms for magnets commonly used in electronics products and wind turbines. Chinese domination of this market is indeed a longtime [concern](#) of both Republican and Democratic administrations, but the Trump administration's chaotic trade policies and ongoing trade war with China have intensified the existing rare earths supply problem.

After Trump hiked tariffs in April, China retaliated with a slew of measures that included [limiting the exports](#) of rare earth magnets – a potential crisis for U.S. companies. By fall, Trump had inked a new deal with China that somewhat de-escalated the conflict, including [a pause on rare earth controls](#). But tensions remain high. China still [may limit rare earths exports](#) to U.S. aerospace companies and other military contractors.

The Trump administration has also been pursuing critical minerals agreements with countries around the world, including a “strategic partnership agreement” related to rare



earth minerals between the United States and the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#). These trade deals, negotiated in secret, often impose obligations only on Global South countries while giving the U.S. free reign, threatening Global South countries' ability to oversee their resources and assert labor and environmental standards. These deals [raise serious concerns](#) about transparency, human rights, worker and environmental exploitation and sovereignty, especially in places such as the DRC and in [Indonesia](#).

While the Biden administration [initiated numerous programs](#) to incentivize [the mining of minerals](#), its primary goal was mainly to promote the transition to electric vehicles and renewable energy. The Trump administration is altering those programs and [expanding them](#), primarily [for military benefit](#), since rare earths are used to produce missiles, fighter jets, submarines and weapons systems.

Numerous Trump officials or people in Trump's orbit have personal ties and investments to the mining industry, making it hard to determine if Trump's policy is based on their policy goals or on the personal financial interests of administration insiders. A brief list follows:

- **Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick's** former Wall Street firm, Cantor Fitzgerald has numerous mining interests. The firm has been [lead underwriter](#) for Northern Dynasty's Pebble Mine, a proposed gold and copper mine near Alaska's pristine Bristol Bay. Under Lutnick, the Commerce Department has [invested](#) \$1.6 billion in USA Rare Earth to launch a Texas rare earth mining project and an Oklahoma manufacturing facility.. As part of this deal, Cantor Fitzgerald, now led by Lutnick's two sons, [Brandon and Kyle Lutnick](#), helped arrange \$1.5 billion [private financing](#) for the Oklahoma-based company. Cantor Fitzgerald also [holds a stake](#) in Critical Metals Corp., which is targeting Greenland, the Danish territory Trump has [sought to purchase](#), for rare earths mining.
- **White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles**, Trump's current chief of staff, [lobbied for the Pebble project](#) while working for Ballard Partners, the [top-billing lobbying firm](#) in D.C. Wiles herself recruited the Pebble project's developers as a lobbying client, [the New York Times reported](#),
- **White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller** was, [until August](#), the owner of shares in MP Materials, a rare earths company that received [\\$400 million investment](#) from the Defense Department under a deal announced in July.
- **Karen Budd-Falen**: A longtime critic of federal land management policies and Wyoming rancher with [extremist, far-right views](#), Budd-Falen is a top Interior



Department adviser whose husband Frank Falen, owns property in Nevada and in 2018 [sold a \\$3.5 million water rights contract](#) to Lithium Americas' Thacker Pass lithium mine project in Nevada. That project is [now part-owned](#) by the U.S. government after the Trump administration restructured a Biden-era [loan](#) to the project.

- **National Security Council staffer David Copley:** A top [adviser for minerals and supply chain policy](#) on Trump's National Security Council, David Copley is a former executive with Colorado-based Newmont, the world's largest gold miner.
- **Donald Trump Jr.,** the president's son, is a partner in [1789 Capital](#), a venture capital firm tied to prominent conservatives that invested in a rare earths firm, Vulcan Elements, that [received federal support](#) months after it was [backed by 1789 Capital](#).

Donald Trump Jr-backed start-up scores \$600mn US federal government deal

President's son's fund 1789 Capital poised to capitalise from father's administration

Financial Times [coverage](#) of Donald Trump Jr.'s venture capital firm's mining investment

Trump's Nuclear Dreams Put Public Lands, Tribes at Risk

The nuclear power industry, which relies on uranium for fuel, is also in line for Trump administration handouts. The Trump administration is trying to spark a revival of new nuclear power construction, [driven by hopes](#) that nuclear plants will provide always-on energy for artificial intelligence data centers. The Trump administration is [touting a new public-private partnership](#) to build nuclear plants under which the government plans to speed permitting and arrange financing, including potential [government loans](#). The U.S. government could even become a shareholder in the [initial public offering](#) of nuclear plant builder Westinghouse, if all goes according to plan. Westinghouse [intends to start](#)



[construction](#) on the first of 10 new reactors in the U.S. by 2030. However, nuclear energy is an expensive power source plagued with [massive cost overruns and lengthy delays](#). It remains to be seen whether the nuclear power industry’s much-hyped, long-predicted renaissance will actually result in a significant number of new reactors.

Though the U.S. has imported most of its uranium supply [since the early 1990s](#), the Trump administration has focused on building domestic production. This push for an enhanced nuclear supply chain puts [public lands and tribal nations at risk](#) of harm – including people who live on the same tribal lands that were [contaminated with radioactive mining waste](#) several decades ago.

Under Trump and Burgum, the concerns of communities are secondary. In May 2025, the Interior Department approved Anfield Energy’s Velvet-Wood uranium and vanadium mine in Utah under [a special 14-day review process under an energy “emergency” declared by Trump](#) – a process that would [normally take an entire year](#). Canada-based Anfield [reopened the mine](#) in November 2025 for the first time in 40 years and expects to start production in 2026. Burgum [claimed that](#) the mine would help with “reducing dependence on foreign adversaries and ensuring our military, medical and energy sectors have the resources they need to thrive.” However, Burgum’s lofty rhetoric conveniently ignored the fact that the review process left almost no time for public input, shutting out neighboring communities. Anfield has also [applied to state officials to restart](#) another mine in Colorado and [reopen a now-dormant uranium processing facility](#) in Utah. Former Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.), a longtime nuclear energy proponent, was [appointed to Anfield Energy’s board](#) in 2025, along with several other [nuclear companies](#).

Key Public Lands Mining Controversies

Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Minnesota, (Twin Metals)

This proposed underground copper and nickel mine is located in one of the most [unspoiled wilderness areas in the country](#), just outside the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in



Minnesota. It has long been controversial amid fears that the mine would leak toxic waste into a pristine wilderness used for recreation by millions of people every year. In 2022, the Biden administration [blocked](#) the project, then [barred mining](#) on the site for 20 years, reversing the first Trump administration's approvals. In June 2025, Burgum and Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said the government would start the process of [lifting the Biden-era restrictions](#) and allow mining on the site, though critics such as Sen. Tina Smith (D-Minn.) [questioned](#) whether the Trump administration performed any scientific analysis to back up its decision.

Grand Canyon Region, Arizona (Pinyon Plain Mine)

The Grand Canyon area has long been targeted for exploration by uranium miners. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Grand Canyon itself housed a [significant uranium mining operation](#) directly on the canyon's iconic South Rim, which now attracts millions of visitors per year. In 2023, former President Joe Biden designated large tracts of land directly north and south of the Grand Canyon as a [national monument](#). Biden's monument designation: Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni-Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument made permanent a 20-year moratorium on new uranium projects put in place in 2012 under President Barack Obama.

Energy Fuels' Pinyon Plain mine is within the boundaries of the new Baaj Nwaavjo monument, located south of the Grand Canyon's entrance. The mine was grandfathered into the monument and still allowed to operate, as the monument's protections only impact future leases or claims. Nevertheless, Energy Fuels was still critical of the designation. A company spokesman [told the Arizona Republic](#), "At a time when the Biden Administration is working to reduce carbon emissions and punish Russia's aggression in Ukraine... permanently locking off America's best uranium deposits seems like a bad idea that runs contrary to many Administration priorities."

Energy Fuels had pre-existing mining claims and an operational [uranium mine](#), the [Pinyon Plain project](#), about 10 miles south of the Grand Canyon, which had been in development before the moratorium. A global surge in uranium prices increased hopes of a revival in nuclear power. The [improved economic prospects](#) of uranium led Energy Fuels to [pull uranium ore out of the ground](#) in December 2023 for the first time since the mine was approved in 1986. [Environmental groups](#) and the [Havasupai tribe](#) have long warned that the mine poses a [threat to groundwater](#) in the area near the Grand Canyon.



Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes [has requested](#) that the U.S. Forest Service perform a new environmental impact study to determine whether the mine is safe for groundwater in the area. Mayes noted that the 40-year-old original study does not properly account for environmental risks that are now better understood due to technology advances. Energy Fuels' Mark Chalmers has downplayed the risks, [telling the Associated Press](#), "there will be some people that will say ... 'uranium mining has contaminated the water in Grand Canyon already... It is false. Natural contamination from the uranium is already in the system. Mother Nature put it there.'" Energy Fuels also wants to open [several additional uranium mines](#) to the north of the Grand Canyon. Chalmers [told E&E News in 2023](#) that the project was taking too long. "It's the most litigated mine in the history of the United States mining industry, and it has always persevered for all the right reasons in that it wasn't going to damage the environment," [Chalmers said](#). "It followed due process over the decades."

Under an agreement between Energy Fuels and the Navajo tribal government, [up to 12 trucks per day](#) carrying uranium ore are allowed to [roll through the Navajo Nation](#), where some tribal communities have already stopped practicing cultural traditions, like collecting medicinal plants, due to fears of contamination. The Navajo Nation has long [coped with the impacts](#) of uranium mining since the 1940s, including elevated cancer levels and 500 abandoned mines. Federal research into the impacts of uranium exposure found that about a quarter of more than [780 Navajo women screened in a study](#) had high levels of uranium exposure in their system.

Bears Ears National Monument, Utah

In 2016, President Barack Obama [established](#) the Bears Ears National Monument, preserving one of the most spectacular sites in southeast Utah. Since then, the monument has been the subject of intense fighting. In 2017, one year after the monument's designation, Trump [slashed the size](#) of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments by 85 percent. "Some people think that the natural resources of Utah should be controlled by a small handful of very distant bureaucrats located in Washington," Trump said at the time. "And guess what? They're wrong." The Washington Post later revealed that Energy Fuels pushed the first Trump administration to [shrink the monument](#), hiring as a lobbyist Andrew Wheeler, who then joined the Trump administration as EPA administrator. President Joe Biden [reversed](#) the Trump administration's move and restored Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante to their prior status. Both of those monuments could be under threat from the Trump administration.



One mile [outside](#) Bears Ears, Energy Fuels operates the White Mesa mill, the only functioning conventional uranium processing facility in North America. Many tribes have fought the White Mesa mill and the disposal of radioactive uranium waste in the area. “I’m against this mill. I’ll always be against it,” Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Councilman Conrad Jacket [told Grand Canyon Trust](#). “This waste comes from all around the world to right here...and when they dump it here, you see the wind’s blowing. And it’s headed east. And it’s blowing into Colorado. That’s how it’s connected to everywhere. It’s not just our issue. It’s everybody’s issue.”

Bristol Bay, Alaska (Pebble Mine)

The massive Pebble Project, a proposed copper, gold and rare earths mine in the pristine Alaska Bristol Bay watershed, home to one of the world’s premier salmon fisheries. The Canadian mining firm, Northern Dynasty Minerals, has long battled with environmental groups over the project, which both of Alaska’s Republican senators, [Lisa Murkowski](#) and [Dan Sullivan](#), have opposed, but Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy has [supported](#) in a federal lawsuit. The proposed project is located on [Alaska state land](#), but the Environmental Protection Agency [ruled in 2023](#) that water pollution created by developing “would have unacceptable adverse effects on certain salmon fishery areas in the Bristol Bay watershed,” and called the area “an area of unparalleled ecological value, with salmon diversity and productivity unrivaled anywhere in North America” resulting in the permanent loss of nearly 100 miles of fish streams and 2,100 acres of wetlands.

Unlike most extractive projects, there has been tension in Trumpworld over the issue, and public disagreement between Trump and his son Donald Trump Jr., [an avid fisherman](#). The first Trump administration [initially acted](#) to speed the project’s approval, then reversed course and denied the project, amid [opposition](#) from Donald Trump Jr. and conservative commentator Tucker Carlson, [who told E&E News](#) “**It’s like the Grand Canyon or something; it’s like the Tetons—this is something that’s unusual that we should preserve.**” So far, the second Trump administration has [stuck with its decision](#) to block the project, but the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and National Mining Association, normally close Trump allies, have filed [briefs in support of the giant mine](#).

Mojave Desert National Preserve, California (Colosseum Mine)

The Colosseum Mine on the California-Nevada border is the site of a formerly active gold and silver mining operation in California’s Mojave Desert National Preserve. Australia-based Dateline Resources wants to [reopen the project](#) and continue the



extraction of gold, though it also believes the project also could produce rare earth elements as a byproduct.

In April 2025, the Interior Department [said](#) it “recognized the Colosseum Mine in California can continue mining operations under its existing mine plan of operations with the Bureau of Land Management.” In doing so, Interior relied on a 40-year-old document and [avoided](#) requiring the company to submit a new mining plan. That move came after a [long-running standoff](#) between the National Park Service and Dateline, which claimed it had the right to mine there under a plan submitted to the Bureau of Land Management more than 40 years ago by the mine’s prior owner. The National Park Service argued that the company was [operating illegally](#) and ordered the company to stop exploring on the site and pay more than \$200,000 in damages.

In June, Burgum went on Fox News and touted the Colosseum project, [saying](#), “we have to get back in the game in a serious way around critical minerals.” In addition, Dateline CEO Stephen Baghdadi [met with Burgum](#) and senior Trump administration officials. In a [letter](#) to Burgum, Democratic lawmakers criticized the Trump administration’s claim to have approved the restart of mining within Mojave National Preserve. “This action appears to violate federal law, disregards National Park Service (NPS) authority, and sets a dangerous precedent for industrial development in lands that Congress has designated as worthy of inclusion in the National Park System,” they wrote.

**Oak Flat/Chi’chil
Bildagoteel, Arizona
(Resolution Copper)**

Resolution Copper is a joint venture owned by the two largest mining companies in the world. The British-Australian Rio Tinto Group, owns 55% stake in the venture and Australia’s BHP Group, the world’s largest mining company, owns 45%. The Resolution

Copper mine is located on a six-square-mile stretch of land in rural Arizona about 60



A Copper Mine in Arizona, “Resolution,” was just delayed by a Radical Left Court for two months — 3,800 Jobs are affected, and our Country, quite simply, needs Copper — AND NOW! They are looking to do an Expedited Appeal before the Ninth Circuit, but it is so sad that Radical Left Activists can do this, and affect the lives of so many people. Those that fought it are Anti-American, and representing other Copper competitive Countries. We can’t continue to allow this to happen to the U.S.A.! The Appeal will take place, shortly, in the Ninth Circuit.

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miles east of Phoenix called Oak Flat, or Chi'chil Bildagoteel, where native tribes [have held ceremonies](#) for centuries. The underground mine is expected to ultimately collapse and create a two-mile-wide, 1,000-foot-deep crater, [destroying the San Carlos Apache Tribe's ceremonial site](#). The Trump administration has aggressively backed Resolution Copper, with Trump and Burgum [meeting with Rio Tinto and BHP executives](#) in the White House.



Trump and Burgum [met with executives](#) from Rio Tinto and BHP Group, which want to mine on a sacred tribal site in Arizona

Though the U.S. Forest Service has agreed to trade Resolution Copper the property in exchange for other environmentally sensitive properties, the actual land swap, which Congress approved more than a decade ago, has been stalled by litigation. In June 2025, the U.S. Forest Service, following an executive order from Trump to expedite the project, put out an [environmental review](#) to pave the way for the land transfer. However, a federal court issued an emergency order in August 2025 temporarily blocking the transfer. Trump then attacked tribal opponents of the project in August, [calling them](#) “Anti-American, and representing other Copper competitive Countries.” In a Facebook post, Terry Rambler, Chairman of the San Carlos Apache Tribe [said](#), “This proposed mine is a rip-off, will destroy a sacred area, decimates our environment, threatens our water rights, and is bad for America.”

Resolution Copper has spent more than \$2 billion on the construction of the mine to reach deposits with an [estimated value of \\$270 billion](#), more than a mile underground, though no copper has been extracted so far. The project has been underway for several years and has been the subject of numerous legal battles. The San Carlos Apache Tribe



argued that the transfer of sacred tribal land to Resolution Copper in exchange for other land violated its religious freedom. The Supreme Court [declined to hear](#) this case despite objections from Justices Neil Gorsuch and Clarence Thomas.

Conclusion

Around the globe, the mining industry has been [characterized](#) by grievous human rights and environmental abuses and violations of Indigenous peoples' rights. The rush to bring rare earths mining to the U.S. to compete with China should not be an excuse to relax standards in the U.S. Instead, they must be made stricter.

In seeking to encourage mining, the Trump administration is prioritizing speed over corporate accountability and societal safeguards, and putting up public lands up for sale. In particular, the Trump White House's executive order removing requirements for mining companies to demonstrate proven mineral deposits before receiving federal funds departs from due diligence practices and exposes taxpayer dollars to risky projects that may never materialize.

However, recently introduced Senate [legislation](#) threatens to exacerbate these problems, rather than correct them. For example, the bill would authorize an additional \$2.5 billion in taxpayer dollars for critical minerals projects and would explicitly permit a Trump-selected corporate board to take equity stakes in mining companies without public transparency or independent oversight. This board would be able to assist the Trump administration's efforts to take power away from public agencies and invest in dirty mining projects. The bill also omits a long-overdue rewrite of the U.S. mining law, enacted in 1872, and fails to impose meaningful environmental standards or policies to protect sensitive environments and sacred Indigenous sites and require fair compensation for taxpayers.

Properly designed, federal minerals policy could help secure critical resources while minimizing risk. However, its effectiveness depends on strong governance and clear environmental, human rights and tribal consultation standards, which are sorely lacking under Trump.

