

America's Future Depends on Decisions We Make Today

by David F. Briggs

Opponents claim the Rosemont copper project should not be allowed to be developed because most of the copper concentrates produced by this project will be exported for treatment by foreign smelters and refineries. The false premise of their argument is; "if the copper produced Rosemont is not consumed here, the project will not benefit Americans."

How many of you know that most of the copper-bearing materials collected at domestic recycling centers are also shipped to foreign facilities for treatment because the United States no longer has the capacity to treat these materials here? During 2011, recyclable materials containing 1,367,000 short tons of copper were exported to foreign countries for treatment. Most of this recyclable material (75.8%) was exported to China.

Should we also stop recycling copper because most of it is also shipped abroad for treatment? Isn't recycling copper good for the environment?

How does denying Rosemont Copper an opportunity to develop its 21st century mining project restore our nation's capacity to smelt and refine the copper concentrates produced by our domestic mining operations?

How does halting the Rosemont Copper project reduce our nation's need to import a third of the refined copper we consume every year?

Just because Rosemont's copper concentrates will be treated at foreign smelters and refineries does not necessarily imply that some of this copper will not find its way back to the United States. And even if none of the copper mined at Rosemont is returned to the United States, it

will offset the refined copper imports we obtain from Chile, Canada and Peru, ultimately decreasing our nation's dependence on foreign imports.

This debate is not about where the copper derived from the Rosemont copper project will ultimately be consumed. The real issue is how do we reduce our nation's dependency on all foreign imports. Unsustainable trade deficits resulting from this dependency rob us of the resources that could be used to invest in our economic future. Without the development of new domestic industrial projects like Rosemont and the jobs they provide, there will be a deterioration of the technological know-how that enables America's workforce to compete on the world market. Our dependence on foreign imports makes America vulnerable to decisions made by foreign governments.

Is it really in our nation's best interest to make decisions that increase this dependency? Or should we be working to find ways to produce more of the goods we consume?

Our success in finding a solution for this problem will ultimately determine whether American society continues to prosper or declines and dies in the same way many other civilizations have during history's past.

Disclaimer: David F. Briggs is a resident of Pima county and a geologist, who has intermittently worked on the Rosemont Copper project since 2006. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Rosemont Copper.

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