



Just Saying No Does Not Solve the Challenges We Face as a Modern Society

by David F. Briggs



Based on information contained on their web site, the [Arizona Mining Reform Coalition](#) consists of Arizona groups that are working to ensure mining is done responsibly to protect communities and the environment of Arizona. Coalition members include the Apache Stronghold, Center for Biological

Diversity, Concerned Citizens and Retired Miners Coalition, Dragoon Conservation Alliance, EARTHWORKS, Groundwater Awareness League, Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club, Patagonia Area Resource Alliance, and Save the Scenic Santa Ritas.

The Mission Statement of the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition, which all its members must agree to, states:

"The Arizona Mining Reform Coalition is comprised of Arizona groups and individuals that work to ensure that responsible mining contributes to healthy communities, a healthy environment, and, when all costs are factored in, is a net benefit to Arizona. The Arizona Mining Reform Coalition expects the mining industry to clean up after itself, comply fully with the spirit of safeguards in place to protect Arizona, and to interact in a transparent and open manner with Arizona citizens.

Further: 1) mining is an inappropriate use of some lands in Arizona; 2) state and federal mining laws need to be positively reformed; and 3) the coalition will promote alternative uses of some mineral deposits.

The coalition will increase awareness of all aspects of mining in Arizona."

On the surface these may seem to be reasonable goals. However upon closer examination of the make-up and record of the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition, it becomes apparent that all is not as it is portrayed.

The Arizona Mining Reform Coalition includes organizations, who oppose virtually every proposed exploration and development project in the state of Arizona, including but not limited to the Resolution Copper, Rosemont Copper, Florence Copper, Gunnison and Hermosa projects. None of these projects appear to be located in areas that, in their opinion, would constitute an appropriate use of the land.

While I agree there are areas in Arizona that are not appropriate for mining, most of these localities have already been placed off limits, including a number of sites with known mineral potential that have been set aside for alternative uses (i.e. Silver Bell East and Silver Bell West). Many of the projects opposed by the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition are located in areas where mining activities have occurred for more than 100 years.

Today's mining industry spends millions of dollars every year addressing issues related to its projects including environmental remediation and mitigation. The industry is addressing historical impacts caused by the previous incomplete understanding of environmental science, the inability (until modern computing era) to predict future impacts, and lack of modern environmental technology to prevent pollution of the air and water. Mining professionals work very hard to minimize impacts at existing and new projects and welcome constructive suggestions on how this may be accomplished. Our nation's environmental laws provide rigorous standards that must be met to protect human health and the environment before mining projects are allowed to proceed and give the public ample opportunity to make positive contributions as to how they will be conducted.

Our nation's mines fulfill the demand for mined products that are used by all Americans, including those who oppose these projects. If there was no demand for these products (i.e. green energy, housing, appliance, vehicles, computers, smart phones and medical technology), there would be no incentive to mine them. Just saying no is no longer a viable option. As consumers of these goods, everyone has a responsibility to help reduce the impacts that may result from their consumption.

To Mr. Featherstone, the director of the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition and the leaders of its member organizations, I respectfully ask the following questions:

- 1) Has your organization ever worked with a mining company to find ways both parties could achieve their mutual goals?
- 2) Please identify the responsible mining operations or proposed mining projects located in Arizona that your organization endorses or supports. How do they differ from projects you oppose?
- 3) As someone who supports responsible mining, how has your organization helped Arizona's mining projects meet the demand for mined products our nation requires to ensure its economic and national security?
- 4) Many areas having the best potential to supply the minerals we consume every day are located within known mining districts. If we are not permitted to produce natural resources from these areas, where can we mine in this nation?
- 5) How can we reduce America's dependence on foreign goods and services, if we are unwilling to produce more of the basic goods (i.e. copper) and provide the services (i.e. smelting and refining) we require to maintain our way of life?
- 6) How can state and federal mining laws be reformed without jeopardizing our domestic mining industry's ability to supply the minerals we require to fulfill the needs of present and future generations of Americans?

Disclaimer - David F. Briggs is a resident of Pima County and a geologist, who has intermittently worked at the Rosemont, Florence, and Hermosa projects. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Hudbay Minerals, Florence Copper or Arizona Mining.

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