



Setting the Record Straight about Rosemont Copper

by David F. Briggs

Save the Scenic Santa Ritas and other opponents of Rosemont Copper have repeatedly stated that the jobs provided by this project are not really important to the well-being of our community because they only represent a small fraction of the area's total workforce. And you know. They are partially correct. The number of workers directly and indirectly employed by Arizona's metals mining industry only represents 1.35% of Arizona's total workforce. However, these workers contribute 3.1% of Arizona's gross domestic product.

One of the many things Rosemont's opponents don't tell us in making their arguments is without the minerals produced by our nation's mines, there would be fewer jobs in the manufacturing sector, which transforms these raw materials into finished products. Without these finished products there would be no need for many of the jobs within the retail sector to sell these products to the consumer. And finally, the benefits received through the use of finished products derived from mining activities would be no longer available to each and every one of us.

I'm sure you have heard the phrase; "If it can't be grown, it must be mined." Mining is one of the basic industries, which forms the foundation of modern society. Without these basic industries, modern society would not exist.

Another fact, which Rosemont's opponents conveniently fail to mention is the number of workers employed by the mining industry in every industrialized country of the world also represents a small percentage of its total workforce, whether you examine it from a local, state or national prospective.

Let's examine another extractive industry, agriculture. One hundred fifty years ago, approximately 58% of the American workforce lived and worked on farms. Over the years, the total percentage of Americans working on farms and ranches had declined to less than 1.6%, today. In spite of this, our farms and ranches not only meet America's demands for food and clothing, but also supply many of these products to the world.

If you apply the same standard opponents are using to argue against the Rosemont Copper project to agriculture and ranching, where would we obtain the products to feed and clothe our society?

Like our nation's agricultural sector, the number of workers employed by our mines has also declined over the last 150 years. The large workforce of 150, 100 or even 50 years ago is no longer required to produce the minerals needed to maintain our basic requirements. Today's mines are very efficient and capable of profitably mining and processing ores, containing a fraction of the metal content of the ores that were mined a century ago. And they have been able to accomplish this in a manner, which minimizes the environmental and social impacts that result from these activities. This has been made possible through advances in science and technology as well as innovative mining and reclamation practices.

Advancements in technology and science over the years have made this possible for all extractive and manufacturing industries, which provide the products America requires to maintain our economic and national security needs. In doing so, this has allowed many of us to pursue an ever expanding variety of business, educational, cultural and recreational activities that would not have been possible a century ago. This is just another way that scientific and technological advances have benefitted everyone.

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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