



Some Interesting Questions to Ponder about Rosemont Copper

by David F. Briggs

Debating the issues surrounding the Rosemont Copper project over the last several years has brought out a number of interesting questions about mining the minerals we require to maintain our nation's economic and national security.



Future Site of the Rosemont Copper Project (Photo taken by David Briggs, August 2008)

Opponents of the Rosemont project tell us the copper at Rosemont is not needed by our nation. They claim there are already enough mines to supply our needs. If this was true, why must the United States import approximately 35% of the copper we consume?

They tell us, our domestic producers can develop new mining projects elsewhere. But, if we are not permitted to mine at Rosemont, where do we mine copper in this nation? You can only mine copper from known deposits, where it is economically feasible to do so. Other proposals to develop new mines at Resolution Copper's project near Superior and Curis Resource's project in Florence are also seeing stiff opposition by local groups. The Pebble Copper project in Alaska and Eagle project in Michigan also have their critics.

The bottom line is, just about everywhere the natural resource industry proposes to develop a new mining operation in this nation, it encounters opposition from local groups as we are now experiencing in our community.

Do we just bow to these demands and halt development of all new domestic mining projects? If we accede to these demands, where do we acquire the minerals we consume? Do we import them from abroad? In light of our already enormous trade deficits, is it really wise to increase our dependence on foreign sources for the minerals we require to maintain our economic and national security? And how wise is it to leave our national security needs vulnerable to decisions made by foreign governments?

The average American consumes more mineral products than anyone else in the world. Don't we have a responsibility to produce at least some of the basic materials we consume?

Congressman Grijalva and Congressman Barber have requested the issuance of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision be delayed to ensure a complete review of the project. However, after six long years and more than 400 reports on virtually every aspect of this proposal, what needs to be reviewed that has not already been studied in excruciating detail? How much longer does this project need to be reviewed? Six months? One year? As long as it takes to kill the project? Congressman Grijalva, Congressman Barber, are the delays you have called for really in the spirit of our nation's laws, which you took an oath to uphold?

Opponents of the Rosemont Copper project argue we should not approve this project because its profits will go to Canada. But are profits the only benefits that will be received from mining copper at Rosemont? Profits from the Rosemont Copper project only represent a small fraction of the total cash flow that will be generated by this mining operation. Who will benefit from the cash flow generated by the Rosemont Copper project? Most of the cash flow will be spent here in America to pay the costs of running this mining operation. This will benefit both southeastern Arizona and our nation. As for Augusta Resource's profits, they will be distributed to its stockholders, which include many Americans.

Adversaries argue we will not benefit from the copper produced from Rosemont, because its copper concentrates will be shipped to Asia. Let me respond by asking; where do you get the

minerals you consume? Are they solely obtained from southeastern Arizona? Or are they derived from all over the world? Do foreigners benefit from selling us mineral products that are mined abroad?

I'm sure that everyone is aware the natural resources we use to maintain our basic way of life are not evenly distributed throughout the world. Regions that are blessed with an abundance of a particular commodity sell or trade it with other areas for commodities that are not available within their homeland and vice versa. It is trade that permits everyone access to the wide variety of mineral products, which are required to promote economic prosperity. In short, everyone benefits from the international trade of mineral products.

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.

Copyright (2013) by David F. Briggs. Reprint is permitted provided the credit of authorship is provided and linked back to the source.

Originally published by Wry Heat in the Tucson Citizen on September 16, 2013.