



Just Saying "No" is not a Viable Option

by David F. Briggs



I thank Mr. Featherstone for responding to my opinion piece of July 27th titled ["Just Saying No Does Not Solve the Challenges We Face as a Modern Society."](#) It is important the public has an opportunity to hear both sides of an issue that affects the quality of life we enjoy in southern Arizona.

In my article I examined discrepancies contained within the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition's mission statement that states it and its member

organizations work to ensure mining is done responsibly, but also contains numerous caveats that have enabled them to oppose virtually all mining.

Having worked with issues dealing with responsible mining for nearly a decade, I am very familiar with the activities of Mr. Featherstone and members of the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition. During this period I have never seen nor heard them offer a single constructive suggestion on how a proposed mining project's impacts could be minimized. To the contrary, they have always opposed all sorts of mining activities and vigorously worked to place as many obstacles in the way as possible regardless of efforts made to minimize its impacts.

The Arizona Mining Reform Coalition is an affiliate of Earthworks. [On March 21, 2013, Jennifer Krill, Executive Director of Earthworks testified before a Congressional Committee with regard to the Southeast Arizona Land Exchange and Conservation Act.](#) Her response to the question "has Earthworks ever endorsed or supported a mining operation in the United States" was "no."

Why doesn't the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition just admit they are opposed to all mining activities?

Mr. Featherstone's August 4th response "[Unless Mine Proposals Truly Protect Arizona, "No" is the Only Option,](#)" is just as ambiguous as their mission statement. In defending the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition, he continues to insist his organization is not opposed to mining. However, the remainder of his response is a litany of false and misleading reasons why they oppose the development of new mining projects that will help meet the needs of present and future generations of Americans. Not once did he answer how the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition is working with, not against mineral developers to ensure we are able to live life to the fullest while still protecting the environment.

Just saying "no" is not a viable option. It only obstructs pragmatic efforts by industry, government and other stakeholders to find realistic solutions for difficult issues related to mining's impact on the environment.

Mining companies are faced with increasing costs to continue exploring for the minerals so vitally needed by Americans and millions around the world, who would like to embrace the benefits of modern society we are blessed to enjoy. Many of the shallow, easily accessible mineral deposits in the United States were extracted long ago forcing explorationists to take substantial commercial and intellectual risks to look for more remote and inaccessible resources, including the deeply buried Resolution Copper deposit. The application of known and new technologies and mining practices by domestic producers helps to minimize social, cultural and environmental impacts as they meet the demand for mined products our nation requires to ensure its economic and national security.

The uncertainty of success in the face of huge technical challenges and the billions required to take on such large-scale endeavors require collaboration of some of the world's best experts and the largest companies. Nonetheless, foreign companies working here register their firms with the Arizona Corporation Commission, hire a dominantly American workforce who live in nearby communities, and follow the same health, safety, labor, and environmental laws as American-owned companies operating in Arizona.

Mining companies do not cast themselves as "benevolent keepers of the public trust" as suggested by Mr. Featherstone, but absolutely cannot flourish and grow without the public's trust as well as full governmental and social "license to operate." Modern development principles insist on full consideration of social, cultural, environmental, ethical, and economical aspects of any proposed action with the goal of lasting benefits to society. Professionals working for Arizona's mining industry have shown that commitment.

Disclaimer - David F. Briggs is a resident of Pima County and a geologist, who has worked in the mining industry for more than 35 years.

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