



## FOREST SERVICE MINERALS PROGRAM POLICY



**The Federal Government's policy for minerals resource management is expressed in the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970, "foster and encourage private enterprise in the development of economically sound and stable industries, and in the orderly and economic development of domestic resources to help assure satisfaction of industrial, security, and environmental needs." Within this context, the National Forests and Grasslands have an essential role in contributing to an adequate and stable supply of mineral and energy resources while continuing to sustain the land's productivity for other uses and its capability to support biodiversity goals.**

**OBJECTIVES.** Exploration, development, and production of mineral and energy resources and reclamation of activities are part of the Forest Service ecosystem management responsibility. The Forest Service will administer its minerals program to provide commodities for current and future generations commensurate with the need to sustain the long term health and biological diversity of ecosystems. Accordingly, the Forest Service will strive to:

- Ensure that exploration, development, and production of mineral and energy resources are conducted in an environmentally sensitive manner and that these activities are integrated with the planning and management of other resources using the principles of ecosystem management.
- Facilitate the orderly exploration, development, and production of mineral and energy resources within the National Forest System on lands open to these activities or on withdrawn lands consistent with valid existing rights.
- Maintain opportunities to access mineral and energy resources which are important to sustain viable rural economies and to contribute to the national defense and economic growth.
- Ensure that lands disturbed by mineral and energy activities, both past and present, are reclaimed using the best scientific knowledge and principles and returned to other productive uses.

**POLICY.** The Forest Service will administer its minerals program within the overall context of the principles of ecosystem management. Accordingly, the Forest Service will:

- Ensure that mineral-related activities are in accordance with our legal and regulatory authority.
- Coordinate and cooperate with other Federal and State agencies having authority and expertise in mineral-related activities.
- Coordinate and cooperate in a collaborative manner with interested public, industry, and community representatives. Foster partnerships with industry to increase knowledge of development potential of the mineral estate.
- Ensure the integration of mineral resource programs and activities with the planning and management of renewable resources through the land and resource management planning process, recognizing that mineral

development may occur concurrently or sequentially with other resource uses.

- Maintain an effective professional, technical, and managerial work force that is knowledgeable of (a) the geologic characteristics of mineral deposits, (b) the techniques of mineral exploration and development, (c) the principles of ecosystem management, and (d) mineral laws, regulations, policy, and guidance.
- Ensure that only certified mineral examiners perform investigations and prepare reports which require the examination of the mineral or geologic character of the land.
- Certify personnel who perform or oversee the analysis, review and administration of plans of operations for mineral and energy operations and their reclamation.
- Require reclamation plans for all proposed surface-disturbing activities to return the land to productive uses consistent with the ecological capability of the area and in accordance with land management goals.
- Process mineral applications, operating plans, leases, licenses, permits, and other use authorizations efficiently and in a timely manner. Deal with applicants and operators in accordance with the principles of customer service.
- Plan and provide for access to and occupancy of National Forest System lands for mineral resource activities, consistent with the overall management objectives and the rights granted through statutes, leases, licenses, and permits. Eliminate or prevent occupancy that is not reasonably incident to and required for the mineral operation.
- Ensure that mineral or energy activities conducted in congressionally-designated or other withdrawn areas are supported by valid existing rights.
- Prior to initiating the administrative withdrawal of National Forest System lands from mineral entry, ensure the full consideration of (a) the national interest in rural community development, (b) the value of the mineral resource foregone, (c) the value of the resource or improvement being protected, and (d) the risk that the renewable resources cannot be adequately protected pursuant to application of the Minerals Surface Use Regulations.
- Ensure private rights are respected in all resource management decisions.
- Ensure the uniform application of resource protection and reclamation standards for mineral-related exploration and development projects.

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