



## Critical Minerals

### Directive:

Within the House Report accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 (P.L. 118-42) the Forest Service received the following request:

*The Committee directs the Forest Service to coordinate with the Department of Defense and other cooperating agencies to ensure that priority is given to completing the review of critical mineral projects that support national security objectives. The Forest Service shall provide a report to the Committee, within 120 days of enactment of this Act, on projects that have been submitted, are under review, or are currently in production that would result in the production of any strategic mineral (as defined by section 3(a) of the Strategic and Critical Materials Stock Piling Act (50 U.S.C. 98b(a))).*

### Background:

The Forest Service is currently administering eight projects that have been submitted for review or are currently producing critical minerals. The text below provides NFS critical mineral projects sorted by their status.

### Coordination with Other Agencies

The Forest Service coordinates and partners with other agencies as part of its standard operating procedures, which helps prioritize environmental review and permitting processes. The Forest Service procedures include notifying agencies of the proposed action and seeking input from other agencies. Generally, the Forest Service leads permitting and review processes when critical mineral operations are proposed on National Forest System lands. As the lead agency, the Forest Service seeks cooperation and coordination with Federal, state, and local agencies through a Project Initiation Letter and scoping processes.

### Operational Projects

- *Region 1, Custer-Gallatin NF, Nye, Montana, Sibanye-Stillwater.* The Stillwater Mine is an operating mine producing platinum group metals and associated critical minerals.
- *Region 4, Salmon-Challis NF, Salmon, Idaho, Idaho Cobalt Project.* The Idaho Cobalt Project produces the critical mineral cobalt. In 2023, the operator paused production due to low commodity prices.
- *Region 5, Angeles NF, Acton, California, Acton Clay Quarries.* Acton Clay Quarries produces alumina, an oxide of the critical mineral aluminum.
- *Region 8, Ouachita NF, Bunker, Missouri, Doe Run Mine.* The Doe Run Mine produces the critical mineral zinc.

- *Region 10, Tongass NF, Juneau, Alaska, Hecla-Greens Creek mine.* The Greens Creek Mine is an operating mine producing the critical mineral zinc.

### **Projects Under Review**

- *Region 3, Coronado NF, Tucson, Arizona, Hermosa-South32.* Hermosa-South32 submitted its Plan of Operations in August 2023, and the Forest Service is currently performing its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis through the FAST-41 process. Hermosa-South32 will produce critical minerals manganese and zinc.
- *Region 4, Payette NF, Yellow Pine, Idaho. Stibnite Gold Project.* The Stibnite Gold Project is currently under review. Operations will produce the critical and strategic mineral antimony.

### **Projects Submitted**

- *Region 2, Black Hills NF, Custer, South Dakota, Rochford Graphite Exploration Drilling* Rochford Graphite Exploration Drilling has submitted a proposal for exploration drilling for the critical mineral graphite. The proposal is currently under review to ensure completeness prior to initiating the NEPA process.