



## Locatable Minerals



# Uranium

**Uranium** – Uraninite, the black oxide mineral of uranium, was first discovered in 1871, in the gold and quartz veins of the Wood Mine near Central City, Colorado. Ten years later a yellow uranium oxide mineral (carnotite) was discovered in south-west Colorado on Roc Creek in Montrose County. This original discovery was responsible for the development of the highly productive Uravan mining district near the Utah border. Colorado experienced six boom and bust periods of uranium (and associated minerals) production during the twentieth century: 1) Radium boom of the 1910s; 2) Vanadium boom of the 1930s-1940s; 3) Uranium boom of the 1940s – related to WWII weapons manufacture; 4) Uranium boom of the 1950s - 1970s; 5) decline from the 1970s to 1990s, and 6) a resurgence starting in 2003.

Today, the United States is the world's leader in nuclear energy production and usage. On average, the world requires 66,500 tons of uranium per year to fuel its 439 nuclear reactors; however, in 2005, the worldwide production was only 41,600 tons. The U.S. produced a mere 1,700 tons of uranium in 2006, while the average consumption was approximately 19,000 tons in 2008. This discrepancy required the U.S. to import more than 90 percent of its uranium for domestic use. As a result, Colorado's deposits of uranium have become increasingly more important for the nation.

Uranium is produced primarily for power generation. In the future, nuclear power could be crucial in order to complete a diverse energy portfolio for the nation. Other uses for uranium include: military applications, vacuum capacitors, glazes, and glass production.



Bureau of Land Management  
Royal Gorge Field Office  
Canon City, CO  
(719) 269-8500