

Solid Minerals



Background Information

The Royal Gorge Field Office (RGFO) contains many different types of solid minerals that are used in energy, manufacturing, and construction sectors to meet regional, national, and even worldwide demands. Resource management objectives are centered on the promotion of an adequate and stable supply of materials necessary to maintain national security, economic well-being, and industrial production with appropriate attention to a long-term balance between resource production, energy use, a healthy environment, natural resources conservation, and social needs.

Solid mineral resources are broken down into mineral materials, solid leasable minerals, and locatable minerals. Mineral materials include common variety sand, stone, gravel, pumice, pumicite, clay, rock, and petrified wood. Mineral materials are available through a series of competitive and noncompetitive sales and by free use permits to government agencies and nonprofit organizations in limited quantities. Current operations mostly consist of construction aggregate, decorative stone, building stone, and clay.



Solid leasable minerals include coal, phosphate, and sodium resources as designated by the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920. Solid leasable minerals within the RGFO include coal resources managed in the Denver and Raton Basin Coal regions. Additionally, the RGFO is processing a lease by application for coal resources and an application for exploration for coal resources, both located west of Trinidad, Colorado.

Locatable mineral development on public lands is authorized under the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, and regulated under 43 CFR 3809. Locatable mineral activity within the RGFO is broken down into casual use, notice level, and plan level operations. Exploration and mining operations currently conducted within RGFO involve gold, uranium, and amethyst.

Potential Decisions:

Solid mineral planning as part of the Eastern Colorado RMP/EIS may:

- Examine Areas of Critical Environmental Concern to understand mineral potential throughout these areas and determine where or if locatable mineral withdrawals are needed
- Identify lands to be open or closed to solid mineral development based on mineral potential and other resource needs
- Update the coal screening process used to determine areas to be further considered for leasing based on changes in land tenure and mineral potential

Planning Issues:

- Which parts of the planning area are appropriate for locatable mineral entry and locatable mineral exploration and/or development? Which are not? Why?
- Which areas in the planning area are appropriate for mineral material disposal? Which are not? Why?
- Which areas in the planning area are appropriate for coal and non-energy leasable mineral exploration and/or development? Which are not? Why?
- What considerations should BLM address in management of new technology, such as solution mining?
- How can the BLM better coordinate with other entities such as the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety on mineral exploration or development projects to determine mitigation and reclamation requirements and increase efficiency when administering multiple sets of regulations?

Tell Us What You Think!

If you have input on these topics, please share it with us in a scoping comment.

1. How can the BLM balance extraction of solid mineral resource supplies to meet current and future needs with protection of other resources?
2. What best management practices and mitigation measures may be needed for solid mineral decisions?
3. Can you recommend sources of information that should be used in the RMP/EIS?

Please submit your comments and other information via email to ECRMP.comments@blm.gov