

Rich Nolan
President & CEO

July 21, 2025

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

On behalf of the National Mining Association (NMA), I am writing to urge the committee to pursue reforms of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. These reforms are needed to enhance the United States' economic competitiveness and advance our national security objectives.

For decades, the U.S. has faced increasingly significant challenges to permit and approve projects that provide the minerals, raw materials and energy resources needed for nearly every sector of our economy. From the mining industry's perspective, an inefficient NEPA process is a primary contributor to the lengthy and unpredictable process that discourages the capital investments required for energy and mineral exploration and mine development. It takes an average of 29 years to bring a mine online in the United States.¹ This is a glaring strategic vulnerability of our own creation.

Clearly an inefficient NEPA process presents a major barrier to the domestic mining sector's ability to perform to its full potential and meet more of our energy, manufacturing, national security and infrastructure needs. These delays have real consequences. On average, a typical mining project loses more than one-third of its economic value as a result of protracted delays in receiving the numerous permits needed to begin production.² The longer the wait, the more the value of the investment is eroded, even to the extent that the project ultimately becomes an unviable investment. Even a large, high-grade deposit will remain unmined if the balance between costs, revenue and timetable are not favorable.

¹ S&P Global, "United States Ranks Next to Last in Development Time for New Mines that Produce Critical Minerals for Energy Transition," July 18, 2024. <https://press.spglobal.com/2024-07-18-United-States-Ranks-Next-to-Last-in-Development-Time-for-New-Mines-that-Produce-Critical-Minerals-for-Energy-Transition,-S-P-Global-Finds>

² SNL Metals & Mining, Permitting, Economic Value and Mining in the United States, June 2015.

Change is needed to make the permit process for mining projects, including the NEPA component, more efficient and timely. Reducing delays and duplication caused by NEPA analyses would benefit not only project proponents, but also federal, state and local governments as well as the public by producing revenue-generating outcomes while saving time and money for the agencies conducting reviews.

We must strike a balance between ensuring environmental protections and allowing important projects that drive the United States' economy to move forward. Further, it helps our country to compete on a global scale in a responsible manner. The NMA and its members look forward to working with the committee to advance responsible NEPA reforms that are long overdue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rich Nolan', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rich Nolan