Today, the subcommittee meets to discuss the importance of mining raw materials for utilization in a variety of infrastructure projects.

From rocks to roads, rare earths to green technologies, and iron ore to wind farm, all infrastructure projects rely upon a mining operation. The diversity of the nation's mineral endowment allows for the U.S. to be self-sufficient, yet domestic production of solid mineral resources is stymied by an arduous and uncertain regulatory scheme.

Aggregates such as crushed stone, sand, and gravel are the literal foundation of many of our infrastructure projects. Quarries are ubiquitous throughout the nation given the limited proximity that they can serve economically. This important industry accounts for over 100,000 direct jobs and 380,000 indirect jobs

The indirect jobs not only include equipment and mining machinery manufacturers, but also jobs involved in

distributing and maintaining that equipment. We are fortunate to have witnesses today from both the direct and indirect side of the aggregate mining workforce, and I look forward to hearing their perspectives.

Now let's take a look at copper, a mineral commodity for which the U.S. produces and has significant reserves and resources, yet we still import 31 percent of what our society needs. Copper is also a crucial component in renewable energy and alternative-fuel vehicles. A Hybrid vehicle requires twice as much copper as a vehicle that runs on gasoline. At 165 lbs. of copper per vehicle, the electric car requires almost three times as much.

Demand for copper is projected to outstrip supply sometime after 2017, with a deficit increasing to 10 million tons by 2028.

Currently, the average timeline from discovery to production is 20 years for large copper deposits. Worldwide, there are

not enough large copper prospects in the pipeline to address the supply shortfall that is projected in the near future. We can talk about the years of environmental studies, permitting, bonding, and stakeholder engagement, both at the state and federal level. In some cases, the time required to obtain a permit can be a decades-long process. . In comparison, mine projects in Canada and Australia can obtain the necessary permits in two to three years without limiting environmental protections.

The witnesses before us today fully recognize the need for environmentally sound mining practices. The permitting process is the means by which this is ensured. However, the prolonged and misguided permitting regime is a logical, and intended, outcome derived from the fear of legal challenges to the permitting agencies' Records of Decisions and permits by anti-mining groups.

It's one thing to invest considerable capital and time in insuring that environmental stewardship is preserved, but

it's another to go through the entire process only to face automatic legal challenges for which the mining companies cannot be ensured their voices are heard in court. The delays, and more importantly, the uncertainties in obtaining the necessary permits for exploration and development drive investments away from the United States.

Delays in obtaining the various permits required for mine construction and production results in a project's loss in value. This affects the economics of a given deposit and a company's ability to maximize the quantity of the resource they're able to recover. In other words, artificial delays in a mining project results in the unethical squandering of the nation's resources. How is that ensuring a fair return to the taxpayer?

Expedited permitting regimes for infrastructure projects will have little to no effect if the mines that supply materials to those projects do not share the same accelerated process.

Sourcing raw materials domestically keeps costs down, creates both direct and indirect jobs, reduces the holistic impact of mining by minimizing transportation costs, and keeps the dollars invested in American infrastructure in the United States.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here and look forward to hearing from them today.