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This Week in COVID-19 News

A positive surprise on the jobs front was offset by news that COVID-19 cases are on the increase in some locations. The National Mining Association (NMA) remains focused on recovery policies in various stages of development across all branches of government, and our messaging continues to position mining as key to U.S. economic recovery – essential for any infrastructure project, strengthening our domestic supply chains, and providing reliable power for American households and industry. Efforts include public communications regarding the essential nature of mining, safety actions taken by our members and contributions being made by NMA member companies. Plus we have updates on both the crisis and its impact on energy and mining markets.

SAFETY SHARE: Many of us are adapting to new ways of working. The National Safety Council has a great infographic on the [myth versus reality of multitasking](#).

Expediting Infrastructure Permitting

President Donald Trump on June 4, 2020, issued Executive Order 13927, “Accelerating the Nation’s Economic Recovery from the COVID-19 Emergency by [Expediting Infrastructure Investments and Other Activities](#).” The NMA [welcomed the renewed focus](#) on reducing permitting delays as a means to get Americans back to work and jumpstart the economy. Rich Nolan and NMA were quoted in stories from [NPR](#), [Roll Call](#), [Reuters](#), [Oil and Gas 360](#), [KFGO](#), [The Epoch Times](#), [Hellenic Shipping News](#), [The Salt Lake Tribune](#) and many other outlets.

Building upon the President’s declaration of COVID-19 as a national emergency, the order authorizes agencies to invoke their emergency authorities to expedite infrastructure project approvals required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The order directs the Secretaries of Transportation, Defense and Interior to identify projects that may merit accelerated approval under departmental emergency regulations within 30 days of the date of the order. It further requires all agency heads to look at NEPA emergency procedures and other NEPA regulatory provisions (e.g., categorical exclusions and use of already completed NEPA analyses) to facilitate permitting of infrastructure projects and provide a list of potential projects to the Council on Environmental Quality within 30 days. Updated reports are required every 30 days.

Not unexpectedly, environmental groups have already announced strong opposition to the order as well as plans to litigate any projects approved pursuant to its provisions. One group, the Center for Biological Diversity, on June 9, 2020, filed a 60-day [notice of intent to sue](#) to challenge the order directly on ESA grounds.

Further PPP Loan Flexibility Signed into Law

The U.S. Senate on June 3, 2020, passed H.R. 7010, the [Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act](#) of 2020 on a voice vote and President Trump signed the measure into law

two days later. The bill, which earlier passed the House by a vote of 417-1, allows a longer term for the forgiveness of PPP loans (24 weeks or until the end of the calendar year) and allows for five years to repay any money owed. The measure also provides greater flexibility in the spending of funds received. It did not provide any new funding for the program. According to the [latest reporting](#) from the U.S. Small Business Administration, the fund has disbursed \$510 billion of the \$659 billion appropriated in two prior rounds of funding.

On Monday, the SBA and U.S. Treasury issued a [joint statement](#) confirming changes made to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) through the recent legislation. In addition to the change to make funding available for 24 weeks instead of 8 weeks, the new joint statement discussed the reduction from a prior requirement that 75 percent of a borrower's loan proceeds must be used for payroll costs. The new requirement is that a borrower use at least 60 percent of their PPP loan for payroll costs during the new 24-week loan forgiveness period. Additionally, if a borrower uses less than 60 percent of the loan amount for payroll costs during the covered period, the joint statement clarifies that the borrower will nonetheless be eligible for partial loan forgiveness, subject to at least 60 percent of the loan forgiveness amount having been used for payroll costs. Additional changes include a safe harbor for loan forgiveness for borrowers unable to return to the same level of business activity the business was operating at before February 2020, due to compliance with federal requirements.

Finally, the new rules will confirm that June 30, 2020, remains the last date on which a PPP loan application can be approved.

Federal Reserve Main Street Lending Program Expands Loan Eligibility

The Federal Reserve Board announced Monday it is expanding its [Main Street Lending Program](#) to allow more small and medium-sized businesses to be able to receive support. The new changes lower the minimum loan amount from \$500,000 to \$250,000 and raise the maximum loan amount from \$200 million to \$300 million. The new changes

also include extending the repayment period from four years to five years and provide that borrowers are not obligated to make principal payments for the first two years. The Fed will take on even more risk by increasing the portion of certain loans it buys from banks from 85 percent to 95 percent. These changes are the latest incentives to encourage participation. While loan applications are not yet being accepted, detailed information on the scope of the program [is available](#).

NMA and Third-Party Voices

The NMA and its third-parties continue to place editorials across the country on the importance of our industry to the country and economy.

On the third-party front, [Salem News](#) (OH), [Lisbon Morning Journal](#) (OH) and [East Liverpool Review](#) (OH) carry an op-ed by Matthew Kandrach, president of Consumer Action for a Strong Economy (CASE), in which he advocates for affordable energy made possible by coal-fueled power plants to weather the current crisis.

[The Detroit News](#) (MI) carries an op-ed by Mark J. Perry, scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, in which he compares the reliability of coal power with renewable energy like wind.

Virus and Virus Response Updates

The U.S. International Development Finance Corporation issued guidelines and began receiving applications for [Defense Production Act loans](#). The loan program resulted from a May 14, 2020, [Executive Order](#) by President Trump seeking to re-shore domestic production of strategic resources needed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and to strengthen any relevant domestic supply chains. The Federal Reserve also expanded its [municipal bond purchasing program](#) to smaller cities and counties.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced it will [temporarily allow](#) a certain

amount of impurities in alcohol-based sanitizers to keep them accessible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A new study finds physical distancing measures effective in limiting the spread of COVID-19. Specifically, it found transmission was significantly lower with physical distancing of 1 m or more, with the use of face masks and eye protection also providing substantial transmission reductions.

Economic Impact

The **Harvard Business Review** explains why accurate economic forecasting is hard to do amid the pandemic.

The U.S. Department of Labor reported employers **added 2.5 million jobs in May** and the unemployment rate fell to 13.3 percent. The White House Council of Economic Advisers said “the labor market’s **comeback has begun.**”

The **construction industry** added 464,000 net new jobs in May, the largest monthly increase on record.

The number of travelers passing through Transportation Security Administration checkpoints has **begun to increase** and rideshare service Lyft reported a **26 percent increase** in rides on its platform in May compared with April.

The National Bureau of Economic Research said that the economy hit its peak in February and has officially **entered a recession.**

The World Bank predicted global gross domestic product will probably **shrink 5.2 percent** in 2020.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the **federal deficit** in May was \$424 billion, lower than April's \$738 billion but still the second-largest monthly shortfall on record.

The U.S. Census Bureau reported exports and imports [declined sharply](#) during April.

Energy and Mining COVID-19 Impact News

The [Silver Institute's](#) latest report, prepared by CRU on silver use trends in solar energy, forecasts silver solar PV demand to average 70 - 80 million ounces annually between 2020 and 2030.

The International Wrought Copper Council's recent [short-term copper forecast](#) predicts that the world copper market will be in surplus by 285,000 metric tons this year as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, with the overhang rising to 675,000 metric tons in 2021.

The World Steel Association's [June short-term outlook](#) predicts that steel demand will recover in 2021 to 1,717 million metric tons, an increase of 3.8 percent over 2020.

NMA COVID-19 Resources

The NMA team is maintaining a comprehensive suite of online resources for [Coronavirus Assistance and Response](#). Resources include both [health, safety and business assistance](#) for NMA members and a chronicle of the American [mining industry's response to the current crisis](#).

Tell Us About Your COVID-19 Response

We are continually gathering information about how the COVID-19 crisis is affecting our members. Information will be used in discussions with policymakers and decision makers at all levels of government and will help illustrate how mining is giving back to the communities where we live and work. Please [contact Ashley Burke](#) with on-going

accounts of your responses to the global pandemic.

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