

[View this email in your browser](#)



COVID-19 UPDATE



Issue 20 - August 19, 2020

This Week in COVID-19 News

With the Democratic National Convention underway virtually and the Republican Convention queued up for next week, much of the national focus remains on COVID-19 and its impact on the November elections. The National Mining Association (NMA) remains engaged with the campaigns and all branches of government working to ensure that mining's interests are considered. Our 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 the economy and how energy and mining markets are trying to recover.

Safety Share

[The Centers for Disease Control](#) updated guidance on increasing evidence of post-infection immunity, clarifying, while people can continue to test positive for up to three months after diagnosis with COVID-19 and not be infectious to others, it does not imply a person is immune to reinfection.

NMA Welcomes Solicitor Opinion Clarifying Mining Rights Under the Mining Law

In an action long-advocated by NMA at several high-level meetings with the Department of the Interior (DOI), the department this week issued a new solicitor's [opinion](#) providing further clarity regarding rights conveyed by the Mining Law to owners of unpatented claims. Without such security of tenure including the right to use lands for purposes reasonably incidental to mining, mining companies will be unable to attract the capital necessary to invest in projects on federal lands. While NMA believes that these rights are unquestionably provided by the Act, NMA nonetheless urged the department to more clearly articulate the legal principles supporting its long-standing interpretation. The additional clarity was needed to address a fatally flawed 2018 federal court decision vacating the Rosemont Copper Mine's mine permit that undermined a century of legal precedent. Not only will the opinion be useful in preventing future similar misconstruction by courts, it reaffirms previous solicitor opinions issued in the early 2000s that were necessary to undo the harm imposed by former Solicitor John Leshy's opinions on ancillary use and millsites, both of which were designed to make the Mining Law unworkable.

NMA Leads Coalition to Support Waterway Infrastructure Investments

This week, the NMA [led a continued effort](#) to support bipartisan infrastructure provisions in the House Water Resources Development Act and Senate American Water Infrastructure Act. Joined by the American Petroleum Institute, the American Chemistry Council, the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers, the International Liquid

Terminals Association, the National Stone Sand and Gravel Association, and the Industrial Minerals Association – North America, the NMA advocated for ensuring additional funding in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund is only used for harbor maintenance projects to address long-overdue maintenance to support safe and efficient navigation across the U.S. and to maintain changes to the cost-share fees received for the Inland Waterway Trust Fund to allow more trust fund dollars to flow to necessary inland waterway projects. The Water Resources Development Act may be one of the only infrastructure bills which Congress expects to pass this year, and staff for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and Senate Environment and Public Works Committee are working to reconcile both chambers' versions of this legislation.

NMA Leads Coalition to Support Mineral Production Legislation

This week, the NMA [led a coalition of organizations](#) including the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, National Association of Manufacturers, Agricultural Retailers Association, The Fertilizer Institute, and multiple mineral production and research organizations to strongly support provisions which would modernize U.S. domestic mineral policies including in the [U.S. Senate introduced HEALS Act](#). The coalition represents a consortium of miners, processors, scientists, manufacturers, agriculture, and other industries across the U.S. who rely on and are concerned about the entire mineral supply chain serving the nation's needs. The coalition stressed to Congressional leadership that mineral supply chain challenges remain pressing, and the failure to address them jeopardizes the nation's ability to compete and innovate in the future.

Senate Republicans Introduce New COVID-19 Relief “Skinny Bill”

Yesterday, Senate Republican leadership circulated its [new proposal](#) addressing COVID-19 assistance. It includes an extension of the Paycheck Protection Program, an extension of federal unemployment benefits at \$300 per week, and a Senate Republican proposal

addressing liability protections for businesses, schools, and other entities. The proposal included additional federal funding testing and vaccines, education funding, and \$10 billion fund for the United States Postal Service.

SBA Warns Against CARES Act Fraud

The Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Inspector General published an [alert about potential fraud schemes](#) related to economic stimulus programs. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), the largest financial assistance bill to date, includes provisions to help small businesses. Fraudsters have already begun targeting small business owners. SBA provided background on grant fraud, loan fraud, and phishing tactics to watch out for.

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.

[Forbes](#) (NY) carries an op-ed by Jude Clemente in which he warns against the dangers of our import reliance for minerals as we grow new industries such as the electric car and clean energy industries.

The [Omaha World-Herald](#) (NE) carries an op-ed by Barry Butterfield, a retired engineer and member emeritus of the American Nuclear Society, in which he argues against energy subsidies that are pushing conventional power plants into premature retirement.

The [Buffalo News](#) (NY), [Lansing State Journal](#) (MI), [Johnstown Tribune Democrat](#) (PA) and [MSN.com](#) (USA) carry an op-ed by Matthew Kandrach, the president of Consumer Action for a Strong Economy (CASE), in which he argues that we must support coal to keep energy affordable for the sake of Americans struggling with household bills.

Economic Impact

Retail sales rose 1.2 percent in July, returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Measurements of consumer sentiment heading into August remained weak, however.

New weekly unemployment claims fell below one million for the first time since March.

American Road and Transportation Builders Association reported highway construction employment continued to increase in June.

Mining and Energy News

GlobalData's recent analysis indicates that “after a flat first quarter of 2020, the total value of mining deals – including mergers and acquisitions (M&A), capital raising and asset transactions – declined by US \$5.3bn to US \$20.6bn in Q2 2020.”

Mining.com reports that platinum, copper, nickel and phosphorous metal alloys may be the key for smart biomedical devices.

The Energy Information Agency's uranium production data for the 2nd quarter, released last Wednesday, contained production tonnage levels so low the agency was not able to release the figures to the public in order to maintain company confidentiality.

S&P Global reported “U.S. coal production and employment took a nosedive in the second quarter as the COVID-19 pandemic delivered a significant blow to demand” while the U.S. Energy Information Administration raised its estimate of 2020 coal production slightly, but the total remains at a 57-year low. The EIA also reported coal stockpiles have steadily increased since reaching their lowest level in a decade in 2019.

At the same time, recent heatwaves are having their impact on demand with Argus Media

reporting that sustained hot temperatures in Texas are driving coal-based generation demand in the Electric Reliability Council of Texas region to record levels. Up to 4 million Californians were hit by “[load interruptions](#)” after power reserves fell below a critical threshold, with rolling blackouts [extending into a second day](#) due to the state’s heavy reliance on intermittent sources of power.

[The Department of Energy](#) has selected one additional project to receive approximately \$1.5 million in federal funding for cost-shared research and development (*Crosscutting Research for Coal-Fueled Power Plants*).

[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 ongoing accounts of your responses to the global pandemic.

Copyright © 2020 NATIONAL MINING ASSOCIATION, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

