

Department of the Interior finalizes list of critical minerals

May 18, 2018

On May 18, the Department of the Interior (DOI) released the final version of the Critical Minerals List (83 FR 23295) in accordance with Executive Order (EO) 13817. Among other directives, the EO directed the Secretary of the Interior, in coordination with the Secretary of Defense and in consultation with the heads of other relevant agencies, to publish a list of critical minerals in the Federal Register. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) compiled the list using the methodology described in USGS Open-File Report 2018-1021 and the list was submitted for public comment on February 16 (83 FR 7065).

After reviewing 453 comments, the final list is unchanged from the 35 minerals first proposed in the February draft. The comments included 147 requests to add a total of 13 minerals to the list, with seven minerals (copper, silver, nickel, gold, zinc, molybdenum and lead) each receiving over 10 requests for addition to the list. There were 183 requests to delete one mineral (uranium) from the list, largely based on arguments that its primary use as an energy source rather than a non-fuel mineral would preclude its inclusion as a critical mineral as defined in EO 13817. DOI indicated that the list of critical minerals, while “final,” is not a permanent list, but will be dynamic and updated periodically to reflect current data on supply, demand, and concentration of production, as well as current policy priorities.

Now, the Department of Commerce is responsible for organizing the interagency responses into a final report for mid-August. The report shall include a strategy to reduce the Nation’s reliance on critical minerals by addressing many issues related to critical minerals: status of recycling and reprocessing technologies or technological alternatives to critical minerals; options for accessing critical minerals through investment and trade with allies and partners; recommendations to streamline permitting and review processes related to developing leases; enhancing access to critical mineral resources; increasing domestic discovery, production, and refining of critical minerals; and a plan to improve topographic, geologic, and geophysical mapping of the United States and make the resulting data and metadata electronically accessible.

The minerals on the final list are:

- aluminum (bauxite)
- antimony
- arsenic
- barite
- beryllium
- bismuth
- cesium
- chromium
- cobalt
- fluorspar
- gallium
- germanium
- graphite (natural)
- hafnium
- helium
- indium
- lithium
- magnesium
- manganese
- niobium

- platinum group metals
- potash
- rare earth elements
- rhenium
- rubidium
- scandium
- strontium
- tantalum
- tellurium
- tin
- titanium
- tungsten
- uranium
- vanadium
- zirconium

Sources: Federal Register; U.S. Department of the Interior; U.S. Geological Survey.
