



4220 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22302-1502
703-379-2480;
Fax: 703-379-7563
www.agiweb.org

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Contact: Megan Sever
msever@earthmagazine.org

EARTH: Is There Really a Minerals Crisis?

Alexandria, VA – China sent the high-tech industry and markets reeling last fall when it blocked exports of raw rare earth minerals to Japan, Europe and the U.S. The sudden severing of rare earths supply was a frightening prospect as the minerals are key ingredients in a broad range of high-tech products, from smartphones to wind turbines and hybrid cars. Although the bans have since been lifted, governments around the world saw the ban as a kind of wake-up call and started looking at ways to develop their own mineral resources — for rare earths as well as basic industry metals like copper and zinc.

As EARTH explores in “Is There Really a Minerals Crisis?” in the August issue, the rare earths scare of last fall prompted scientists from academia, government and industry alike to reconsider the question of the world’s supply of minerals in general — and how governments should, going forward, invest in new exploration. At issue, economic geologists argue, is not whether the geological reserves of these minerals exist. Instead, they say, any shortages have more to do with ongoing sociological and political impediments to minerals exploration and mining.

Read how Europe and other parts of the world are trying to surmount the sociological and political issues surrounding mining. Plus, learn about other topics such as what scientists are finding in mysterious sinkholes beneath the Great Lakes, how the Large Hadron Collider is answering long-standing theoretical physics questions, and how natural gas fracking is affecting well water in the August issue. And don’t miss the cover stories about traveling to Australia and New Zealand.

These stories and many more can be found in the August issue of EARTH, now available digitally (<http://www.earthmagazine.org/digital/>) or in print on your local newsstands.

For further information on the August featured article, go to <http://www.earthmagazine.org/earth/article/45f-7db-7-8> .

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