Mineral Resources of Illinois

Production and Use

Illinois is a major mineral* producing state. In 1999, Illinois ranked No. 1 nationally in the production of industrial sand and tripoli, No. 3 in the production of peat, No. 5 in the production of Fullers Earth, No. 8 in the production of crushed stone, No. 9 in the production of construction sand and gravel, No. 14 in the production of oil and No. 5 in the production of coal.

Mining contributes significantly to our economy, provides employment and helps us maintain our high standard of living. Every year, 48,000 pounds of various minerals must be provided for every person in the United States just to maintain this standard of living.

The presence of usable minerals in Illinois is a function of its geology. This document will discuss the interrelationship of this geology to mining operations and the resultant impact on our economy and standard of living. The main purpose of this document is to help you relate each significant Illinois mineral with its ultimate commercial use.

The land surface over most of Illinois was formed by glacial activity during the "Ice Age", referred to by geologists as the Pleistocene Epoch, which began about 1.6 million years ago. The movement of the glaciers and subsequent melt water runoff and windblown dusts resulted in large deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel, many of which are actively mined. However, it is the older rock layers beneath the surface, or exposed at or near the surface in non-glaciated areas, that produce the most economically important minerals in Illinois. Layers of coal, limestone and sandstone found in these rocks are mined to depths of nearly 1,000 feet.

This document will also discuss some interesting geologic phenomenon occurring in Illinois, such as "pyrite suns" and geodes, which are not mined commercially, but are worthy of mention nevertheless.

*[Note: The term mineral is used in a generic sense. When we refer to industrial minerals, we generally include materials that are technically rocks - such as limestone, dolomite, shale - and also coal and oil that are in fact organic substances.]

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Commercial Mining In Illinois - Index

Illinois Mining is Close to Home
A poster showing how Illinois mining affects our everyday lives

Clay
Describes the character and mining processes of this versatile mineral

Coal
Outlines the mining and formation of this mineral used for electric generation

Fluorite
Learn about this mineral that was once mined in Illinois

Industrial Sand
See how and where this foundry and glass industry staple is mined

Lead and Zinc
Describes northwestern Illinois' once thriving industry

Limestone
Illinois' most valuable mineral resource is depicted here

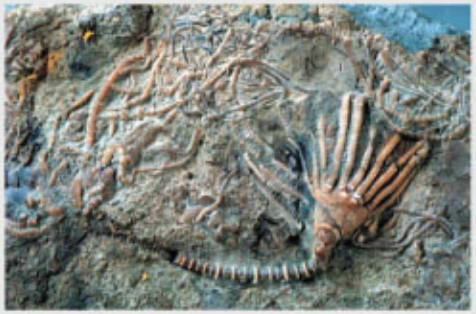
Peat
Learn about the mining and uses of these recently deposited materials

Oil
See how and where Illinois' oil is extracted

Sand and Gravel
Outlines the mining and usage of this glacially deposited mineral

Tripoli
Learn about Illinois' rich deposits of this useful mineral

Illinois' Geologic Phenomenon - Index



Fossils

Find out where Illinois' fossils can be found as well as other information about Illinois' oldest inhabitants including the Tully Monster, our State Fossil

Geodes

Learn about Illinois' "little treasure chests" including the geode rich area of the state and the debate on their formation

Pyrite Suns

Also known as miner's dollars, find out where these features were found and learn about their chemical makeup