Easing environmental regulations for mining and processing and providing companies easier access to the wilderness is not the answer to increasing domestic production of strategic minerals to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign suppliers, says an article in the July-August edition of Sierra Magazine.

According to Carol Polsgrove, author of the article "Strategic Minerals, Reality and Ruse," a better approach to reducing U.S. imports of critical minerals is to work on developing substitute alloys, conservation measures and recycling systems.

"For some of the most critical minerals, it is unlikely that either economic incentives or opening of large areas of government lands to conventional exploration and mining can insure a stable supply," said Polsgrove. "The truth is that the mining industry has exaggerated the strategic minerals problem as one more ploy to help it pursue private profits at public expense, and to fight the environmental movement."

Chuck Herbert, former president of the Resource Development Council and noted Alaska mining consultant, pointed out the conclusion of a well-balanced series of articles on minerals in the Christian Science Monitor which said "U.S. reliance on imported strategic raw minerals, often from politically unstable areas, is as risky as dependence on imported oil was in the 1970's."

Herbert stressed that "unless memories of the petroleum shortages and inflation-producing oil price hikes of the 1970s are very short, intelligent readers will listen to the Christian Science Monitor's warning of risk, rather than endorse the Sierra Club's fears of "private profit." Herbert continued, "the truth is that the U.S. mining industry, consistently over the years, has been less profitable than manufacturing."

Herbert, a former Alaska commissioner of Natural Resources, said profits are further reduced by huge investments in environmental-dictated pollution abatement measures, which have "so shrunk the capital needed for plant replacement and expansion that many economists warn that dependence on imports will be aggravated."

U.S. demand for mineral raw materials, equal to about one-third of the world's supply, will face stiff competition from both economic and political forces, Herbert predicts. Pointing out that this is not a new alarm, Herbert said that even before President Kennedy's lament over diminishing economic and political freedom caused by mineral import dependence, Russian Major General Lagovskiy advised his nation to exploit the U.S. dependence. The communist-inspired attack by Angola in 1978 on the world's most important source of cobalt shows that the General's advice is not forgotten, said Herbert.

Citing that it is not only the unfriendly or unstable nations that may tax advantage of American weakness in mineral supplies, Herbert said several oil refineries in the Midwest were threatened with extinction by a proposed cut-off in Canadian oil supplies.

Nor does the U.S. have a clean record in raw materials trade, Herbert added, as "in the past we have damaged our friends with severe export restrictions on uranium, copper and soy beans."

The mining consultant said the Sierra Club is correct in urging more recycling of metals to conserve supplies and energy. "Hopefully, the club will use its demonstrated clout to improve freight rates and regulations that now burden the producers of recycled metals."

However, recycling of some metals, largely those that are essential to many steel alloys, is very difficult, Herbert explained. "Even their identification during the sorting of scrap metal is often impossible."

Conservation, substitution and recycling will become more necessary but they cannot close or even reduce the gap between domestic use and domestic availability of many metals, Herbert said. Since U.S. production cannot provide all of the mineral raw materials required in this complex industrialized society, "we must rely on trade and that reliance dictates that we be in a strong trading position," said Herbert. Proven domestic mineral reserves are insurance against threats of embargoes and insufferable price escalations, he added.

"The environmentalists deliberately weaken our trading position by locking vast areas with unknown and untested mineral potential in parks, wilderness and refuges," Herbert stated. "The Sierra Club would deny us even the right to know what we might have as weapons to meet the coming trade war for mineral supplies."
Those of us who share a deep concern over our nation's reliance on politically unpredictable sources for petroleum and minerals have a battle on our hands with those who want less domestic development. We believe a sudden cutoff of either resource would have a chaotic effect on our economy. If all the federal land which contains these resources were to be closed to development for a sudden 50 years, it would make little sense to lock up vast wilderness areas when a small portion could be carefully mined and the wildlife characteristics retained. If an environmental group decided that minerals in a particular area could not be extracted without greater damage to the land than the benefits of extraction, the group would simply be required to make improvements on an equivalent amount of land that had been damaged by previous activities. Conservationists could thus add to their stock by using their pool of voluntary labor to repair land damaged by primitive mining techniques.

While this explanation of the Center's proposal gives you only an idea of its approach, it is a unique means of saving wilderness that you may wish to explore further. A request from you will bring more-in-depth information. What do you think about this?
Borax To Begin Road Construction  
Continued from page 3
Finney said he doesn't expect any delay in construction, although environmentalists have threatened to protest the EIS decision. "My feeling is that the process has been followed closely and carefully," he said.
In an update briefing of U.S. Borax activities at Quartz Hill before an RDC breakfast meeting audience last month, Finney said construction of mine facilities could begin in 1984 with operation in 1987. However, due to current market conditions, he reported that Borax may only produce about 40,000 tons daily in the early years of the project. He added, however, that economists are predicting a world shortage of molybdenum by 1990.
An Environment Review Team organized by RDC selected the Blossom route as its preferred route some months ago. RDC was surprised that its lengthy review and analysis was excluded from the Final Environmental Impact Statement, but, said the Council's executive director, "It's not the first time our comments have been ignored by a government agency in the EIS process and I doubt it will be the last."

Borax Readies for Blossom Road Construction
U.S. Borax has received the go-ahead to use the Blossom River route to its molybdenum mine at Quartz Hill 45 miles from Ketchikan for road access and bulk sampling. The U.S. Forest Service issued its ruling in a final environmental impact statement (EIS) for road access and bulk sampling.
According to Don Finney, U.S. Borax Ketchikan manager, construction on the road could begin later this month. "We expect to have South coast geared up and ready to go," Finney said. The first step, he added, is to move in a floating camp to establish a beachhead for the road-building effort.
The EIS found the 10 mile Blossom route to have a more favorable safety factor, more townsite facilities and long term economic advantages for mine development over the Katla River alternative backed by environmental organizations.

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Roaring '20s Train Trip Scheduled
Musical groups, casino games, singing, dancing and an outrageous baseball game are only a few of the zany events planned for the Fourth Roaring Twenties Express to Seward September 11.
Sponsored by the Resource Development Council, the popular Alaska Railroad charter leaves the Anchorage depot at 9:00 a.m. and arrives back in town at 11:30 p.m. Over 800 persons jammed the previous Express to Seward, which the Alaska Railroad claimed was the longest passenger train in North America.
Several bands have been commissioned to perform aboard the train, including two California jazz bands: The World Famous Desolation Band of Sacramento.
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Continued from page 3

While the Alaska Railroad does make regular freight runs to Seward, passenger runs have not been scheduled for many years. This year's train trip will bring back memories for Seward residents who had traveled the route in the "old days.”
Persons wishing to assure passage on the Express are urged to make reservations early by contacting the Resource Development Council at 278-9615. Round trip tickets sell for $65.

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RDC Attacks Wetland Rules

The regulatory quagmire facing property owners who seek to develop their land was the focal point of five individual Alaskans testifying before a U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing on wetlands in Anchorage July 8. The testimonies were coordinated through the Resource Development Council, which claimed that some individuals have lost their life savings in pursuit of wetland permits. The hearing, chaired by Senator Frank Murkowski, centered on current definitions. The Council's witnesses reported that due to federal regulations, the property involved was not a "wetlands property," and even though none of us had received a report of determination as promised by the Corps, Cone reported to the Senate Committee. "We were both issued a cease and desist order and informed that we could be fined as much as $25,000 per day until the violations were taken care of by submitting a 'wetlands' permit application." Months later Dean was sent a determination report that classified his land as "wetlands," but a full year later Cone had never received a determination, even though he had been informed to stop all development. "Repeatedly, Colonel George Robertson and other Corps personnel told us and everyone else that we would not be deprived of the use of our land, but would only have to obtain a use permit," Cone said. "If you are worried about the Corps, you should be worried about the Corps, you should be worried about the Corps, you should be worried about the Corps, you should be worried about the Corps." Meanwhile, Benson told the Committee that the denial of citizens to develop their private property should be stopped and that the committee should act to stop the violation of property rights. Benson said the permit process is based on the biases of government agencies involved and on the real public interest expressed by citizens. To support that statement Benson gave the committee a stack of petitions bearing 275 signatures of nearby residents who support his project.

Don Benson purchased a piece of property at Mile 35 of the Glenn Highway from a Palmer resident in 1978. Later that year he obtained all local permits for the development of an airstrip and aircraft maintenance facility, and started work on the project. In March 1979, Benson was given a cease and desist order issued by the Corps of Engineers, at which time he immediately halted the project. He was told by the Corps that his development was subject to wetlands regulations. It has been four years and our project has yet to be completed," said Benson, one of five Resource Development Council witnesses testifying before a U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing on wetlands in Anchorage July 8. The hearing, chaired by Senator Frank Murkowski, centered on current definitions. The Council's witnesses reported that due to federal regulations, the property involved was not a "wetlands property," and even though none of us had received a report of determination as promised by the Corps, Cone reported to the Senate Committee. "We were both issued a cease and desist order and informed that we could be fined as much as $25,000 per day until the violations were taken care of by submitting a 'wetlands' permit application." Months later Dean was sent a determination report that classified his land as "wetlands," but a full year later Cone had never received a determination, even though he had been informed to stop all development. "Repeatedly, Colonel George Robertson and other Corps personnel told us and everyone else that we would not be deprived of the use of our land, but would only have to obtain a use permit," Cone said. "If you are worried about the Corps, you should be worried about the Corps, you should be worried about the Corps, you should be worried about the Corps, you should be worried about the Corps." Meanwhile, Benson told the Committee that the denial of citizens to develop their private property should be stopped and that the committee should act to stop the violation of property rights. Benson said the permit process is based on the biases of government agencies involved and on the real public interest expressed by citizens. To support that statement Benson gave the committee a stack of petitions bearing 275 signatures of nearby residents who support his project.

Wetland Nightmares
Witnesses Complain Private Property Rights Violated

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