

*Management of Fuel and Nonfuel Minerals
in Federal Land*

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**Management of Fuel
and Nonfuel Minerals
in Federal Land**

Current Status and Issues

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Foreword

Federal lands constitute about one-third of the geographical area of the United States and contain much of its mineral and other natural resources. In recent years, Congress has increasingly been confronted with difficult questions concerning the development of these mineral resources. As a result, the Office of Technology Assessment was requested to undertake this study by the Technology Assessment Board and several congressional committees, including the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.

To protect other resources such as forests, grazing land, and wilderness areas, mineral activity has been prohibited or restricted in large portions of Federal lands. It is felt by some that such prohibitions and restrictions may seriously harm the domestic mineral industry and that, within a decade or so, the United States may find itself facing minerals shortages in a world minerals market that is becoming increasingly tight. Others, however, are concerned that continued mineral activity under existing laws and regulations could have major adverse environmental and social impacts.

This assessment examines a series of options that range from continuance of the status quo to major and comprehensive innovations in the management of mineral activities on Federal lands. It is another in the series of assessments of energy and natural resources policies that the Office of Technology Assessment is conducting for the Congress.



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