

Casper Star-Tribune Tuesday, January 6, 1970 9

Wyoming Mineral Production Reaches Record \$616 Million

Value of mineral production in Wyoming reached a new high of \$616.7 million in 1969, according to the U.S. Bureau of Mines.

It jumped \$40.5 million from last year, a 7 per cent gain.

Oil and gas accounted for \$461.9 million, or 75 per cent of the value of all minerals. Wyoming led the Rocky Mountain states in wells drilled and oil produced.

Uranium continued in second place with a value of \$41.5 million.

Uranium land leasing, exploration and development continues at an accelerated rate. Wyoming now ranks as the second largest uranium producing state, next to New Mexico, but was first in exploration drilling.

The Casper office of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission reported about 100,000 acres of land a month were leased for exploration by various companies during the first five months of the year. At the beginning of 1968, uranium firms held nearly one-ninth of the state's total area of 7 million acres.

The Gas Hills area continued as the biggest producer, with four of the state's total of five operating uranium mills.

Major oil companies entered the uranium picture last year, buying large holdings in the Powder River Basin and western Wyoming, in addition to Shirley Basin.

Coal production increased 20 per cent in value above 1968 to \$14.6 million, but made up only 3 per cent of the mineral fuel category. The largest construction project announced during the year was the \$300 million, 1.5 million kilowatt coal-fired generating complex to be built northeast of Rock Springs by Pacific Power and Light Co. and Idaho Power Co. Start of construction is slated in 1971, with completion due in 1978.

Nonmetals recorded gains in clays, feldspar, gypsum, pumice, sand and gravel, and sodium carbonate.

Declines were registered in masonry and portland cements, lime, phosphate rock, sodium sulfate and stone.

Total value of nonmetals was \$78.3 million, up 12 per cent or \$8.5 million from 1968.

Allied Chemical Corp. went on stream with a 1,500 ton a day trona plant at Green River to supply another new plant near the town, the \$5 million Church & Dwight bicarbonate of soda plant dedicated in September.


Purvin & Gertz began sulfur recovery near Worland at the rate of 25 tons per day from sour gas produced in the Big Horn Basin.

Northwestern Feldspar Corp. completed a 100 ton per day feldspar mill at Bonneville.

Stauffer Chemical will expand its Green River facility from 800,000 to 950,000 tons of soda ash per year by June, 1970.

Wyo-Ben Products announced plans for a new bentonite plant at Lovell.

The Open Cut Land Reclamation Act passed by the 40th legislature went into effect Aug. 7. Mining operations started or completed before that date are exempt. Other exemptions are prospectors as well as pits and quarries under governmental regulations equal to the state's. Permits are issued by the State Land Commissioner for a fee of \$50. Violations of the new law can cost up to \$1,000 a day.



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Wed, Apr 22, 2020