

Mining in Washington

by

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Mining in the State of Washington appears to have continued for 1953 at the recent production rate of approximately \$50 million per year. About 73 percent of this value is accounted for by the mining of industrial minerals, the remaining 27 percent by the mining of metals. Though no overall production figures have yet been released by the U. S. Bureau of Mines for any year beyond 1950, the value ratio of industrial minerals to metallic minerals has probably been quite consistent at 3 to 1.

Metallic minerals

Metallic mineral exploration and production were maintained at a good level of activity during 1953, considering the present depressed metal market. With the possible exception of lead and zinc, metal production in the state doubtless will be maintained at a profitable level in 1954. Throughout the greater part of 1953 the price of lead and zinc was at 13½ cents and 10 cents per pound, respectively, as compared with a price of 15 cents and 19½ cents a pound a year and a half ago. These 1953 prices are too low to support the profitable production of these metals; consequently, prospecting has fallen off and mining is carried on under very adverse conditions. At the present time there are only three lead-zinc mines in the state in continuous production. These, all in northeastern Washington, are the Pend Oreille, 1,600 tons per day,

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the Grandview, 450 tons per day, and the Van Stone at 1,000 tons per day. That the lead-zinc mines are able to continue operation despite the low price for the metals is solely due to the fact that they have been successful in reducing their mining costs to a remarkably low figure. Considerable zinc is also produced at the Holden copper mine in Chelan County which has a production of 1,500 tons per day. It is hoped that a way will be found to maintain a price of lead and zinc, not only in Washington but throughout the United States, which will allow this phase of the metal mining industry to remain alive.

The prices of the other metals being mined in the state have held up well and their mining and exploration have been going along unabated. Exploration work directed toward the development of future copper and tungsten properties has been quite encouraging during 1953. The price of copper has been stabilized throughout the last half of the year at 29.685 cents. A slight decline is to be expected during 1954, but nothing serious is looked for. The tungsten ore in the State is being developed under the government support price of \$63 per unit.

The latest available Bureau of Mines production figures for the State are those covering the mining of gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc for 1952. These show that the total value of the five metals increased from \$14,030,884 in 1951 to the record figure of \$14,767,054 in 1952. Ore output was also at an all-time high, advancing from 1,304,495 tons in 1951 to 1,402,472 tons in 1952. This peak production was achieved despite declines in the price of lead and zinc toward the end of the year.

The output of both gold and silver in 1952 were down to the lowest point since 1947. Gold production was 54,776 ounces, valued at \$1,917,160; Silver production was 315,645 ounces, valued at \$285,674. About 99 percent

of the gold came from the Holden mine, in Chelan County, the Knob Hill mine, in Ferry County, and the Gold King mine, located near Wenatchee in Chelan County. The principal amount of silver (77 percent) came from the Knob Hill and the Holden mines.

Copper was produced chiefly from the Holden mine, this property accounting for 98 percent of the State's copper for 1952, in the amount of 4,357 tons, having a value of \$2,108,788.

Lead to a value of \$3,781,568 and a total weight of 11,744 tons was produced in 1952. About 99 percent of the lead production came from the following mines listed in order of decreasing output: the Pend Oreille and Grandview mines in Pend Oreille County, and the Bonanza and the Deep Creek mines in Stevens County.

Zinc production in 1952 totalled 20,102 tons, valued at \$6,673,864. About 98 percent of this record amount came from the following mines, listed in order of decreasing output: the Pend Oreille and Grandview mines, the Deep Creek mine, and the Holden mine.

Industrial minerals

Production figures over the past few years show that the annual value of industrial minerals mined in the state remains fairly constant, so it is assumed that the output for the past year has not differed markedly from that of 1950, the last year for which complete statistics are available. In decreasing order of dollar value, the various industrial materials are: portland cement, sand and gravel, coal, stone, magnesite, clay and clay products, and some 14 other minerals and substances produced in small to moderately large amount.