

# CALIFORNIA MINERALS ROUNDTABLE

The California Minerals Roundtable discussion at this year’s CalCIMA Education Conference explored challenges and opportunities for ensuring continued mineral resources availability in the state.

Fred Gius, supervising engineering geologist with the California Geological Survey (CGS), kicked off the session with a review of the process for classifying construction aggregates and the ongoing update to the CGS report, *Aggregate Sustainability in California*, which shows a 50-year aggregate demand compared to permitted aggregate reserves for various production-consumption regions in the state. Mr. Gius reviewed the CGS’s purpose and process for preparing and updating the projections and appealed to operators to respond to a new form that will assist in updating and improving the accuracy of the data and mapping needed for projections.

Next, David Brown, president of Benchmark Resources, presented California Needs Its Minerals! Mr. Brown reminded us of the critical need that minerals provide to California industries and their unheralded contribution to the lifestyle enjoyed by every Californian. His presentation was both enlightening and alarming in its review of the historical documentation of California’s vast mineral wealth and how it has been compromised by decades of decisions made for more obvious societal values—like open space, recreation, and habitat—at the expense of limiting access to known and potential mineral resources.

Mr. Brown first showed a connection between the minerals available in California’s unique and diverse geology and how those minerals are used in the state’s top economic industries. He provided an important perspective on the annual needs for construction aggregates and the relatively small cumulative area of surface mining disturbance in the state as compared to other land uses (Figure 1). Despite often negative attention, mining results in a very small land use compared to other industries and urban development. Mr. Brown’s presentation then showed, using shocking graphics, recent decades of land use policy and other special interest preferences that have limited access to California minerals, often making the minerals uneconomic to pursue (Figure 2). Mr. Brown reminded attendees of a nearly forgotten 1989 workshop that explored the industrial mineral resource supply problems facing the state at that time. Sponsored jointly by the U.S. Geological Survey

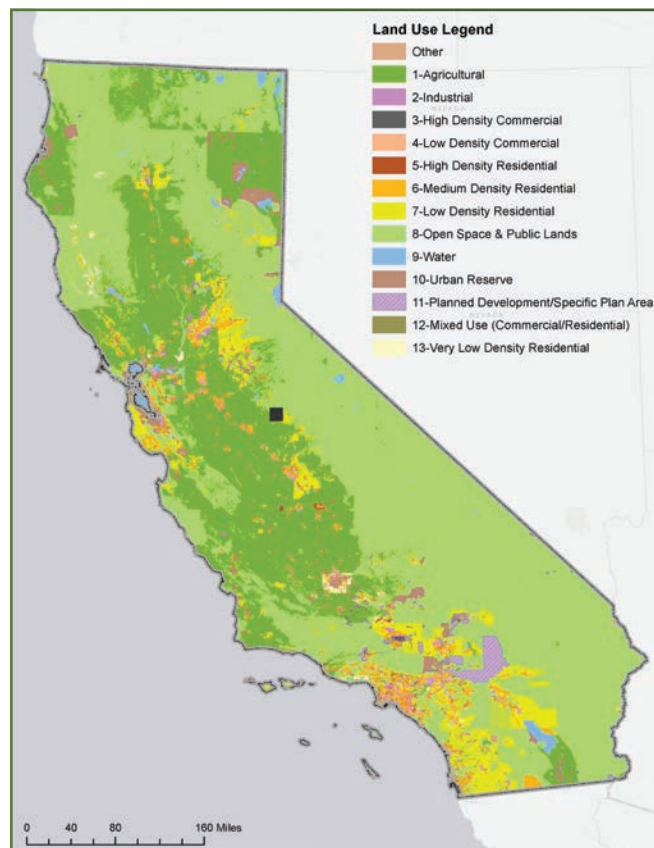
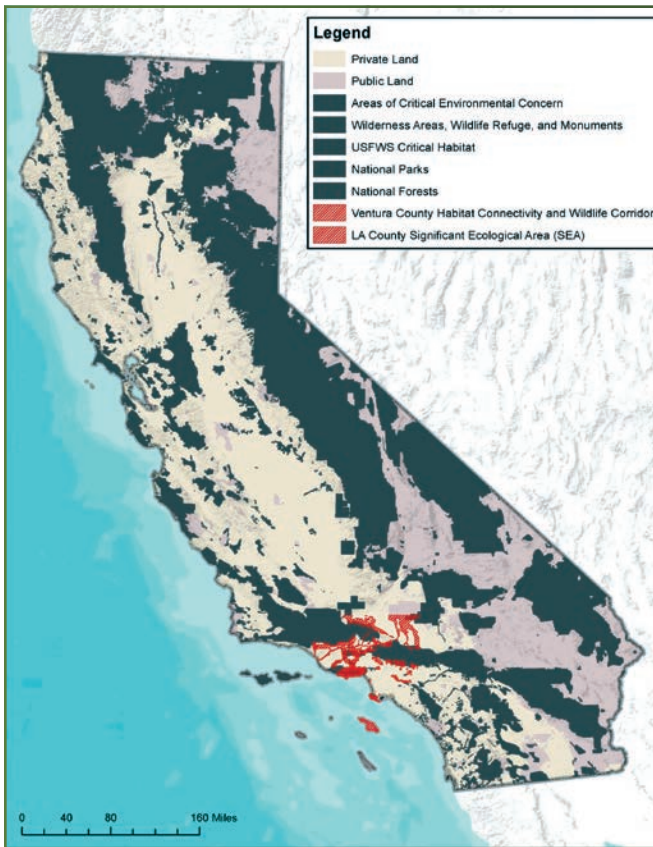


Figure 1. Total consolidated mining acreage (black square) as compared to other land uses.

and the California Division of Mines and Geology (now CGS), the 1989 workshop resulted in a publication titled, *Industrial Minerals in California: Economic Importance, Present Availability and Future Development*. That report recognized issues (e.g., depletion of sand and gravel deposits needed for low-cost construction materials, conflicting demands for resource-rich lands, urbanization over valuable mineral deposits, land-use priority issues, and public safety and reclamation) that are as relevant today as they were 30 years ago.

The forum then opened with roundtable panelists, including Mr. Brown, Jason Marshall, chief deputy director of the California Department of Conservation, Pablo Garza, member of the State Mining and Geology Board, and Brent Leclerc, western division environmental manager of Vulcan Materials Company. The panelists discussed perspectives and experience in California minerals and fielded comments and questions from conference attendees regarding protecting existing mining operations, preserving



**Roundtable panelists (left to right): David Brown, Pablo Garza, Jason Marshall, and Brent Leclerc.**

future access to mineral resources, facilitating more efficient mineral extraction permitting and development, and providing better public knowledge of minerals uses and their importance.

The robust discussion among panelists and attendees explored ideas and solutions to the land use conflicts and mine permitting obstacles that hobble mineral resource availability. It is clear that industry and represented state agencies recognize these challenges, which are critical to the future of California, and that the next steps in this issue are ready to be taken. Stay tuned. ■

**Figure 2. Land use designations restricting mineral access.**

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