

White House Executive Order Aims to Boost US Minerals Production

US President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order on March 20 to increase domestic production of critical minerals, as well as uranium. This order invokes the Defense Production Act to prioritize mineral production for national security and energy independence. It directs federal agencies to expedite permitting processes and prioritize mineral projects on federal lands with the goal of reducing reliance on foreign imports.

The Executive Order defines “minerals” as not only the those identified as critical on the US Department of Interior’s list, but also adds uranium, copper, gold, and potash. Importantly, it leaves the critical minerals list open to other materials as determined by the newly formed National Energy Dominance Council (NEDC).

Moreover, the Executive Order designates clear authorities to relevant agency heads and outlines timelines for implementation within 10, 30, or 45 days. It assigns the NEDC, chaired by Secretary of Interior Doug Burgum, a leading role in overseeing the progress of domestic minerals security.

For example, within just 10 days, the Executive Order directs the NEDC to identify priority projects for expedited permitting and orders the Secretary of the Interior to identify all federal lands with minerals deposits. Within 30 days, it directs all relevant agencies to identify sites on federal lands suitable for leasing for private commercial mineral production.

Support from the Defense Production Act & US International Development Finance Corp.

The Executive Order seeks to strengthen US minerals security primarily by expediting permitting for priority mining projects on federal lands, invoking the Defense Production Act, and leveraging financing programs, including the US International Development Finance Corp. (DFC), which is traditionally reserved for development-oriented projects in low- and middle-income countries, to invest capital into minerals projects domestically.

This builds upon the national energy emergency Trump declared in January. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and Ben Black, Trump’s nominee to head the DFC, are expected to have significant roles in determining the future of US critical minerals production.

The Export-Import Bank's Role

The Executive Order directs the Export-Import Bank of the United States to submit guidance as to how this program can be leveraged to secure offtake of feedstock mined abroad. The success of this initiative will be key to addressing concerns that domestic processing and refining facilities will not have access to enough raw materials to reach economies of scale. This has been a challenge for many minerals supply chains.

US Uranium Production Climbs in 2024

Uranium is crucial as a fuel for nuclear power facilities, which accounted for 19 percent of total US energy production in 2023. Once a leading uranium producer, the USA relies heavily on imports today. Including uranium in this Executive Order can provide crucial support for domestic uranium production and processing capabilities.

According to recent data published by the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), US production of uranium concentrate (U_3O_8) in Q4 2024 totaled 375,401 pounds U_3O_8 —more than triple Q3 2024 production of 121,296 pounds U_3O_8 and the highest quarterly production since Q3 2018 (**Figure 1**).

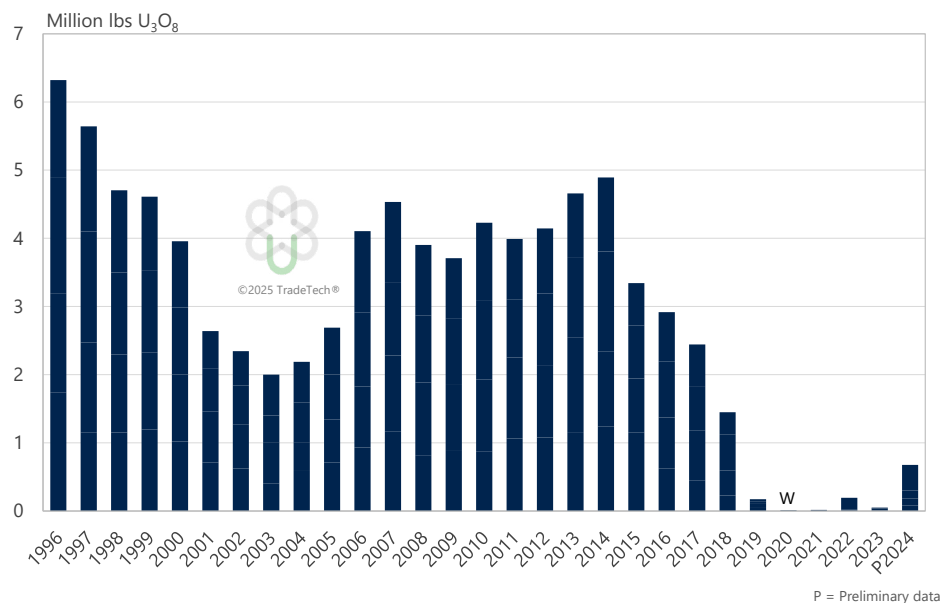


Figure 1 US Uranium Production, 1996-2024

Sources: US Energy Information Administration / TradeTech

Total uranium production in Q4 last year occurred at six *in-situ* recovery operations and one mill, including Energy Fuels' Nichols Ranch Project, Ur-Energy's Lost Creek Project, Peninsula Energy's Ross Central Processing Plant, and Cameco's Smith Ranch-Highland Operation, all in Wyoming, as well as enCore Energy's Alta Mesa and Rosita Projects in Texas and Energy Fuels White Mesa Mill in Utah, according to the EIA.

Bill Introduced to Include Uranium in US Critical Minerals

Uranium was previously classified as a critical mineral in the USA. In 2018, the US Geological Survey (USGS) included uranium on its list of critical minerals, recognizing its importance to national security and the economy. However, there was debate about this classification and in 2022, the USGS cited the Energy Act of 2020, which excludes fuel minerals from the definition of critical minerals, when removing uranium from the list.

On February 28, US Representative John McGuire (R-VA) introduced the Uranium for Energy Independence Act of 2025 (H.R.1622), legislation that would add uranium to the USGS list of critical minerals. The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and awaits review.

