

Future for mining? Why not?

By Baker City Herald Editorial Board February 09, 2015 01:19 pm

We came away from the first Eastern Oregon Mining Summit with newfound optimism about the future of the industry on which Baker County was founded.

The Jan. 27 event in Baker City invigorated us mainly because several speakers said the reason large-scale gold mining has pretty much disappeared in Oregon is the widespread perception, among mining companies and investors, that the state's laws and permitting process discourage mining.

But that's not the case, speakers said.

Oregon law in fact allows the same kind of chemical mining that has been a mainstay of the economy in Northern Nevada for the past two decades.

Indeed a company is trying to negotiate the state's permitting process for a mine in Malheur County southwest of Vale.

We hope Calico Resources USA succeeds.

Even one successful mine might change the perception and bust open the floodgates that have kept mining investment money, and the family-wage jobs it would create, out of Oregon.

In the meantime, state officials need to be much more aggressive in touting Oregon's abundance of mineral deposits.

The state showers tourists with glossy brochures showcasing Oregon's scenic wonders. But a tourism economy won't do much to help Baker County and the rest of rural Oregon recover from the Great Recession.

For that we need family-wage jobs — the jobs that gold mining can provide.

Oregon government leaders should remember that not all of the state's treasures are photogenic. Some of them need to be dug up.

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