

Rebuttal to Will Felderhof Statement
Canon City Daily Record
August 20, 2021

In the August 20, 2021, *Canon City Daily Record* interview, Will Felderhof, executive chairman for Zephyr Minerals, stated, "I don't think there are any fires attributed to modern mining that I can recall."

A publicly available geospatial data suggests otherwise. This data is generated by the Forest Service and is located at <https://data.fs.usda.gov/geodata/edw/datasets.php>. The specific dataset reviewed is the Fire Perimeter data for the entire United States. Within this data, we found 70 fires dating from 1919 through 2020 that have a word associated with mining in their name (Mine, Rock Quarry, Gravel Pit, Coal Seam, Oil Field).

While the name of the fire itself does not mean the mining operation caused the fire, it often indicates the origin is at least nearby. These 70 fires burned a total of 85,064 acres. Of those acres, only 11% were caused by lightning; the remaining 89% were human-caused: equipment-use, smoking, campfire, debris burning, arson, children, and "miscellaneous." The final determination of cause requires solid proof and that determination is not within this data set. But one comment within the data does state, "someone set this fire in woods in mining cuts." That fire was called the Minecut Fire and was reported in March of 2006 and burned 36 acres. This data is considered authoritative data and appears to contradict what Zephyr claims.

Another fire concern is the mine's proximity next to the National Forest. "Our site will be a non-smoking site," said Felderhof. What assurances has Zephyr provided that there will be defensible space between the mine property and ALL of the surrounding land, to prevent the possibility of a mine-activity fire spreading onto neighboring lands? What is the contingency plan if a fire starts or if a Zephyr employee who does want to take a smoke break walks into the adjacent forest and leaves their smoldering cigarette butt behind? Also, what is the risk that any employee driving into work smokes a last cigarette before tossing it out the window? There should be zero tolerance for that...

Compiled by the Arkansas Valley Conservation Coalition (AVCC)
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