



How It Works

In the U.S., land and the resources beneath it can be owned by private individuals and corporations or by federal, state, local, and tribal governments. This makes the U.S. different from nearly every other country; in many places oil, gas, coal, and other minerals simply belong to the government, but in the U.S. there is widespread private ownership of these resources.

Learn what the [extraction process](#) looks like, how [natural resources](#) are managed, and what [laws and governance](#) relate to the industry.

The U.S. ranks at or near the top worldwide in the production of many natural resources

1st



Natural gas



Oil

2nd



Coal



Renewables

What natural resources are produced in the U.S.?

The process

The federal government awards rights to extract natural resources from federal lands, and those resources eventually result in revenue. That process differs depending on the resource and whether extraction takes place onshore or offshore, but it generally follows five steps:

Plan > Lease > Explore > Develop > Decommission

Oil and gas

Oil and gas (or natural gas) are fossil fuels that form underground on land and under the ocean. They are abundant, but not renewable.

Coal

Miners extract coal through surface and subsurface mining. In 2013, the U.S. was the world's second largest coal producer after China.

Nonenergy minerals

Gold, copper, and iron are the main sources of nonenergy mineral revenues. In 2013, U.S. metal production totaled \$32 billion.

Renewable energy

Renewable energy resources — including geothermal, solar, wind, biomass, and hydrokinetic energy — comprised about 10% of U.S. energy consumption in 2013.

Natural resources

Ownership



Private individuals and corporations, as well as federal, state, local, and tribal governments, can own land and the oil, gas, coal, and other minerals found below the surface. [Learn about land and resource ownership →](#)

Production



Revenues



Laws and governance

Federal laws and regulations



Federal reforms



State laws and regulations



Regulations in 18 states



Tribal laws and regulations



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