



The Southwest Region

Products and Natural Resources

There are many cattle and sheep ranches in the Southwest region. The Southwest region leads all other states in the raising of beef cattle as well as sheep. The cattle provide beef to all parts of the United States. Some beef is sold to other nations, like Japan.

Deserts are full of valuable minerals. Gold, iron, and copper are found in the Colorado River basin. New Mexico is known for its silver mines. Arizona produces about two-thirds of the copper mined in the United States. People have been digging in Arizona for precious metals for a long time. Native Americans used gold, silver and copper for tools and weapons as well as for jewelry and in paint for pottery. Copper ore is still mined in the state for many different uses. Copper is used in mostly in wire or coins, such as a penny.

The Southwest region is also rich in the fuels that supply energy. Uranium, coal, natural gas, and oil are all found in the Southwest region. The most important natural resource in the Southwest is oil. Oil is so valuable that it has been nicknamed “black gold.” The oil that bubbles up from the ground is called crude oil, and is not very useful. A refinery is a kind of factory that separates crude oil into parts like gasoline and heating oil. Some parts of the crude oil are used to produce goods like plastic, crayons, and medicines. A refinery runs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and requires a large number of employees to run it. A refinery can occupy as much land as several hundred football fields. Workers often ride bicycles to move from place to place inside the complex.



Cattle from ranches in the southwest region provide beef to the United States and other countries.

One of the biggest problems of the Southwest region is a limited water supply. Aqueducts are used in the Southwest to move water from lakes and rivers to farms and cities. Aqueducts are large pipes or canals that move water over a long distance. The people of the Southwest rely on the Colorado River for many things. The Colorado River provides drinking water for 25 million people. It supplies water for more than three million acres of farmland. Water rushing through machines called turbines cause huge machines to spin. These spinning turbines produce much of the electricity used in the Southwest.



The southwest region contains over 300,000 oil wells, more than any other region.