

# Mineral Production in 2024 and Exploration in 2025



Milford Open Pit Gypsum Mine – Milford Station, Nova Scotia

## Information Circular ME 84

*Mineral Management Division*



**Natural Resources**

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**Note**

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**Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources**

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Minister

Sandra McKenzie  
Deputy Minister

## Message from the Director of Mineral Management

This Mineral Production and Exploration report offers an overview of recent trends in Nova Scotia's exploration and mining industry. It includes 2025 exploration statistics, 2024 mineral production data, and a summary of reclamation securities. The report also highlights ongoing efforts to address the risks posed by abandoned mine openings across the province. The data presented was developed in collaboration with industry stakeholders and contributions from surveyed companies. I extend my thanks to Nova Scotia's exploration and mining industry for their support in preparing this report.

In a highly competitive global mineral investment market, Nova Scotia acknowledges the challenges facing the mining sector. The Mineral Management Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources is focused on making the province a leading investment destination by implementing clear, effective policies and laws that promote sustainable mineral resource development. To this end, the Department has been involved in several important changes implemented in 2025 and continuing into 2026. These include development of the NovaMINE online permitting portal and introduction of the Making Business Easier Act aimed at enabling several key initiatives within the mineral resources sector.

In 2025, mineral exploration activity in Nova Scotia reached unprecedented levels, marked by a significant surge in new exploration licences and a major expansion in the area under exploration. Investment in mineral exploration and related development increased substantially, reflecting strong confidence and heightened activity across the sector. A diverse mix of companies and individuals held exploration interests, supporting a wide range of work from early-stage prospecting to advanced drilling and aerial surveys, with regulatory approvals issued to facilitate this increased level of exploration.

Mineral production in 2024 continued to be led by salt, despite reduced output related to variable winter de-icing demand. Gypsum remained a key commodity, supported by steady long-term production and increasing demand for natural gypsum. Gold production was limited to recovery from existing material at sites under reclamation or care and maintenance. Limestone production supported cement manufacturing, emissions control, agricultural and industrial uses. Coal mining remained inactive, with production limited to recovery from stockpiles as sites transitioned to care and maintenance, or reclamation, while silica sand output remained small and sourced from a single operating pit.

Employment at active mine sites experienced some downturn resulting from reduced activity in the gold and coal sectors as sites transitioned from operating to reclamation and care and maintenance. Overall employment dropped from 640 employees in 2023 to 380 employees in 2024; a 40% decrease. Employment at salt operations remained stable and now accounts for 41% of the workforce in the sector.

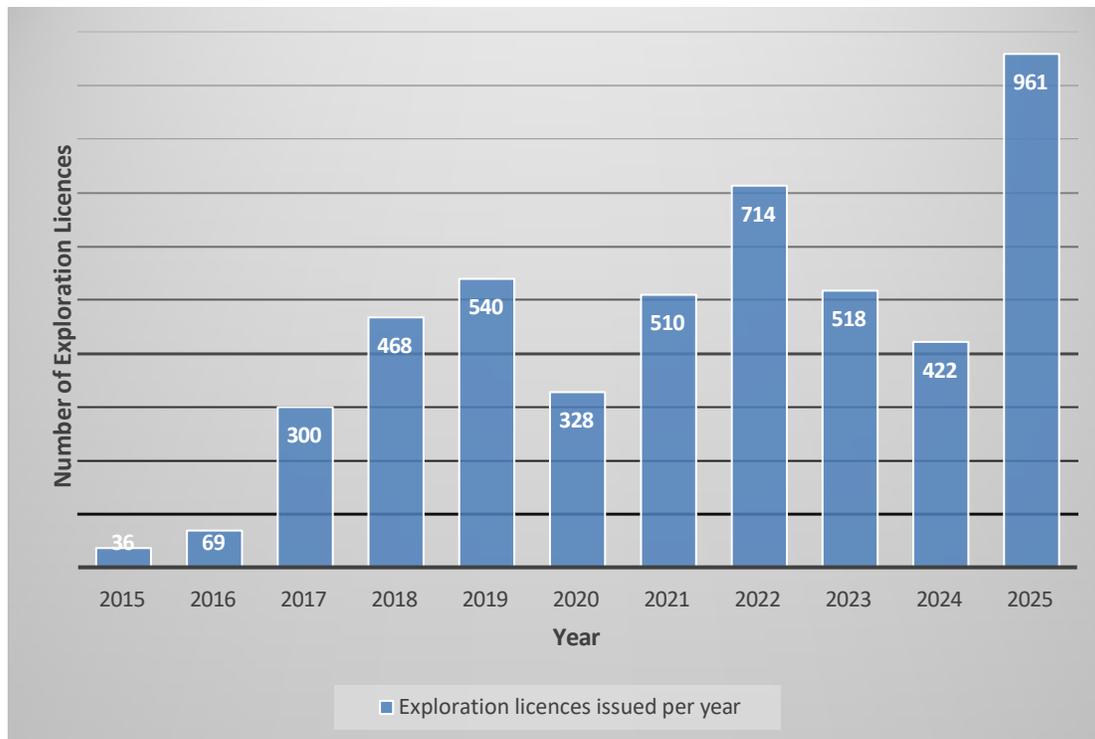
For those interested in contributing to a sustainable future through mineral resource development, further information can be obtained by contacting [GMB@novascotia.ca](mailto:GMB@novascotia.ca).



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## 2025 Exploration Highlights

Mineral rights activity in Nova Scotia reached unprecedented levels in 2025. The province recorded a new high of 961 new exploration licences issued, making it the most active year for exploration licence issuance since the conversion to online mineral rights in 2013. Licence issuance more than doubled compared to 2024 and exceeded the previous peak year (2022) by more than 200 licences (Figure 1). This trend is also reflected in the total area covered by newly issued exploration licences, which increased more than fivefold from 88,262 hectares to 466,631 hectares year over year. Figures 2a and 2b represent the exploration licences held at the end of 2025 and 2024, respectively.



**Figure 1.** Number of licences issued per year, 2015-2025.

Preliminary expenditures for mineral exploration in Nova Scotia—including both exploration and deposit appraisal—were projected at **\$34.7 million in 2025**, a significant increase from **\$21.1 million in 2024**. The trend is similar when including mine complex development, capital assets, and repair maintenance expenditures. Intended expenditures across all categories increased to \$67.0 million in 2025 from actuals of \$45.3 million in 2024, an increase of nearly 50%. This growth reflects heightened activity across the province’s mineral sector (NRCan, 2025).

In 2025, a total of 297 entities held exploration interests (licences or options), comprising 75 companies and 222 individuals. Exploration activities associated with these interests, including prospecting and geochemical surveys generated both new and renewed interest across the province. More advanced exploration methods, such as drilling and aerial surveys, continued to provide confirmation and expansion of existing exploration programs. In support of this work, the Registry of Mineral and Petroleum Titles reviewed 30 mineral exploration related field activity notifications in 2025.

For an up-to-date view of the number and distribution of mineral exploration licences in Nova Scotia, visit [NOVAROC](#), where an interactive map displays current mineral rights across the province.

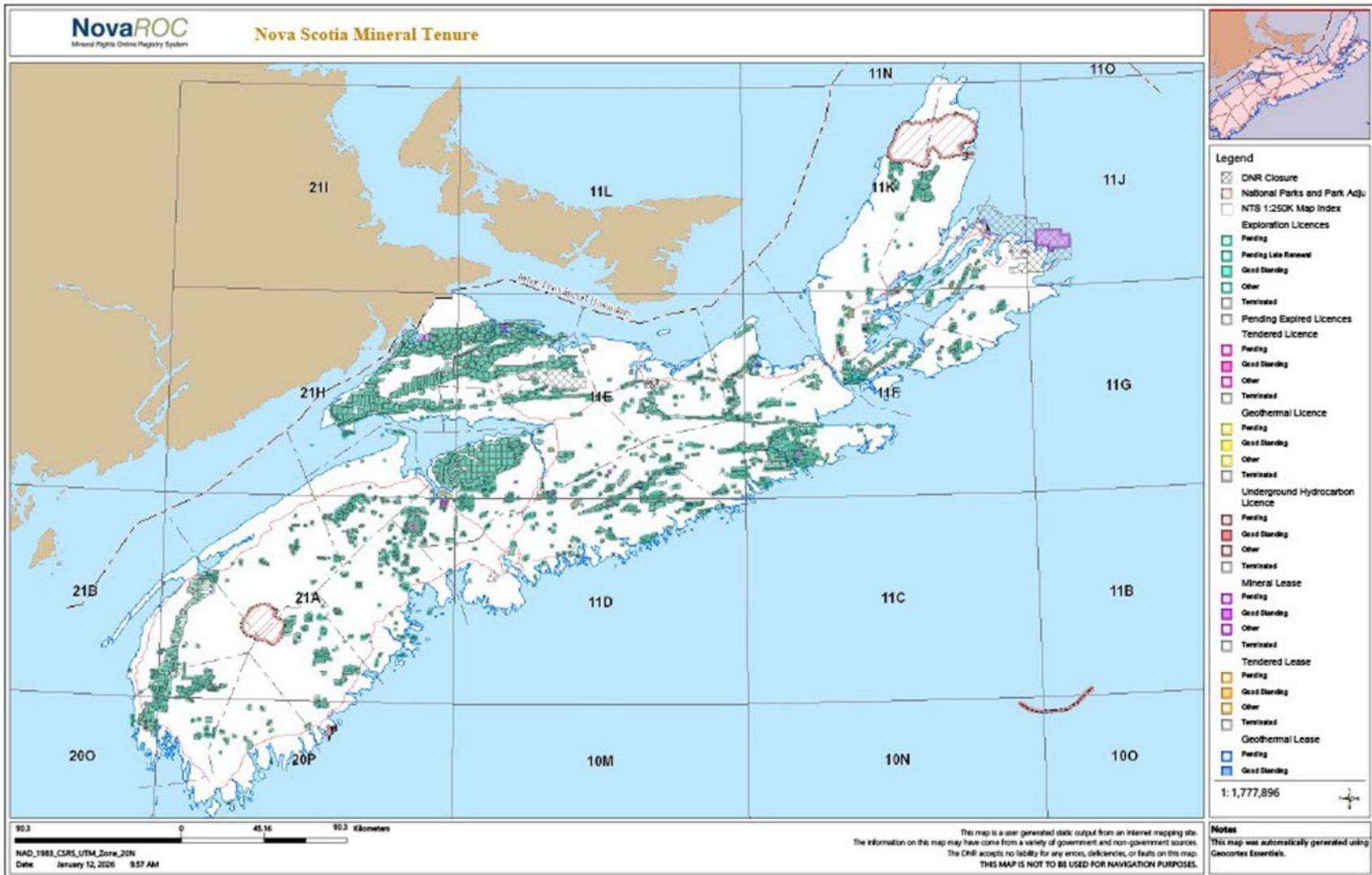


Figure 2a. Exploration licences held as of December 2025.

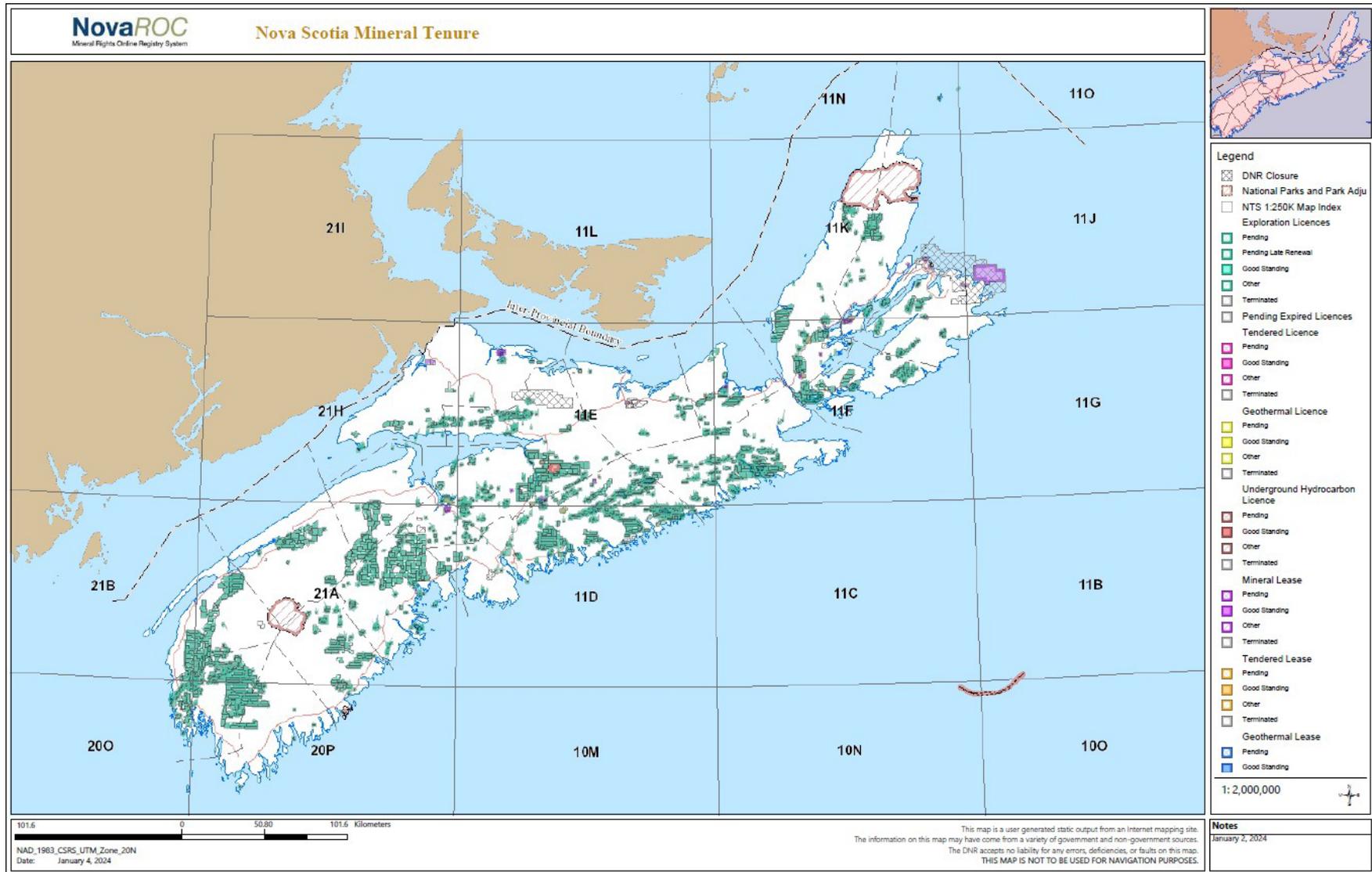


Figure 2b. Exploration licences held as of December 2024.

## 2024 Production Highlights

There were 10 producing mines in Nova Scotia in 2024 (Figure 3), which operated under the authority of the *Mineral Resources Act*. In addition, six operations were under care and maintenance, pending improved market conditions to support a restart in production.

In 2024, the market value of the province’s mineral production was approximately \$141 million as shown in Table 1. This amount reflects a decrease relative to 2023 and is reflective of decreased production of salt, gold, and coal as shown in Figure 4.

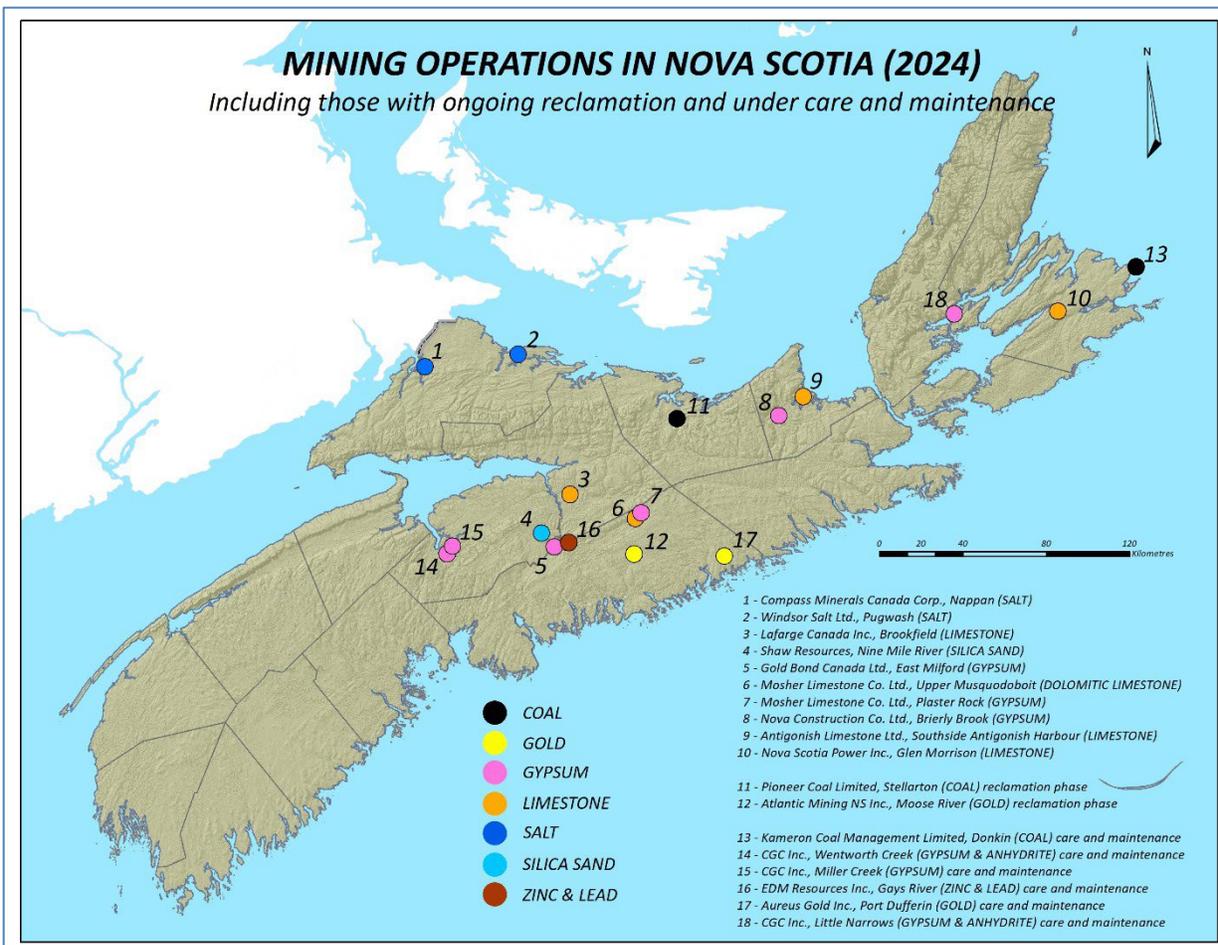


Figure 3. Active, reclamation, and care and maintenance mine sites.

**Table 1.** Nova Scotia mineral production in 2024\*.

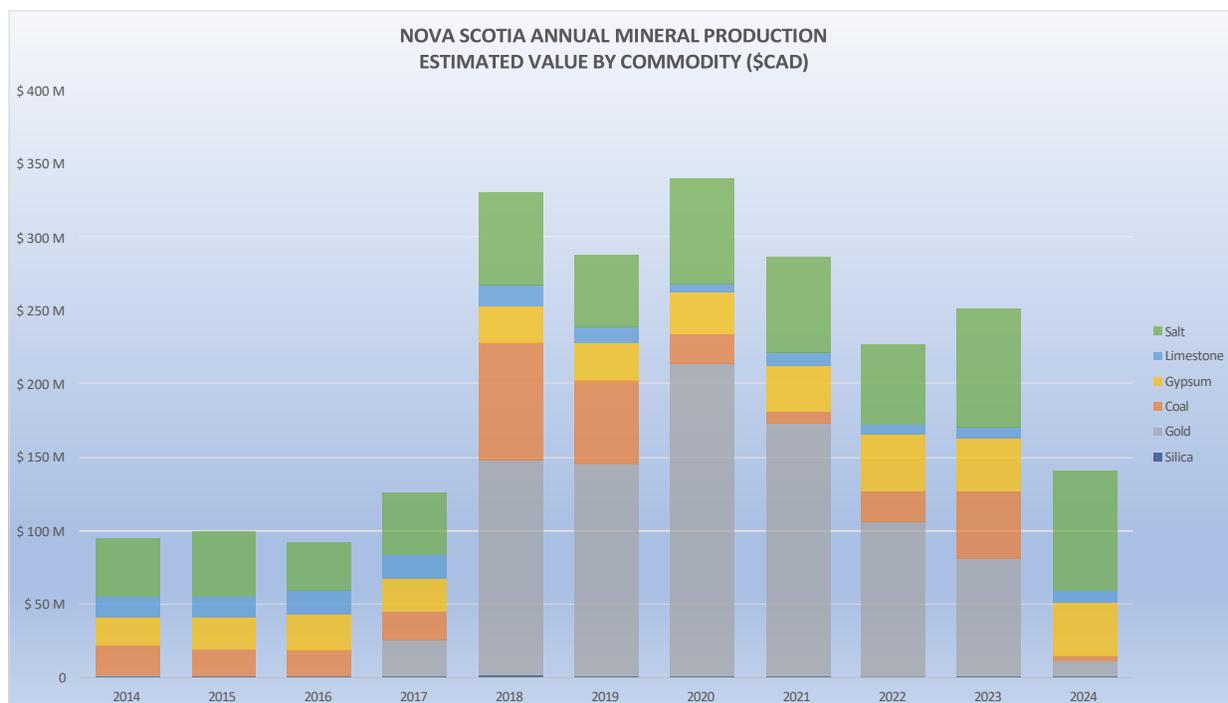
Commodity	Production (Tonnes**)	Market Value***	Percentage of Total Market Value
Coal	24,991	\$3,779,000	2.7%
Gold (ounces)	2,960	\$10,187,000	7.2%
Gypsum	2,276,082	\$36,941,000	26.2%
Limestone	289,286	\$7,665,000	5.4%
Salt	790,634	\$81,741,000	58.0%
Silica sand	8,829	\$530,000	0.4%
<b>Total Production</b>	<b>3,389,822</b>	<b>\$140,843,000</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* Construction aggregates data are not included in Table 1

\*\* Tonnes shipped, except gold (ounces)

\*\*\* Market value of shipped products

Historical prices for individual commodities are available from the [London Metal Exchange](#).

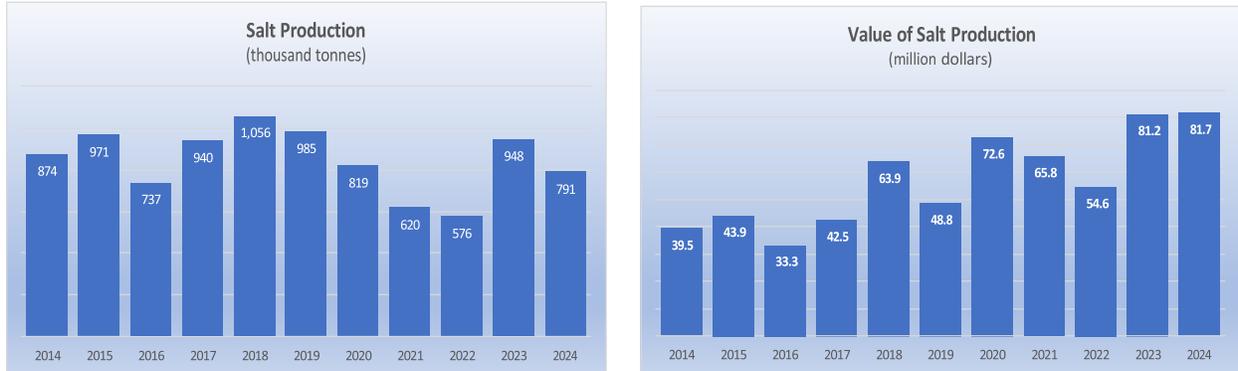


**Figure 4.** Value of Nova Scotia annual mineral production.

## Salt

In 2024, Nova Scotia’s two operating salt mines produced a combined total of 790,634 tonnes of salt, marking a 17% decrease (-156,979 tonnes) compared to 2023. Salt production generated \$81.7 million in value, accounting for 58% of the province’s total mineral production value (see Figure 5; Table 1).

Since 1980, annual salt production in Nova Scotia has averaged approximately one million tonnes. Production levels often fluctuate based on winter weather conditions in the region, which influence the demand for road de-icing.



**Figure 5.** Salt production and market value of shipped salt and salt products.



**Figure 6.** Pugwash Mine, Cumberland County.

***Pugwash, Cumberland County***

The Pugwash underground salt mine (Figure 6), operated by Windsor Salt Ltd., has been in continuous production since 1959. The mine employs a room-and-pillar extraction method, where salt is undercut, drilled, blasted, and transported by trucks and conveyor belts to the production shaft for hoisting to the surface.

In 2024, the mine produced 573,189 tonnes of finished salt, with 675,400 tonnes shipped to market due to availability of additional stockpiled inventory. The finished rock salt, available in bulk and packaged forms, was distributed across eastern Canada by ships and trucks. The majority of the product was sold in Atlantic Canada, primarily for road de-icing.

***Nappan, Cumberland County***

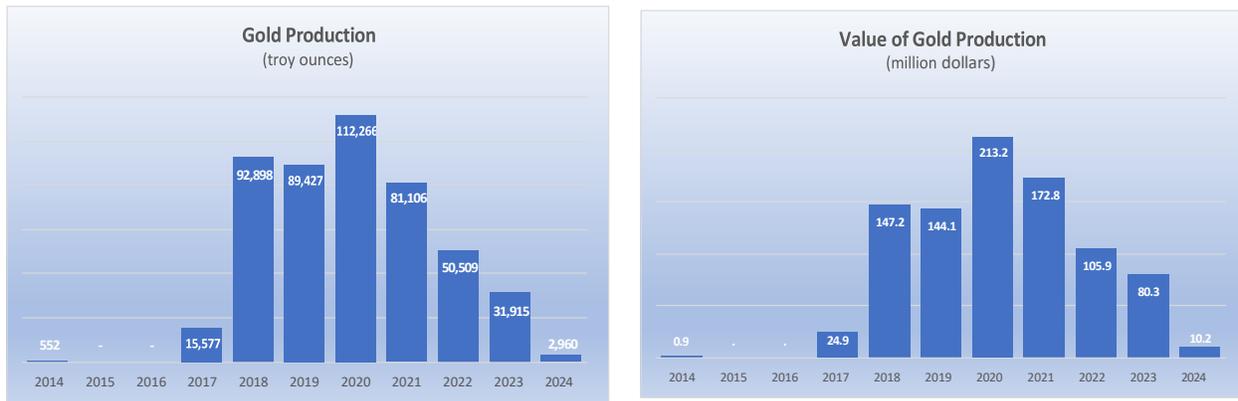
The solution salt mine in Nappan, operated by Compass Minerals Canada Corp., has been in operation since 1947. The mining process involves drilling wells into salt formations, using water to create caverns and dissolve the salt into a brine solution. The brine is then brought to the surface and processed in a plant where water is evaporated to produce high-purity salt.

In 2024, 115,234 tonnes of salt were shipped from the Nappan operation. This salt is primarily used in food processing and industrial applications. The plant also produces and packages salt for water softening, fishery, pool salt, and ice control. The product is distributed in both bulk and packaged forms to markets across Eastern Canada and Northeast United States.

## Gold

In 2024 gold was recovered and sold from two operations: the Touquoy Gold Mine and the Aureus East Site (Figure 8), both in Halifax County. Touquoy is an open pit mine at Moose River Gold Mines which has since ceased production and is undergoing reclamation activities. Through the mill cleanup process, 2,903 ounces of gold were recovered at Touquoy. Aureus is an underground and mill operation that is on care and maintenance. Limited metallurgical test work was completed in 2024 at Aureus resulting in the refining of 57 ounces of gold from previous milled material.

In total, 2,960 ounces of gold were shipped in 2024 representing \$10.2 million or 7.2 % of Nova Scotia’s total value of mineral production (Figure 7; Table 1).



**Figure 7.** Gold production in Nova Scotia.



**Figure 8.** Aureus East Site, Halifax County

### ***Touquoy, Halifax County***

The Touquoy Mine, operated by Atlantic Mining NS Inc., a subsidiary of St. Barbara Limited, concluded production mining in early 2023. St. Barbara acquired the operation in 2019 through its purchase of Atlantic Gold Corporation. After completing mining activities at the open pit itself, the site continued processing stockpiled ore until September 2023 before transitioning to reclamation in 2024. The following reclamation activities were carried out including; tear down of mill and admin infrastructure, TMF

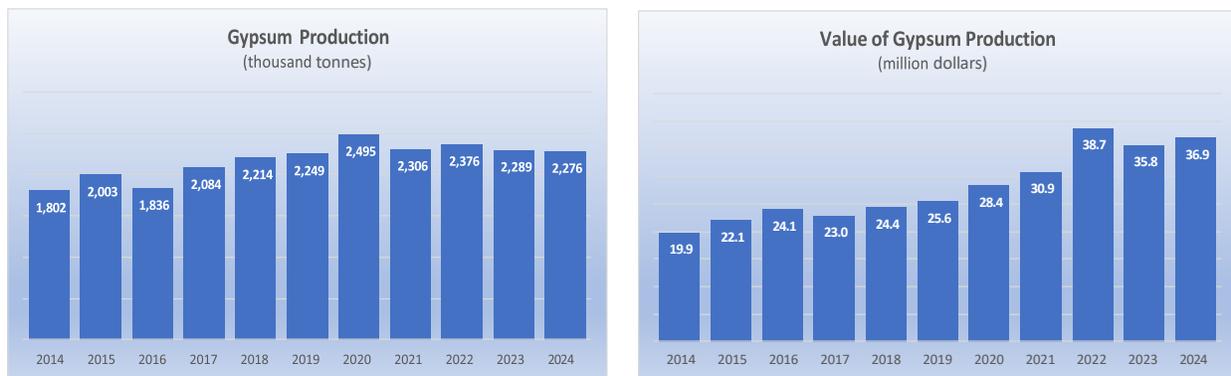
spillway construction and south dam re-sloping, soil cover placement, removal of septic tanks, and the re-sloping of the waste rock storage area projected to continue into 2025.

In 2024 2,903 ounces of gold were sold by Touquoy, a total value of \$10 million.

## Gypsum

In 2024, Nova Scotia produced 2.28 million tonnes of gypsum, valued at \$36.9 million, representing 26.3% of the province's total mineral production value (see Figure 9; Table 1). This marked a slight (-0.6%) decrease in production compared to 2023. Gypsum mining took place at two sites: a large quarry in East Milford, Halifax County, and a smaller quarry at Brierly Brook (Figure 10), Antigonish County. The East Milford Quarry primarily supplied gypsum for wallboard manufacturing, while the Brierly Brook Quarry served both the cement industry and wallboard production.

Since 2010 gypsum production has been steady, averaging approximately two million tonnes annually. The increased demand for natural gypsum has been driven by the reduced availability of synthetic gypsum, a byproduct of coal-fired power plants. This demand has caused a renewed interest in Nova Scotia's gypsum resources. The Little Narrows gypsum mine is scheduled to reopen in 2026, and several other projects are in various stages of development.



**Figure 9.** Gypsum production in Nova Scotia.



**Figure 10.** Brierly Brook Gypsum Quarry, Antigonish County.

### ***East Milford, Halifax County***

Gold Bond Canada, Ltd. operates a gypsum quarry in East Milford, Halifax County. In 2024, the mine produced 2.2 million tonnes of gypsum and has produced more than 140 million tonnes since it began

continuous operation in 1954.

Mining at this operation involves drilling, blasting, and loading the gypsum onto trucks. It is then crushed and screened to remove fine particles and transported by train from East Milford to Wrights Cove, Dartmouth. Crushed rock is loaded on ships for wallboard manufacturing by its parent company in the United States and for customers in Canada and the United States. The mine also sells products within Nova Scotia for agricultural use.

### ***Brierly Brook, Antigonish County***

The Brierly Brook gypsum quarry (Figure 10) is owned by Nova Construction Co. Ltd. and shipped 110,542 tonnes of gypsum in 2024. The quarry has operated consistently since 2020 after ending a period of care and maintenance in 2019.

Operations at Brierly Brook include drilling, blasting, and loading the gypsum onto trucks. The gypsum is then crushed, screened, and stockpiled for shipment. The mine supplies gypsum for the manufacturing of wallboard and cement in domestic markets.

## Coal

In 2024, coal production in Nova Scotia was 24,991 tonnes, valued at \$3.8 million, representing ~3% of the province's total mineral production value (see Figure 11; Table 1). This material came from stockpiles at the Donkin underground mine (Figure 12) in Cape Breton County.

Coal production in Nova Scotia has now ceased, with two of the operations, Donkin Mine and Stellarton Surface Coal Mine, last operating in 2023. In 2024, the Donkin Mine remained in a care and maintenance status, while reclamation activities continued at the Stellarton Surface Coal Mine.

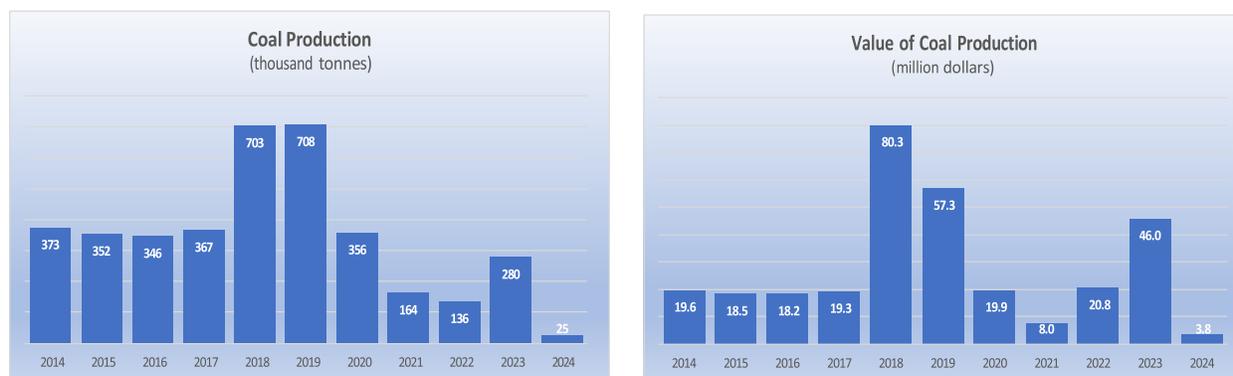


Figure 11. Coal production in Nova Scotia.



Figure 12. Donkin Mine, Cape Breton County

### ***Donkin, Cape Breton County***

The Donkin underground mine, operated by Kameron Coal Management Limited, was under care and maintenance during 2024 awaiting improved conditions that could potentially enable a restart of operations. During this time some of the remaining stockpiles were processed.

In 2024, the Donkin Mine shipped 24,991 tonnes of coal to domestic markets.

## Limestone

In 2024, Nova Scotia's limestone production totaled 289,286 tonnes across four operations; Brookfield Quarry, Glen Morrison, Upper Musquodoboit, and Southside Antigonish Harbour. The total produced limestone was worth a total value of \$7.7 million, accounting for 5.4% of the province's total mineral production value (see Figure 13; Table 1).

The largest portion of the limestone produced (~59%) was used as a feedstock for Portland cement production. Approximately 36% was utilized for managing combustion gas emissions at a coal-fired power station. The remaining limestone was sold for agricultural soil amendments, pulp and paper manufacturing, and other miscellaneous applications.

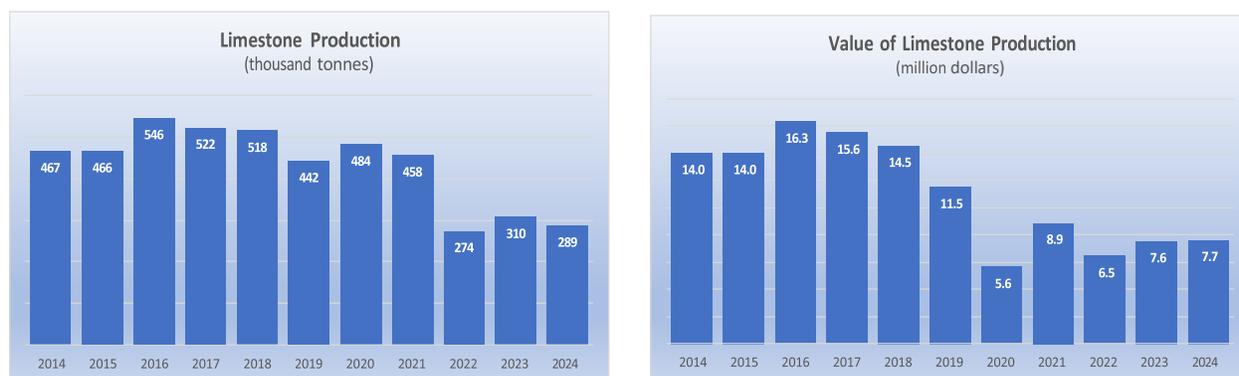


Figure 13. Limestone production in Nova Scotia.



Figure 14. Glen Morrison Quarry, Cape Breton County.

### **Brookfield, Colchester County**

Since 1965, Lafarge Canada Inc. has operated a limestone quarry and cement manufacturing plant in Pleasant Valley, located 5 km west of Brookfield in Colchester County.

In 2024, the Brookfield Quarry produced 398,956 tonnes of limestone, with approximately 171,431 tonnes of calcium oxide equivalent sold during the year. The mining process involves removing till and cap rock

overburden, followed by drilling, blasting, and loading the rock onto trucks for transport to a crushing plant. All limestone extracted from Brookfield is used exclusively in the production of cement products.

### ***Glen Morrison, Cape Breton County***

The limestone quarry at Glen Morrison in Cape Breton County, owned by Nova Scotia Power Incorporated, has been in operation since 1993. In 2024, Northern Contracting Limited managed quarry operations. The mining process involves removing overburden, drilling and blasting the limestone, and then hauling it with a front-end loader to a primary crusher. The limestone is further processed at an on-site crushing and screening facility.

In 2024, 104,614 tonnes of limestone were produced and shipped to Nova Scotia Power's generating station in Point Aconi, where it is used to help reduce stack emissions from coal and pet-coke combustion.

### ***Upper Musquodoboit, Halifax County***

Mosher Limestone Company Limited operates multiple quarries near Upper Musquodoboit in Halifax County. In 2024, the company crushed 25,835 tonnes of limestone of which around 1,018 tonnes was transported to the mill to be processed. The company's limestone is sourced from both quarry production and drawdown of existing stockpiles.

At its grinding plant in Upper Musquodoboit, the company produces agricultural-grade dolomite and limestone, available in both ground and pelletized forms. These products are sold throughout the Atlantic provinces in bagged or bulk format.

### ***Southside Antigonish Harbour, Antigonish County***

Antigonish Limestone Ltd. operates a small quarry at Southside Antigonish Harbour. In 2024, all limestone production was sourced from existing stockpiles. The limestone is crushed and sorted into three distinct sizes, each tailored to specific applications and markets. The company also runs a cage mill to produce finely ground limestone for the agricultural sector. 12,223 tonnes of limestone products were sold in 2024, with a significant portion used in agriculture.

## Silica Sand

In 2024, all of Nova Scotia's silica sand production originated from the West Indian Road Silica Pit in Nine Mile River, Hants County (Figure 16). Shipments from this site totaled 8,829 tonnes, with an estimated value of \$0.5 million. This represented 0.4% of the total value of Nova Scotia’s mineral production for the year (see Figure 15; Table 1).



**Figure 15.** Silica sand production in Nova Scotia.



**Figure 16.** Nine Mile River Silica Processing Facility, Hants County.

### ***Nine Mile River, Hants County***

Shaw Resources, a subsidiary of The Shaw Group Limited, extracts silica sand from a deposit on West Indian Road in Nine Mile River. The sand is mined from the pit and either stockpiled or transported to the company’s wash plant, where it is washed and screened into a range of products. These products are then distributed across the Atlantic provinces and Quebec.

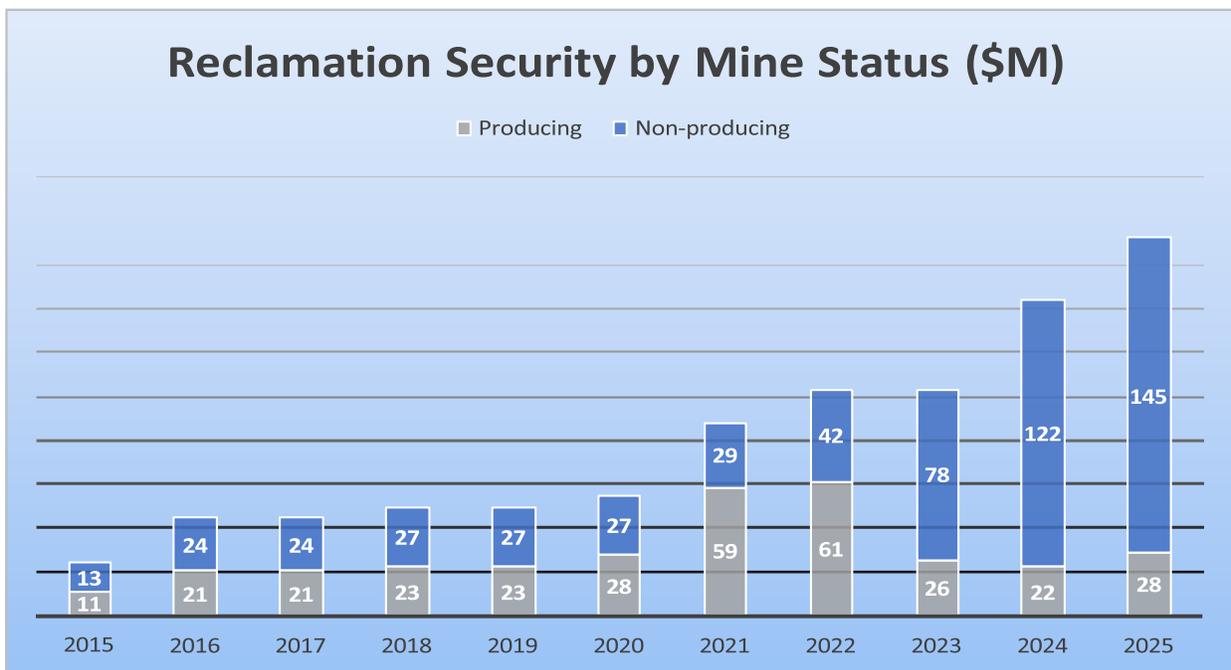
In 2024, 8,829 tonnes of silica sand were processed and shipped from an existing stockpile at the Nine Mile River site.

## Reclamation Security Table for Operating Mines

Reclamation securities for 2015 - 2025 are summarized below (see Figure 17), categorized by producing and non-producing site statuses for each year. While the figure does not provide an exact accounting of reclamation securities, it offers a generally accurate representation.

These securities, managed by either the Department of Natural Resources or the Department of Environment and Climate Change, may take the form of cash, letters of credit, surety bonds, or combinations of these. Through regular reclamation plan reviews, the province ensures that security amounts held accurately reflect the peak disturbance liabilities of mine sites, updating them as new information becomes available.

For details on tax and royalty data, please refer to the Natural Resources Canada website under the "Access ESTMA reports and data" section.



**Figure 17.** Reclamation Security by Mine Status.

## 2024 Abandoned Mine Opening Update

There are more than 8,500 abandoned mine openings in the province of Nova Scotia, spread across approximately 800 current and former mining and exploration sites. These openings pose hazards to people, wildlife, and the environment. In 2001, the Abandoned Mines Opening Remediation Program was initiated with the primary goal of reducing the risk associated with abandoned mine openings. In 2024, field staff noticed an increase in the amount of ATV, dirt bike and snowmobile traffic on Crown land. This prompted additional sign posting for select mine openings as well as metal posts with signage warning of open holes at well used access points to many abandoned mine sites on Crown land. The table below identifies abandoned mine openings in the province’s regions where additional signs were posted in 2024.



Figure 18: Example of a metal post with warning signage installed in the field.

Table 2. Locations of abandoned mine openings where additional signs were posted in 2024.

Central Region	Eastern Region	Western Region
Caribou Mines Dufferin Mines Harrigan Cove Joggins Jubilee Montague Mines Mooseland Oldham River Hebert Waverley	Cochrane Hill Country Harbour Mines Forest Hill Goldboro Goldenville Little Pond Stellarton Sydney Mines Thorburn	Colpton (Pleasant River Barrens) Molega Mines New Ross North Brookfield Stanburne Whiteburn Mines

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