



The Trona Story

What is TRONA?

Trona is a naturally occurring mineral that is chemically known as sodium sesquicarbonate, the raw material for soda ash. Soda ash is a versatile chemical used to make glass, paper, laundry detergents and many other products you come in contact with every day use. Soda ash is also used as a raw material in the manufacturing of other chemicals, including sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) and sodium phosphates (detergents).

TRONA and its associated products will play an important role in the future of our planet. Environmental problems, such as acid rain, can be controlled through modern technology and the use of trona related products. The trona industry is working to make our world a better place to live.

HISTORY

TRONA was discovered in Sweetwater County in 1938 during oil and gas explorations. The first mine shaft was excavated in 1946, and commercial production began in 1948. Up until that time, all soda ash in the United States was produced synthetically (chemically). TRONA is refined to produce soda ash in very large, and sophisticated refineries.

The trona industry is the major employer in Wyoming's Sweetwater and Uinta counties. There are four producers operating in Sweetwater County:

1. FMC Wyoming Corporation
2. General Chemical
3. OCI
4. Solvay Chemical, Inc.



The four companies produce over 15 million tons of trona and over 8 million tons of soda ash each year.

Over 90% of the soda ash produced in the United States and 15% of the World's supply is natural soda ash from Sweetwater County.

GEOLOGY

TRONA is a rare mineral. There are only a few locations where it is found, Africa, China, Turkey, and Mexico; and the only site where it is commercially mined is right here in Sweetwater County.

Fifty million years ago, the Green River Basin and surrounding areas were covered by a 20,000 square mile land-locked lake. As the earth changed through the ages, the water in the lake evaporated. What was left behind was over 100 billion tons of nearly pure trona wedged in between layers of sandstone and shale. In fact, even though trona is considered rare, 100 billion tons are enough to meet all the world's needs for thousand of years. These minerals deposits cover about 1000 square miles in the Green River Basin. The trona deposit varies in depth from 800 to 3500 feet below the surface and contains 42 layers of trona. Actual mining occurs at a depth of 800 to 1600 feet in beds that are 8 to 10 feet thick.

On May 21, 1997, Governor Jim Geringer signed a proclamation designating Sweetwater County the Trona Capital of the World and commending them for the 50th year of soda ash production.

For more information contact the Sweetwater Economic Development Office
800-803-6876

Wyoming Mining Association
<http://www.wma-minelife.com/>