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RARE EARTHS:

New trade group starts lobbying push

Manuel Quinones, E&E reporter

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A new trade group focused on promoting U.S. production of rare earth elements is urging members of Congress to form caucuses on rare earth issues.

The Association of Rare Earth, also known as RARE, is making its pitch in letters to lawmakers this week.

"Important legislative work is already being undertaken on this issue, and much more needs to be done to ensure reliable access to these materials that are critical to our technology and clean energy needs," RARE adviser Roger Ballentine, former chairman of the White House Climate Change Task Force under President Clinton, said in a statement.

RARE has tapped seasoned Washington, D.C., communications strategist Peter Mirijanian to handle media affairs. Among the group's advisers: Stuart Holliday, former Ambassador to the United Nations; retired Vice Adm. Conrad Lautenbacher, former administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and former Rep. Thomas McMillen (D-Md.), chairman of Homeland Security Capital Corp.

But some industry insiders are quietly questioning RARE's motives.

"I think it's a fair reaction because we only launched the week before last," said Adam Falkoff, RARE's president. "It came about by people who have known about the issue at the highest levels in both the Bush administration and the Clinton administration and Congress."

Falkoff was president of CapitalKeys LLC and co-founder of the Quinn Gillespie & Associates International Practice. He was also government affairs director for the Consumer Electronics Association.



RARE has yet to release a roster of members. Falkoff said members represent Fortune 500 technology and energy companies and international **rare** earth producers. The group plans to release the roster at an event in January.

In an interview, Falkoff called RARE "a diverse group," saying its members "represent the diversity of the uses for these [rare earth elements]."

The U.S. rare earths industry is competitive with China, the major exporter of the materials that are seen as critical to a wide range of technologies.

RARE is focusing on mining permits and international cooperation, Falkoff said. "We're not a China-bashing organization," Falkoff said, adding that the group has members with operations in China. "We want to work with them."

Lobbying on **rare** earths has been picking up, with several pieces of legislation related to the issue. Lynas Corp Ltd. of Australia has spent \$60,000 so far this year, and Molycorp Inc., the main mining player in the United States, has spent roughly \$500,000.

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