

MP Materials and the Race to Rebuild Rare Earth Supply Chains: Ryan Corbett on "The Next Big Thing" Podcast

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Key Takeaways

- MP Materials is building a fully integrated U.S. rare earth magnet supply chain, positioning itself to benefit from rising demand across AI, robotics, defense and electrification.
- China still dominates rare earth processing, but growing U.S. government support and commercial partnerships are creating opportunities for domestic leaders and funds such as the [WisdomTree Efficient Rare Earths Plus Strategic Metals Fund \(WDIG\)](#).
- The biggest opportunity lies in scaling neodymium and praseodymium (NdPr) magnet production, as demand continues to outpace secure rare earth supply outside China.

When people talk about the future of technology, they usually start with the end product. The electric vehicle (EV), the drone, the robot, the data center, even the fighter jet.

But underneath all that sits something perhaps less glamorous, but far more important than people often realize, the materials that make those systems work.

That is why we invited Ryan Corbett, CFO of MP Materials, on [The Next Big Thing](#). In our opinion, MP is one of the most important companies in the rare earths story, and one of the few sitting right at the center of the supply chain reset. MP's story is indeed about mining. But it is also about whether the U.S. and the West can actually build secure, scaled supply chains for the materials that modern industry now depends on.

This article summarizes some of the key messages from the conversation. Listen to the full episode [here](#).

Why We Spoke with MP Materials

MP Materials stands at the center of one of the most consequential industrial policy stories in America today. Operating the only rare earth mine in the United States at Mountain Pass, California, the company has moved decisively beyond extraction, commencing commercial production of neodymium-praseodymi-

um metal and trial production of automotive-grade sintered NdFeB magnets at its Independence facility in Fort Worth, Texas.

This is genuine vertical integration:

- Mining
- Processing
- Metallization
- Finished magnet manufacturing

The government backing is substantive. The U.S. Department of Defense has committed \$400 million to the company, and a long-term Pentagon offtake agreement anchors the buildout of "10X," a planned 120-acre magnet manufacturing campus in Northlake, Texas, representing a \$1.25 billion investment.¹ Commercial partnerships also reinforce the thesis. For example, Apple signed a \$500 million long-term agreement for domestically produced recycled rare earth magnets.² For investors focused on critical materials and supply chain resilience in the U.S., MP Materials may be the most complete domestic story in the space.

The [WisdomTree Efficient Rare Earths Plus Strategic Metals Fund \(WDIG\)](#) is an actively managed approach seeking to build exposure to both companies and metals futures contracts related to rare and strategic metals. For every hypothetical \$100 invested:

- \$90 generates exposure to a basket of rare earth and strategic mining, processing, recycling and final product assembly companies.
- \$10 is invested in short-term U.S. Treasuries to serve as collateral for a basket of metals futures.
- \$90 is exposed to a basket of metals futures.

Therefore, the total notional exposure would be \$180. Looking at the equity basket, as of June 11, 2026, MP Materials was in the top 10 holdings at a weight of 2.59%.

What Is MP Materials Actually Building?

Ryan's starting point was that MP is not just trying to be a miner. It is trying to rebuild the full supply chain in the U.S., from mine through to finished magnet products. He said the company's mission is to recreate the full chain at scale, because customers do not need intermediate products, they need magnets. That is the real end product, and that is what matters if you want to serve the automotive, industrial and defense markets properly.

Why Does the Value Chain Matter So Much?

Ryan emphasized that the important thing is not just mining and refining, it is having every step in the chain in place. Between mine, refining and magnet production, there are smaller but essential steps, things like metallization, fluorination and alloy flake manufacturing.³ He said these are often overlooked, but they are what make the system work. In other words, you do not get a real supply chain by doing the headline steps only. You need the whole thing.

What Exactly Are Rare Earths, and Which Ones Matter Most?

There are 17 rare earths, but the market tends to focus on a few names that really matter for magnets. Ryan explained that the key materials are neodymium and praseodymium, or NdPr, which are the building blocks of the strongest permanent magnets. In some higher-temperature applications, small amounts of dysprosium and terbium are also needed. But the main constraint is still NdPr. That is where the real supply-demand issue sits.

Why Is NdPr the Binding Constraint?

This was probably the most important part of the conversation. Ryan said the market often talks about heavy rare earths, but the real bottleneck is scaled NdPr oxide. He explained that the industry is seeing a huge rise in use cases, but not enough scalable ex-China supply to match it. In his view, that gap is where the imbalance is likely to get worse, not better, unless more production comes online.

How Big is the Opportunity?

He put the scale of the opportunity in very practical terms. MP currently produces about 50,000 tons of rare earth oxides in concentrate, and is targeting around 6,000 tons of NdPr oxide production, with output already running near 4,000 tons. On a fully integrated basis, that could support around 12,000 tons of magnets.⁴ That is a meaningful contribution to U.S. supply, but it does not solve the whole problem, which is exactly why he thinks the market is still underestimating the scale of the gap.

How Does China Fit into the Story?

China remains the center of gravity in rare earths. Ryan said it has about 60% of mining, about 90% in refining and nearly 95% in permanent magnets.⁵ His point was not just that China is dominant, but that it has used that dominance strategically for decades. That has made rare earths one of the clearest examples of supply chain risk becoming a geopolitical issue.

Where is Demand Coming From?

This part was especially interesting, because the demand story is much broader than a lot of people think. Automotive still matters a lot, and Ryan said it is around a quarter of demand, but the bigger point is that rare earth magnets sit inside a huge range of products, from consumer electronics and HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems to industrial pumps, elevators, drones and robotics. He also pointed to AI data centers, where efficient cooling and power systems create more demand for permanent magnets. That means the demand story is not narrow, it is becoming more and more diversified.

What About Physical AI, Robotics and Drones?

This was one of the clearest signs of where the market is going. Ryan said humanoid robots, industrial robots and drones all need high-performance magnets because they need strength, compactness and efficiency. He also highlighted defense use cases, where drones are becoming a major demand driver. His view was that these areas are not side stories, they are part of the next wave of demand for rare earths.

What Does Policy Support Change?

Ryan was very open that policy matters. He said the company's partnership with the U.S. government helped accelerate investment decisions, especially around magnets. The key idea was that if the government wants secure domestic supply, then policy can help close the gap between a strategic need and a commercial investment case. That support has helped MP move faster, but he was also careful to say that the underlying economics still matter. The business has to stand on its own over time.

What Should Investors Keep in Mind?

His final message was really about discipline. This space has a lot of noise, a lot of press releases and a lot of ambitious claims. Ryan's view was that investors need to separate the scaled producers with proven process from the projects that sound exciting but are unlikely to work in practice. MP's argument is that it has earned the right to be taken seriously because it has actually delivered on what it said it would do, and because its economics are rooted in a real supply chain, not just a story.

Final Thought

The big takeaway from this conversation is that rare earths are no longer just a niche mining story. They are now part of the wider conversation about industrial policy, geopolitical risk, AI infrastructure, robotics and defense. MP Materials sits right in the middle of that, and Ryan's message was that the real battle is not just about finding more rare earths, it is about building scale and the supply chain to turn them into something the modern economy actually needs.

1 Source: MP Materials. (2025, July 9). *MP Materials announces transformational public-private partnership with the Department of Defense to accelerate U.S. rare earth magnet independence*. MP Materials Corp.

2 Source: MP Materials. (2025, July 15). *MP Materials and Apple announce \$500 million partnership to produce recycled rare earth magnets in the United States*. MP Materials Corp. / SEC Form 8-K Exhibit 99.1.

3 Metallization refers to converting rare earth oxides into pure metal form; fluorination is a chemical treatment that prepares those metals for alloying; and alloy flake manufacturing is the process of melting and spinning the metals into thin flakes, the direct input for producing permanent magnets.

4 Source: MP Materials. (2026, February 26). *MP Materials reports fourth quarter and full year 2025 results*. MP Materials Corp.

5 Source: International Energy Agency. (2026, April 8). *New projects, partnerships and policies are needed to address supply chain risks for rare earth elements*. IEA.

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