

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

October 17, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

As you are aware, domestically produced minerals, fuel and nonfuel alike, are vital to our nation's economy and national security. These resources improve our quality of life on a daily basis, whether through use of cellphones, the ongoing benefits of national defense, or simply turning on a light. A reliable supply of oil, gas, coal, metals, and minerals are essential to modern life and the continued prosperity of the nation.

Last year, the Committee on Natural Resources ("Committee") sent a letter to your office and Secretary Perdue addressing the negative impact of unwarranted, unilateral administrative mineral withdrawals made in the final days of the previous Administration.¹ Some of these withdrawals remain in effect, such as the withdrawal area in Southwestern Oregon, which halts mineral entry in over 100,000 acres of public land for 20 years. Left in place, withdrawals such as these will harm local communities, job growth in the region, and even reduce funding for public education in the surrounding area. As Chairman Bishop noted in his letter, administrative mineral withdrawals remain a serious concern as they "[harm] our nation's economic and strategic potential." The Committee continues to believe mineral withdrawals, if they are to occur at all, are more properly addressed through an open legislative process rather than by administrative fiat.

Arbitrarily limiting access to minerals also poses security concerns. From nuclear control rods to advanced electronics, domestically produced metals and minerals provide invaluable contributions to the national security interests of the United States. The U.S. is now reliant on foreign sources for our supply of many of these materials – many of which are found within our borders – and this problem is only getting worse. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. was import reliant on foreign sources for 30 non-fuel minerals in the mid-1980s – this more than doubled to 64 commodities by 2017, with 21 imported at a rate of 100 percent. China provides the greatest number of these materials to the U.S., acting as a major supplier of 26 commodities in 2017.

¹ Letter from Chairman Rob Bishop to Sec. Zinke and Sec. Perdue, September 28, 2017:
https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/bishop_letter_on_mineral_withdrawals.pdf

America's increasing import reliance of nonfuel resources should not overshadow the nation's continued need for reliable domestic fuel sources. While the use of renewable energy technologies is growing, the high demand for traditional fuel sources such as coal, oil, and natural gas is undeniable. This could not be more clearly shown than the results of the New Mexico lease sale in early September, which grossed nearly \$1 billion for the American taxpayer, breaking all previous records and exceeding the revenue from all Bureau of Land Management's oil and gas sales in 2017 combined. The United States is the world's top producer of petroleum and natural gas hydrocarbons, and these industries provide a plethora of well-paying jobs and significant tax revenues, often in rural areas. Attempts by the previous Administration to ban energy and mineral development in vast areas of public land deny the taxpayer an immense revenue source, not to mention the countless direct and indirect jobs across the country.

There is no doubt that we need to be steadfast stewards of our public lands. We also need to provide for the economic and national security of our nation. These goals are not mutually exclusive. The current Administration has done much in the way of rescinding several of the heavy handed and onerous withdrawals of the past eight years, including President Trump's revocation of the Superior National Forest Withdrawal. However, much more needs to be done.

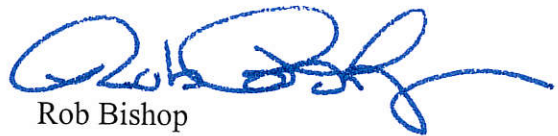
To better understand the extent of the remaining mineral withdrawals, the Committee requests the Bureau of Land Management to produce an inventory of all administrative withdrawals currently in effect, regarding both nonfuel mining and oil and natural gas development. The Committee further requests that the following information be included in the analysis: 1) the approximate acreages encompassed by all current withdrawals, 2) the agency that requested each withdrawal, 3) how long each withdrawal has been in effect, and 4) whether mineral assessments have been completed for the withdrawn areas in question, and if so, what minerals currently are, or would be, impacted.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and should you have any questions regarding the content of this letter, please contact Rebecca Konolige at 202-225-9297. The Committee respectfully requests a response on or before November 5. We look forward to your response.



Sincerely,

Paul Gosar, D.D.S.
Member
U.S. House of Representatives



Rob Bishop
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources