

April 25, 2022

Dear Members of Congress,

On behalf of our millions of members across the country, the undersigned organizations support the immediate passage of the “Clean Energy Minerals Reform Act of 2022”, a bill that would update the antiquated and racist hardrock mining law that has governed mining operations in the United States for 150 years.

Our hardrock mining law dates back to 1872, when the United States incentivized colonization and settlement of what is now the Western part of the country. Now 150 years old, the mining law allows anyone to stake claims on public land and extract the gold, copper, uranium, and other minerals from the ground without paying any royalties to the public. With an increased focus on the raw materials needed for clean energy supply chains to electrify our economy, there has never been a more important and compelling moment for updating the mining law.

The 1872 Mining Law contains no environmental or community protections. It threatens Indigenous and other mining-affected communities and the scarce drinking water upon which they depend. Hardrock mining releases arsenic, mercury, and lead into communities’ air and waters. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, 40 percent of Western headwaters are polluted by mining. In fact, the EPA’s Toxics Release Inventory has consistently shown that the hardrock industry releases more toxic chemicals into air, land and water than any other industry.

Even when mining operations cease, the destruction they leave behind impacts communities for generations. Hundreds of thousands of hazardous abandoned mines litter the West, polluting water and land and causing serious hazards. Without dedicated funding for reclamation, these old mines cost U.S. taxpayers tens of billions of dollars to clean up. Congress established a hardrock mines reclamation fund in the recently-passed Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, but has yet to appropriate any money. Since 1872, hardrock mining companies have taken more than \$300 billion worth of minerals from public land, without paying a dime in royalties to taxpayers. The Clean Energy Minerals Reform Act of 2022 provides a fair return to taxpayers for our minerals.

For 150 years, the hardrock mining law has prioritized the interests of mining corporations over the needs of the American people and Indigenous and other mining-affected communities. Over the years, mining has threatened many sacred and irreplaceable places, including national parks, yet community members and land managers have been unable to reject mine proposals where they do not belong.

This bill would remedy this long standing injustice and:

- Protect water resources and habitats by establishing strong environmental and cleanup standards specific to mining;
- Provide a fair return to taxpayers by ensuring a reasonable royalty on new mining

operations;

- Defend Indigenous and other mining-affected communities and wild places from irresponsible mining by giving land managers the ability to balance mining with other uses of the public's lands; and
- Create an Abandoned Mine Land Fund to address the long-standing hazards of abandoned mines to drinking water, fish and wildlife habitat, and the wellbeing of Indigenous and other mining-affected communities.

The Clean Energy Minerals Reform Act of 2022 recognizes that hardrock mining causes irreparable damage to sacred and valuable resources and disproportionately harms Indigenous Peoples. It recognizes that in order to meet the clean energy needs of the future, we cannot sacrifice other communities to get there.

We are grateful to the bill sponsors for this important effort to improve hardrock mining policy and urge broad support within Congress. We look forward to working with Senators Heinrich and Chair Grijalva on these common-sense solutions to modernize our hardrock mining law to fit a 21st century industry, and to begin to fix the toxic legacy left behind by abandoned mines over the last 150 years.

Sincerely,

Ahmut Pipa Foundation
Amigos Bravos
Arkansas Valley Conservation Coalition (AVCC)
Azul
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance
Californians for Western Wilderness
CALSTART
Cascade Forest Conservancy
Copper Country Alliance
Cultural Survival
Dakota Rural Action
Earthjustice
Earthworks
Endangered Species Coalition
Ethical Metalsmiths
Friends of the Earth US
Friends of the Inyo
Friends of the Sonoran Desert
Georgia Interfaith Power and Light
Gila Resources Information Project
Global Witness
Grand Canyon Trust

Grand Junction Area Broadband- GreatOld Broads for Wilderness
Great Basin Resource Watch
Great Bear Foundation
Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Bozeman Broadband
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
GreenLatinos
High Country Conservation Advocates
Information Network for Responsible Mining
Inland Ocean Coalition
League of Conservation Voters
Los Padres ForestWatch
Lynn Canal Conservation
Malach Consulting
MiningWatch Canada
Moms Clean Air Force
Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment
National Parks Conservation Association
Native American Land Conservancy
Natural Resources Defense Council
New Energy Nexus
New Mexico Environmental Law Center
New Mexico Wild
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
No Hot Creek Mine
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Observatoire d'Etudes et d'Appui à la Responsabilité Sociale et Environnementale, OEARSE en
sigle
Oregonians For Wild Utah
Oxfam America
Patagonia
Patagonia Area Resource Alliance
Portneuf Resource Council
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Publish What You Pay - United States
Rock Creek Alliance
Royal Gorge Preservation Project
San Juan Citizens Alliance
San Juan Citizens Alliance
Save Our Cabinets
Save The Scenic Santa Ritas
Sierra Club
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Southeast Alaska Conservation Council

Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
The Wilderness Society
United Women in Faith
Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition
Waterkeeper Alliance
WaterLegacy
Waterway Advocates
Western Organization of Resource Councils
Western Watersheds Project
Wild Connections