



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

APR 30 2024

The Honorable Pete Stauber
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Stauber:

Enclosed are responses to questions for the record submitted to the Department's witness, Steve Felgus, Ph.D, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Land and Minerals, following the Subcommittee's January 31, 2024, legislative hearing on several bills. These responses were prepared by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to you on these matters.

Sincerely,

Pamela L. Barkin
Acting Legislative Counsel
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources

Questions for the Record
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 2925, H.R. 6862,
H.R. 7003 and H.R. 7004
January 31, 2024

Questions from Representative Lamborn

Question 1: Dr. Feldgus, mineral mining was added to the FAST-41 only a few years ago, have there been any concerns that mining companies have been taking advantage of this acceleration process outside of the intent of the law? I don't understand when mines that are not even running yet are having these expedited opportunities stripped away.

Response: There has only been one mining project accepted under the FAST-41 criteria – the South32 Hermosa Critical Minerals Project. The U.S. Forest Service is the lead agency for the permitting process on this project. To date, the BLM does not have any mining projects accepted as covered projects under the FAST-41 process.

Question 2: The Administration has said that they are prioritizing national defense and energy security priorities, and I also agree with this sentiment, it is what much of my time in Congress has worked hard to protect. Dr. Feldgus, would you concur that many of the green energies the Administration is prioritizing uses some of these hardrock minerals, such as Nickel and Copper use in electric vehicles? I believe these policies just seem contradictory to what the Biden administration is saying their priorities for national security, when these policy decisions are being made behind closed doors that undermine an all of the above approach to the energy sector. Additionally, the National Security issues regarding domestic mining vs the chokehold that China has on all mining and mineral refinement is very concerning to me.

Response: The Department recognizes that the rapid buildout of a clean energy economy is fueling a significant increase in demand for responsibly sourced critical minerals. As we transition to a clean energy economy, it is essential that the BLM's mining program promote the highest environmental and public engagement standards, including those related to environmental justice and Tribal engagement. As such, the Department continues to process notices and plans of operation for exploration and mining in an environmentally responsible manner.

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Questions from Representative DelBene

Question 1: What have been the barriers to full implementation of the National Landslide Preparedness Act to date?

Response: To date, there have been no barriers to implementing the National Landslide Preparedness Act. The Interagency Coordination Committee on Landslide Hazards has been established and will hold its second meeting in March 2024. Nominations to the Federal Advisory Committee on Landslides are moving through the vetting process, with a first meeting planned for the fourth quarter of fiscal 2024. The U.S. Geological Survey is also focusing resources to implement other activities directed by the Act, such as the 3D Elevation Program (3DEP), developing a national landslide hazard and risk database and expanding debris-flow early warning in partnership with the National Weather Service.

Question 2: What are the near-term priorities the Department of the Interior is working on with respect to implementation of the Act, and how will they be affected if the Act expires?

Response: Near-term implementation priorities include continuing the work of the Interagency Coordination Committee on Landslide Hazards; developing an interagency management plan; and establishing the Federal Advisory Committee on Landslides. If the Act expires, the authority for these governance bodies will lapse, potentially reducing federal and non-federal input on landslide hazards to the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Geological Survey. Another priority at the Department of the Interior is establishing the 3D Elevation Federal Interagency Coordinating Committee (3DE-FICC) in 2024 to govern the 3D Elevation Program and the 3D Hydrography Program. If the Act expires, the committee may not proceed, hindering federal agencies' engagement in the program. Lastly, it is crucial to continue the National Geospatial Advisory Committee 3DEP Subcommittee and provide its program assessment to the 3DE-FICC when it is established. If the Act expires, the authority for the Subcommittee will lapse, potentially reducing the non-federal input provided by the Subcommittee.