

February 24, 2026

**RE: House Natural Resources Committee Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee  
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 7458, The Domestic Opportunities for Resource Exploration  
Act**

Dear Chairman Stauber, Ranking Member Ansari, and members of the House Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources,

On behalf of the 37 groups and organizations, we write to express our strong opposition to H.R. 7458, The Domestic Opportunities for Resource Exploration Act. This legislation proposes a five-fold increase in the surface disturbance acreage limit—from 5 acres to 25 acres—for mining exploration activities that are not subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). **This bill will put hundreds of millions of additional acres at risk of mining activity occurring without any Tribal consultation or public input.** This bill advances the flawed theory that underpins much of the legislation originating in the House Natural Resources Committee in the 119th Congress: that engaging the public is a bad thing. On the contrary, early public input minimizes conflict, litigation, and expense. Given the devastating impacts that mining can have on our public lands and communities, Congress should reject legislation to green light more of it by bypassing the essential step of public engagement.

Currently, hardrock mine exploration operations on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands that disturb fewer than 5 surface acres simply require a notice filed with the land manager in accordance with 43 CFR 3809.300–3809.336. Filing this notice authorizes activities such as road construction, drilling, blasting, sampling, and the deployment of any mining equipment. But even five acres of disturbance can have extensive impacts, depending on the affected resources. Furthermore, because the current regulations allow notice-level operations to bypass public review under NEPA and the National Historic Preservation Act, there is no opportunity for the public to voice their concerns or even support for particular mining projects. Expanding the acreage disturbance limit for mining claimants so dramatically will thus allow vast tracts of public lands to be subject to disturbance without any real analysis of the impacts, Tribal consultation, or public input.

This serious issue would only be compounded by the fact that H.R. 7458 would also grant mining companies the same ability to dictate their own actions on National Forest System lands. This bill would authorize mineral exploration and associated activities like road construction without any public input on an estimated 150 million acres.

Mining exploration often begins with heavy equipment carving access roads into remote landscapes before drilling and blasting bore deep test holes into the earth to assess mineral deposits. This process can cause serious disturbances to wildlife and human communities. A glaring example of the destruction these notice level operations can cause is in the Big Sandy River Valley in Arizona, where exploration operations began without formal or informal Tribal

consultation. According to a 2024 Lawsuit initiated by the Hualapai Tribe,<sup>1</sup> nearly 50, 300-foot-deep test holes were drilled into lands that the Hualapai people consider sacred. In Nevada, local residents and the Timbisha Shoshone have expressed concerns that notice-level exploration activities near Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge would penetrate the water table and seriously jeopardize cultural resources and imperiled species.

Additionally, the bill gives sweeping authority to the Secretary to approve exploration activities so long as the Secretary determines they have provided “adequate” financial assurance, without providing any definition or criteria for what constitutes “adequate” assurance. This vague language would leave the public and stakeholders in the dark about the requirements an exploration application must adhere to in order to proceed. This would create uncertainty for claimants as well as raise concerns about consistency, transparency, and the limits of administrative discretion.

Should this bill be enacted, it would afford even greater latitude to mining corporations, which already operate with minimal accountability, allowing them to profit extensively from the exploitation of our public lands.

For all these reasons, we oppose H.R. 7458 and ask the members of the committee to not advance it. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alaska Wilderness League  
Basin and Range Watch  
CactusToCloud Institute  
Californians for Western Wildness  
CalWild  
Cascade Forest Conservancy  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Climate Justice Alliance  
Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship  
Earthjustice  
Earthworks  
Environmental Protection Information Center  
Faith Organizing Alliance  
Food and Water Watch  
Friends of the Inyo  
Great Basin Resource Watch  
Great Old Broads for Wilderness  
League of Conservation Voters  
Los Padres Forest Watch  
Native Movement

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<sup>1</sup> *Hualapai Indian Tribe v. Haaland*, 755 F. Supp. 3d 1165, 1175 (D. Ariz. 2024)

Native Organizers Alliance  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Nature For All  
Nuclear Information and Resource Service  
Oregon Natural Desert Association  
Project Eleven Hundred  
San Juan Citizens Alliance  
Sierra Club  
Silvix Resources  
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance  
The Alaska Center  
The Wilderness Society  
WE ACT for Environmental Justice  
Western Environmental Law Center  
Western Slope Conservation Center  
Wild Connections  
Wildlife for All