



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**

PO BOX 9257
MISSOULA, MT 59807
406-926-1908

March 6, 2024

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
202 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
1203 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Grijalva:

On behalf of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA), the voice for our wild public lands, waters and wildlife, I write to express our support for Title IV of the Northern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act (H.R. 3173). Title IV, cited as the Ruby Mountains Protection Act, would withdraw 309,272 acres of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and 39,926 acres of the Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas leasing.

The Ruby Mountains in northeastern Nevada are a premiere destination for sportsmen and women. They are immensely valuable to hunters by providing a critical migratory corridor for the largest mule deer herd in the state and habitat for the imperiled greater sage-grouse. Anglers can pursue the highly sought after Lahontan cutthroat trout, Nevada's state fish, in the region's mountain streams and alpine lakes.

In 2019, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) determined that approximately 54,000 acres in the Ruby Mountains were unsuitable for oil and gas leasing. The USFS cited limited geologic potential for drilling in the area under consideration and concerns regarding impacts to wildlife values. Immediately following the determination by the USFS in 2019, a private entity filed Expressions of Interest to lease in the region. Despite being classified as having no or low potential for oil and gas, the Ruby Mountains continue to be threatened by speculative leasing and associated development.

Once again, BHA shares our support for Title IV of H.R. 3173 and we would like to thank the committee for holding a hearing on this legislation that would conserve our nation's public lands enjoyed by all Americans. Withdrawing these lands from leasing would protect an intact landscape from habitat fragmentation and ensure the health of a crucial watershed while continuing to manage the region for multiple use. Doing so is in the interest of fish and wildlife as well as hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts who recreate on these public lands.

Sincerely,

Kaden McArthur
Government Relations Manager
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers