



September 2, 2025

Dear Chairman Stauber, Ranking Member Ansari, and the members of the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee:

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. On behalf of our 1.6 million members and supporters nationwide, I write to share our thoughts on select legislation ahead of a hearing in the Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources scheduled for September 3, 2025.

NPCA understands the importance of developing robust, responsible and resilient domestic supply chains for minerals. Clean energy, national security and infrastructure all rely on minerals. However, the existing framework for managing mining exploration and development on our public lands is not up to the modern standards needed to reduce conflict with the continued protection of the natural, cultural and historic resources of the National Park System. Under the mining law of 1872 and the overlying regulatory landscape, multi-national mining corporations and speculators have near unlimited access to public land. This system, designed for the pick and shovel miner of the California gold rush, hands the responsibility of managing public lands over to companies looking to profit from them without providing for any fair return to the American taxpayer.

On top of the antiquated regulatory framework, the Trump administration has reduced environmental and historical review timelines, reduced opportunity for public input, directed agencies to identify swathes of public lands for mineral development, directed agencies to expedite approval for mineral projects and even promoted speculative mineral exploration development inside of a national park.

H.R. 4090 - To codify certain provisions of certain Executive Orders relating to domestic mining and hardrock mineral resources: NPCA **opposes** this legislation, which would codify some provisions of Executive Order (EO) 14241: [*Immediate Measures To Increase American Mineral Production*](#). The EO directs the Secretary of the Interior to identify public lands with high mineral potential and prioritize mineral development activities. When combined with other actions taken by the administration regarding mineral development on public lands, this EO provides significant benefits for the mining industry in the short term at great risk to our national parks and public lands, while doing little to provide for long-term, sustainable and low-conflict domestic mineral

supply-chains. We appreciate the provisions in H.R. 4090 to place some modest oversight on the administration's mineral agenda. However, the bill still does not adequately address the fundamental underlying issues with mining on public lands.

H.R.1366 - Mining Regulatory Clarity Act of 2025: NPCA **opposes** this legislation, which would provide mining companies with more access to public lands to dump mine waste. This version of the bill has been improved since last Congress (E.g., the previous version of the bill would have created legal ambiguity for claimants inside of national park units). However, despite the marginal improvements there are still issues regarding the clarity of the lands to which this bill would apply. Given the current administration's mining policies, it is likely that the mill sites in this bill would be abused by mining companies to the detriment of national parks and connected public lands.

Additional Background on Mining and National Parks

Under current law, if a national park is established on land where active mining claims are staked, the mining claim is preserved as an inholding and the surface activities on that claim become subject to the regulations of the National Park Service. The Park Service has the legal authority to approve or deny plans of operation for mining on claims inside of the park. These regulations apply to all claims inside of parks or monuments managed by the National Park Service.

According to a recent analysis from NPCA:

- There are approximately 627 active mining claims within 15 national park units across 11 western states and Alaska,
- Across the 11 western states and Alaska there are approximately:
 - 2,114 total active claims within national monuments managed by BLM, USFS and USFWS
 - 43,639 total active claims within 10 miles of national park or monument
 - 59,371 total active claims between 10-20 miles of national park or monument
 - 56,454 total active claims between 20-30 miles of national park or monument
 - With a total of 163,034 active claims within 30 miles of a national park or monument

According to NPCA's analysis, about 33 percent of active mining claims are located within 30 miles of a national park or monument. While these claims are not all destined to become large mining operations, exploration activities, like drilling and road building, on these lands still pose a huge risk to resources protected by the National Park System.

NPCA is particularly concerned about a growing boom of exploration and mining activities in Southeastern Utah, around the California Desert, Southwestern Nevada, the Gates of the Arctic and the greater Grand Canyon area. Recent exploration for lithium, uranium, cobalt, rare earth elements and more all raise serious concerns for the potential impacts to water, air, wildlife, visitor experience and sensitive cultural resources at our national parks in these landscapes.

On April 8, just two weeks after signing EO 14241, the Trump administration ignored the requirements of the Mining in the Parks Act and approved further mineral exploration work at the Colosseum Mine in Mojave National Preserve. The approval, published in a BLM press release, cites a plan of operations from 1985 that pre-dates the creation of the park and ignores the congressionally designated status of the lands in which the mine is located. Without conducting a modern environmental review, the approval of the Colosseum project threatens the natural resources that the park was established to protect. The administration touts this approval as a win for the “American Energy Dominance” agenda.

With recent efforts to expand investment in domestic mining, cut permitting requirements and give away more public land to the mining industry, we are still concerned about the lack of proposals on the table to ensure that our most special places are not sacrificed in the process. To be clear, NPCA does not oppose responsibly sited mining projects so long as they are paired with adequate environmental and social safeguards and modernization of the laws that govern mining on public lands to ensure our national parks and special places are protected.

NPCA suggests that mining and mineral policy conversations include:

- Protecting special places like national parks from adjacent harmful mining activities
- Increasing the annual claim maintenance fee to better reflect the value of the public land being locked up for mining and return value to the taxpayer
- Increasing investment in abandoned mine land (AML) reclamation with a clear commitment for additional funding to address the approximately 38,000 AML features across our national parks
- Increased investment in mining schools and mining engineering, with commitments to improve federal expertise in mining.
- A mining royalty that would return fair value back to the American taxpayer for use of public lands and provide vital funding for future conservation
- More discretion for land managers to determine landscapes more suitable for mining development and steer developers away from areas of high conflict (those directly outside of a national park)
- Increased investment in recycling
- Increased investment in end-of-life planning for mine sites to be either re-mined or converted for other uses such as renewable energy development.
- Robust scientific review and environmental safeguards for all extractive industries, including coal and deep-sea mining, to ensure protection of ecosystems and cultural resources.

We appreciate the work of this committee to advance the protection of our national parks and special places. As you look to invest in domestic mining and address concerns with the permitting process, we hope you will also address the systemic deficiencies with our mining systems. NPCA stands ready to work with the committee to develop real, science-based

solutions that meet our mineral needs without sacrificing public health, our climate or America's most treasured landscapes and seascapes. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Charlie Olsen at colsen@npca.org.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Christina Hazard

Legislative Director