

To: Marc Himmelstein[Marc_Himmelstein@nes-dc.com]
From: Cason, James
Sent: 2017-08-29T18:34:11-04:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: Fwd: *News Alert* Secretary Zinke pushes for mining ban near park
Received: 2017-08-31T07:41:46-04:00

FYI. Appears similar to other withdrawals with mineral interests.

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From: **Nachmany, Eli** <eli_nachmany@ios.doi.gov>
Date: Tue, Aug 29, 2017 at 2:44 PM
Subject: *News Alert* Secretary Zinke pushes for mining ban near park
To:

E&E News -- YELLOWSTONE: Zinke pushes for mining ban near park

Dylan Brown
August 29, 2017

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has pledged whatever resources he can provide to speed up the federal review of a mining ban north of Yellowstone National Park.

The former Montana congressman supports a proposed 20-year mineral withdrawal on more than 30,000 acres of the Custer Gallatin National Forest in his home state.

Requests from two companies to explore for gold and other minerals in Park County have sparked a backlash from local businesses looking to protect a burgeoning recreation and tourism economy in an area where mining dates back to 1863 (Greenwire, Aug. 3, 2016).

Last year, the Obama administration imposed a two-year pause while the Forest Service reviews the longer ban. While the withdrawal would not affect existing mining claims, it would effectively block development of large-scale mines.

"The secretary supports protecting the Paradise Valley from mineral development," Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said. "He believes the environmental review is an important part of the process, and in an effort to speed up the process, he is dedicating Department of the Interior resources to assist the U.S. Forest Service."

In a letter to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, who oversees the Forest Service, Zinke offered a Bureau of Land Management geologist and mineral examiner to expedite the National Environmental Policy Act review.

The letter also requests expanding the withdrawal to include additional minerals like oil, gas, coal and phosphate but did not address the permanent ban, S. 941, proposed by Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) (E&E Daily, July 27).

The Yellowstone Gateway Business Coalition hailed Zinke's leadership but urged support for the

"Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act."

"We still need a permanent solution for our children, our businesses and our way of life," the group said in a statement.

Montana Republican Sen. Steve Daines has declined to support the bill, but a spokesman said Daines has urged Zinke and Perdue to make the review a "priority," reiterating that "this is not a suitable place for a mine."

Rep. Greg Gianforte (R-Mont.) also "supports a long-term moratorium on new mining claims that will help protect Paradise Valley's economy and way of life," a spokesman said. "And he will continue to work with the community for a permanent solution."

The mining industry, however, opposed the bill and withdrawal.

"A mineral withdrawal of the magnitude under analysis appears to be gross overreaction to two small proposed exploration projects," said Montana Mining Association Executive Director Tammy Johnson. "Mining activity has been present in the two historic mining districts for more than 100 years and has presented few, if any, significant environmental impacts."

Johnson and other industry groups have argued the existing regulatory framework can protect an area that was purposely left out of previous wilderness designations because of its mining potential.

"The idea that exploration and mining at Emigrant and Jardine is a threat to Yellowstone Park is not supported by the historical record or science, since both districts are downstream from the Park," the American Exploration & Mining Association wrote in comments to the Forest Service.

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Sincerely,
Eli Nachmany
Writer, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Communications