

Exposing U.S. Supply Chains to Risk

LAND WITHDRAWALS

New mining operations are already either restricted or banned on more than half of all federally owned public lands. Federal lands account for as much as 86 percent of the land area in certain Western states and these same states account for 75 percent of our nation's metals production.

The U.S. is currently more import dependent for the minerals we need than at any other time in history. We are now entirely import dependent for 15 key mineral resources, and more than 50 percent import dependent for an additional 36 mineral commodities – even though we have significant deposits of some of these minerals within our borders.

A history of overreach returns.

In recent years, large-scale mineral withdrawals under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) have been abused in terms of need and scope. FLPMA requires congressional approval if mining activities are to be curtailed by large-scale withdrawals. Specifically, mineral withdrawals of more than 5,000 acres are subject to congressional approval.

Yet, in 2015, under the Obama administration, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) proposed to withdraw up to 10 million acres of land from new mining operations to protect the sage grouse – a bird that was not endangered, whose habitat has been improved by mining conservation agreements and habitat restoration efforts.

While that withdrawal was canceled under the Trump administration, the Biden administration is now reconsidering that action with an announcement likely this year. The administration has also returned to a practice of stunning and sweeping withdrawals of mineral-rich land, announcing the withdrawal of hundreds of thousands of acres of minerals-rich land in Minnesota in January 2023, and, in February 2023, blocked future proposals across more than 300 square miles of Alaska land. And in March 2023, more than 500,000 acres of federal lands was designated as a national monument, reportedly without substantive input from the state.

At a time when demand for minerals such as copper, nickel and cobalt are skyrocketing for use in electric vehicles and solar and wind infrastructure, the administration is withdrawing hundreds of thousands of acres of land that could provide U.S. manufacturers with plentiful sources of these same minerals.

America the...unnecessary importer?

Our import dependence for key mineral commodities has doubled over the past two decades. Removing large swaths of additional mineral-rich lands from development will further increase our import dependence.

Less than half of the mineral needs of U.S. manufacturing are met from domestically mined resources. As a result, key domestic industries are left unnecessarily vulnerable to disruptions from extended, complex and fragile supply chains. By closing off more and more U.S. land to responsible domestic mining, the administration is sacrificing high-paying American jobs, and supporting overseas mining operations that may be conducted under sub-standard environmental, labor and safety standards.