

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 entirely import dependent for 17 key mineral resources, and more than 50 percent import dependent for an additional 30 mineral commodities – even though we have significant deposits of some of these minerals within our borders.

A history of overreach.

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, 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.

In 2017 DOI wisely cancelled that withdrawal but, in February 2021, the U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho vacated the cancellation of the proposed withdrawal. The Judge did not immediately reinstitute the withdrawal, but remanded the matter to DOI for consideration of whether the withdrawal is needed for sage grouse conservation and directed DOI to reinstate the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to evaluate the environmental impacts of a withdrawal.

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.