



BLM NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Department of the Interior • Bureau of Land Management • Washington, D.C., Office • 1849 C Street N.W. • Washington, D.C.

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BLM Schedules Public Scoping Meetings on Proposed Minerals Withdrawal in Sagebrush Focal Areas and Extends public comment period

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is holding a series of public meetings across the west to gather information on a proposal to withdraw lands determined to be crucial to the survival of the greater sage-grouse from location and entry under the 1872 Mining Law, subject to valid existing rights. The BLM is also extending the public comment period on the withdrawal proposal until January 15, 2016 to allow the Secretary of the Interior to collect additional information relevant to the decision on whether to withdraw these areas from the location of new mining claims for up to 20 years. An interactive map of the areas included in the proposed withdrawal is available at www.blm.gov/sagegrouse.

Meetings are scheduled for:

December 14:

Burns, OR; 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Harney County Chamber of Commerce
484 North Broadway
Burns, Oregon 97720

Lakeview, OR; 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Lakeview BLM District Office
1301 South G Street
Lakeview, Oregon 97630

Salt Lake City, UT; 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Salt Lake City BLM Office
2370 South Decker Lake Drive
West Valley City, Utah 84119

December 15:

Boise, ID; 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM
Best Western Vista Inn & Conference Center
2645 Airport Way
Boise, Idaho 83709

Rock Springs; 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Rock Springs BLM Field Office
280 Highway 191 North
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901

Reno; 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
The Nugget
1100 Nugget Avenue
Sparks, Nevada 89431

December 16:

Idaho Falls; 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM
Shiloh Suites Conference Hotel
780 Lindsay Blvd.
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83402

Elko; 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Elko Conference Center
724 Moren Way
Elko, Nevada 89801

Malta; 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Great Northern Hotel
2 South 1st Street East
Malta, Montana 59538

The previously announced withdrawal proposal is consistent with the unprecedented effort to conserve the greater sage-grouse and its habitat and was made in response to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) identifying habitat disturbance and fragmentation caused by certain hardrock mining operations as a threat to sage-grouse habitat. This finding was why the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land use plan amendments and revisions finalized in September recommend that the Secretary of the Interior exercise her authority under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) to safeguard the most important landscapes identified by the FWS within Priority Habitat Management Areas – identified as Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFAs) – by reducing the threat posed by certain future hardrock mining operations through what is known as a “withdrawal.”

As part of the careful consideration of this withdrawal proposal, information will be sought from the states, stakeholders and others on mineral potential, including rare earths, as well as the importance of these areas as sagebrush habitat. These efforts will be undertaken under the leadership of the BLM in cooperation with the USFS and in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. At the end of the process, a decision on the proposal may be made.

As part of the withdrawal process the lands covered by the proposal have been temporarily segregated for period of up to two years. During that period, the agencies will undertake environmental and other analyses to determine if the lands should be formally withdrawn to protect sage-grouse habitat from adverse effects of future locatable exploration and mining. This process will be transparent and invite participation by the public, tribes, environmental groups, industry, state and local government, as well as other stakeholders.

Neither the segregation for up to two years, nor any subsequent withdrawal, would prohibit ongoing or future mineral exploration or extraction operations on valid pre-existing mining claims, or any other authorized uses on these lands. Under FLPMA, the Secretary may withdraw these lands for a maximum of 20 years, and may extend the period in the future.

Written comments must be received by January 15, 2016. Comments should be addressed to the BLM Director, 1849 C Street NW (WO-200), Washington, DC 20240 or electronically to sagebrush_withdrawals@blm.gov.

The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to manage and conserve the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations under our mandate of multiple-use and sustained yield. In Fiscal Year 2014, the BLM generated \$5.2 billion in receipts from public lands.

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