



COUNTY OF DEL NORTE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Jerome E. Perez, State Director
BLM Oregon
1220 S.W. 3rd Avenue
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09/22/15

Subject: Mineral Withdrawal in Support of the Southwestern Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act

Dear State Director Perez,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very critical subject. The responsiveness of the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service to the request of our federal legislators for a five-year mineral withdrawal on lands that flow into our pristine watersheds is greatly appreciated.

Del Norte County is home to the Smith River which is considered to be the prize of the California Wild and Scenic River System because of its unparalleled free-flowing status, large and abundant salmon and steelhead stock, and extraordinary botanical diversity. The river's recreation opportunities are abundant and it provides the indirect primary source of drinking water for the majority of Del Norte County's 28,000 residents. The value of a healthy Smith River to the vitality of Del Norte County is incalculable. While the California portion of the Smith River was afforded protection under the Smith River National Recreation Area Act and Wild and Scenic River designation, the upper reaches of the North Fork of the Smith River, which lie in Oregon, remain vulnerable to large scale strip mining operations.

In July 2014, the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to oppose the issuance of the limited water use license for Red Flat Nickel Corporation's Cleopatra Check Drilling Program based on the potential to cause significant adverse environmental impacts within the overall watershed of the Smith River and subsequent impacts on drinking water for residents and thousands of annual visitors. While this request was later withdrawn, the County has continued to work with California state legislators to garner the support needed to permanently safeguard the North Fork of the Smith River. Most recently the California State Legislature approved Senate Joint Resolution No. 3 – Smith River Watershed Protection which resolves that the state Legislature will urge the President of the United States and Congress to permanently safeguard the Smith River.

Given the exigency of the matter, Del Norte County strongly urges your support in recommending approval of the mineral withdrawal to the Director of the Bureau of Land Management to allow adequate time for our federal legislators to approve the Southwest Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act which will permanently protect our world class rivers and streams.

Respectfully submitted,



David Finigan, Chair

cc: Representative Jared Huffman, U.S. Congress
Senator Mike McGuire, California State Senate
Mayor Ron Gastineau, City of Crescent City Council