

**SOUTHWEST OREGON
MINERAL WITHDRAWAL**

MEDIA AND PRESS RELEASES

JAN. 12 THROUGH JAN. 15, 2017

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BLM Announces Southwest Oregon Withdrawal: More than 100,000 acres of federal lands will be protected to safeguard critical watersheds

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Portland, OR –The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced today that the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management has signed a public land order for a 20-year term withdrawing lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the BLM in the southwest corner of Oregon, subject to valid existing rights.

This withdrawal includes 95,805 acres of National Forest System lands on the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, and 5,216 acres of Bureau of Land Management public lands in the Medford and Coos Bay Districts of the BLM. The lands are in Josephine and Curry Counties. The Assistant Secretary’s Order withdraws these lands from settlement, sale, location, and entry under the public land laws, location and entry under the U.S. mining laws, and operation of the

mineral and geothermal leasing laws, for a period of 20 years while Congress considers legislation to permanently withdraw those areas. This action will also protect the natural resources in the southwestern Oregon watersheds from possible adverse effects of mineral development.

This withdrawal does not prohibit or restrict any other authorized uses on these lands. The withdrawal protects these watersheds from possible adverse effects of mineral development. Also, while this action prohibits the location of new mining claims, it does not prohibit ongoing or future mining exploration or extraction operations on valid pre-existing mining claims.

The area covered by this action is generally known as the Klamath Mountains and includes the Rough and Ready-Baldface Creek and the Hunter Creek-North Fork Pistol River subwatersheds of southwestern Oregon. The defining characteristic of the proposal is the North Fork of the Smith River, which originates in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness and drains most of the area under consideration for withdrawal. Creeks that feed into the North Fork and other rivers that flow to the Oregon Coast offer unique ecological features stemming from the confluence of the Coast Range, Cascades, and Siskiyou Mountains. A high concentration of rare plants, forested trails, and scenic views are all emblematic of these drainages. Rough and Ready Creek and Baldface Creek are listed as eligible for National Wild and Scenic River designation by the U.S. Forest Service.

The areas protected include the watershed of the National Wild and Scenic North Fork Smith River in Oregon and the watershed of Rough and Ready Creek. These rivers are known for their wild salmon and steelhead populations, and provide vital economic, recreation and natural resources to the area.

Additional information about the BLM's mineral program is available online at: www.blm.gov.

DeFazio, Huffman, Wyden, Merkley Secure Critical 20 Year Mining Ban in Southwestern Oregon, Smith River Watershed

Jan 12, 2017 Press Release

WASHINGTON—Reps. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Jared Huffman (D-CA) and Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Jeff Merkley (D-OR) today secured a twenty-year ban on new mining projects in an ecologically and economically critical region in Southwest Oregon.

The areas protected include the watershed of the National Wild and Scenic North Fork Smith River in Oregon, the watershed of Rough and Ready Creek (an eligible Wild and Scenic River and tributary to the National Wild and Scenic Illinois and Rogue rivers), as well as 17 miles of the National Wild and Scenic Chetco River.

These rivers are known for their wild salmon and steelhead populations, and provide vital economic, recreational and natural resources to the area.

Also protected from mining would be the headwaters of Hunter Creek and the Pistol River—two prized native salmon and

steelhead rivers that flow directly into the Pacific Ocean along the spectacular Wild Rivers Coast of Southern Oregon and Northern California.

“This is an incredible victory for Southwest Oregon,” said **Rep. Peter DeFazio**, D-OR. “This mining ban will support the area’s recreation economy, safeguard safe drinking water sources for thousands of families in the area, and stop the threats of foreign-owned nickel mining companies who want to strip-mine this beautiful area. I’m proud to have helped to protect this unique land, and I thank my colleagues for their help in accomplishing this important goal.”

“The people of Del Norte County, the Elk Valley and Tolowa Dee-ni’ tribes, and thousands of other Californians and Oregonians who cherish the Smith River have united in working to secure two decades of protection for this spectacular landscape and its wildlife for future generations,” said **Rep. Jared Huffman**, D-CA. “I applaud the Obama Administration for taking this action today and thank my colleagues for their hard work and support.”

“I’m very pleased this unique landscape will be safeguarded for 20 years from future mining operations, protecting clean water, diverse ecosystems and recreation opportunities for Oregonians,” **Senator Ron Wyden** said. “With Oregonians’ overwhelming support for this action, I have been a long-time strong advocate for this approach because it provides Congress time to pass a bill that will permanently protect this special place.”

“The pristine waters of these Southwest Oregon rivers are a public treasure that we owe it to future generations to preserve,” said **Senator Jeff Merkley**. “Mining would have posed an

unacceptable threat to the region's clean water and to the fishing and recreation economy that many rely on. These lands and waters belong to all of us, and today's news is a huge victory in the fight to ensure that our beloved citizen-owned resources are passed down to future generations in the same condition we received them."

[http://defazio.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/defazio-huffman-wyden-merkley-secure-critical-20-year-mining-ban-in](http://defazio.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/defazio-huffman-wyden-merkley-secure-critical-20-year-mining-ban-in-southwestern-oregon-smith-river-watershed)

[http://huffman.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/huffman-defazio-wyden-merkley-secure-critical-20-year-mining-ban-in](http://huffman.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/huffman-defazio-wyden-merkley-secure-critical-20-year-mining-ban-in-southwestern-oregon-smith-river-watershed)

<https://www.merkley.senate.gov/news/press-releases/defazio-huffman-wyden-merkley-secure-critical-20-year-mining-ban-in-southwestern-oregon-smith-river-watershed>

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/2017/01/12/obama-administration-blocks-mining-100000-acres-southern-oregon/96518872/>

Obama administration blocks mining on 100,000 acres in Southern Oregon

Zach Urness, Statesman Journal

Published 6:31 p.m. PT Jan. 12, 2017 | Updated 16 hours ago

(Photos: Zach Urness / Statesman Journal)

A long-running effort to block mining in the watersheds of several iconic rivers in southwest Oregon scored a major victory Thursday.



A 20-year ban on new mining projects across 100,000 acres of the Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains was signed by the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management.

The withdrawal has been pushed for years by environmentalists, politicians and local cities worried about

nickel mining fouling water that drains into streams such as the North Fork Smith River and Rough and Ready Creek.

The action was one in a flurry of moves by the Obama administration to enact environmental protections before leaving office. It's separate from the [48,000 acres added to the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument](#), also on Thursday.

“(We’ve) been working to get this done for decades,” said Barbara Ullian, who has opposed mining proposals in the area since the 1990s. “We are thrilled and thankful to President Obama’s Administration.”

The withdrawal halts any new mining in the 100,000-acre area of Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, but doesn’t eliminate existing mining claims.

There have been multiple nickel mining proposals on federal lands southwest of Grants Pass and Cave Junction going back to the 1990s.



But one recent proposal galvanized opposition.

Beginning in 2012, a Portland mining firm owned mostly by a company in the United Kingdom, Red Flat Nickel Corp., proposed exploratory drilling and a possible open pit mine on a 2,350-acre site in southwest Oregon's Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.

The proposal ignited a firestorm of criticism due to its close location to the North Fork Smith River, a stream known for clear water, wildlife habitat and recreation. The river begins in Oregon, crosses the California border and joins the larger river system near Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park.

"People come from around the world to vacation in this beautiful country, and it makes no sense to locate a strip mine near a river that means so much to so many," said Grant Werschull, executive director of the Smith River Alliance in Crescent City.

A highly remote river on the border of southwest Oregon and northwest California in the Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains. Zach Urness/ Statesman Journal



The proposal — and others on Hunter, Pistol and Rough and Ready creeks — generated attention from lawmakers in Oregon and California. They began pursuing legislation and the mineral withdrawal as a way to halt possible mining.

“This mining ban will support the area’s recreation economy, safeguard safe drinking water sources for thousands of families in the area, and stop the threats of foreign-owned nickel mining companies who want to strip-mine this beautiful area,” Oregon Rep. Peter DeFazio said in a statement. “I’m proud to have helped to protect this unique land, and I thank my colleagues for their help in accomplishing this important goal.”

The mineral withdrawal doesn’t necessarily mean Red Flat’s proposal will go away. The company has existing mining claims, which means it could still move forward with the project.

“Red Flat Nickel Corp. has a legally recorded claim and could still come to us with a plan of operation,” said Virginia Gibbons, spokeswoman for Rogue River-Siskiyou Forest, the area where much of the withdrawal is located. “That would trigger a ‘valid existing rights determination,’ which is a pretty involved process.”

Even so, mining opponents are celebrating.

“We’re so thankful to the thousands of citizens who’ve supported the mining ban going back to the 1990s,” Ullian said.

Zach Urness has been an outdoors writer, photographer and videographer in Oregon for eight years. He is the author of the book “Hiking Southern Oregon” and can be reached at zurness@StatesmanJournal.com or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Twitter at @ZachsORoutdoors.

<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060048372/print>

MINING:

Nearly 100,000 Ore. acres withdrawn by Obama admin

[Dylan Brown](#), E&E News reporter

Published: Friday, January 13, 2017

The Obama administration yesterday banned new mining on about 100,000 acres of public land in southwest Oregon for the next 20 years.

The mineral withdrawal has been at the center of debate over proposed nickel mining in the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.

The protected area spans 95,805 acres of that forest and 5,216 acres of the Bureau of Land Management's Medford and Coos Bay districts.

Red Flat Nickel Corp., a subsidiary of a U.K. investment firm registered in Panama, has proposed a more-than-3,000-acre nickel mine within that area of the Klamath Mountains near the California border and Pacific Ocean ([E&E News PM](#), July 6, 2016).

Environmental groups and Oregon Democrats fought for the withdrawal to safeguard the creeks feeding into protected rivers, namely the North Fork of the Smith River. Most of the withdrawn area drains into the river

that originates in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness and is known for its salmon runs.

"With Oregonians' overwhelming support for this action, I have been a longtime strong advocate for this approach because it provides Congress time to pass a bill that will permanently protect this special place," said Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.).

The American Exploration & Mining Association, urged Congress to reverse the Obama administration action.

"These actions are not only disappointing but a desperate last-minute action taken without Congress or citizen input at a huge cost to American manufacturing and local economic activity," said AEMA government affairs advocate Matthew Ellsworth.

The withdrawal cannot halt ongoing or future mining on existing mining claims, but the Forest Service has raised questions about the validity of Red Flat's claims.

Federal officials assured other users that only mining activities are affected by the withdrawal.

"This mining ban will support the area's recreation economy, safeguard safe drinking water sources for thousands of families in the area, and stop the threats of foreign-owned nickel mining companies who want to strip-mine this beautiful area," Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) said in a statement.

Mining ban secured for 20 years

Published Jan. 13, 2017 at 11:55PM

Two Southwest Oregon watersheds known for their wild salmon and steelhead, clean waters, natural and recreational resources, just received 20 years of protection from new hard rock mining projects.

The 20-year mining ban was secured by Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Congressmen Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Jared Huffman (D-CA) and will include the watershed of the National Wild and Scenic North Fork Smith River in Oregon, the watershed of Rough and Ready Creek (an eligible Wild and Scenic River and tributary to the National Wild and Scenic Illinois and Rogue rivers), as well as 17 miles of the National Wild and Scenic Chetco River.

The headwaters of Hunter Creek and the Pistol River, which that flow directly into the Pacific Ocean along the Wild Rivers Coast of Southern Oregon and Northern California, will also be protected.

“The 20-year ban on new mining claims is an important step in the right direction,” said Grant Werschkull, executive director of the Smith River Alliance, who gave a presentation to the Crescent City Council on Monday about the need for mineral withdrawals. “It is an amazing team effort on behalf of protecting our drinking water and the Smith River.”

In a written statement to the TriPLICATE on Friday, Werschkull lauded Huffman, DeFazio, Wyden and Merkley for their work. He also credited

local agencies, tribes and “thousands of community members” who supported the temporary mining ban.

“We look forward to working with these partners to enact the Southwest Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act, which will permanently protect the headwaters of the Smith and other spectacular rivers in our bioregion from strip mining,” Werschkull said.

Huffman echoed Werschkull’s sentiments about the work Del Norte County residents and tribes have done in support of the mining ban.

“The people of Del Norte County, the Elk Valley and Tolowa Dee-ni’ tribes, and thousands of other Californians and Oregonians who cherish the Smith River have united in working to secure two decades of protection for this spectacular landscape and its wildlife for future generations,” he said. “I applaud the Obama Administration for taking this action today and thank my colleagues for their hard work and support.”

Residents in Southwest Oregon have also expressed support for a mineral withdrawal, as was expressed by many at a public hearing in Brookings Nov. 15, 2016. Many feared strip mining would contaminate drinking water, kill salmon and hamper natural tourism for years to come.

“This is an incredible victory for Southwest Oregon,” said DeFazio. “This mining ban will support the area’s recreation economy, safeguard safe drinking water sources for thousands of families in the area, and stop the threats of foreign-owned nickel mining companies who want to strip-mine this beautiful area. I’m proud to have helped to protect this unique land, and I thank my colleagues for their help in accomplishing this important goal.”

Senator Merkley called the rivers a public treasure, saying residents owe it to future generations to protect them.

“Mining would have posed an unacceptable threat to the region’s clean water and to the fishing and recreation economy that many rely on. These lands and waters belong to all of us, and today’s news is a huge victory in the fight to ensure that our beloved citizen-owned resources are passed down to future generations in the same condition we received them,” Merkley said.

Agencies withdraw land to protect it from new mining

January 13, 2017 at 4:09 PM

By Jeff Duewel Grants Pass Daily Courier

The U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management have followed through on a threat to withdraw more than 100,000 acres of federal land from mineral development for 20 years to protect it against strip mining.

The withdrawal, initially proposed almost a year ago but formally announced Thursday, sets aside lands near and in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, covering the upper drainages of the Chetco, Smith and Illinois rivers where mining companies have explored for nickel. All are important salmon- and steelhead-bearing rivers.

Most of the withdrawal is U.S. National Forest Service land, with a small amount of BLM land, according to a release from both agencies.

The withdrawal was supported by a letter from the city of Cave Junction in November.

The withdrawal also follows congressional legislation proposed last year by Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Oregon, and Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, both Democrats, to protect the area's pristine nature.

"This has been an amazing effort of communities in southwest Oregon and northwest California coming together to protect the clean, clear, drinking water and the exceptional Wild and Scenic rivers and creeks that flow from these National Forest and BLM lands," said Barbara Ullian of Grants Pass, a longtime advocate of protecting the wild area, in a statement.

The legislation targeted the Red Flat Nickel Corp.'s proposal to strip-mine more than 3,000 acres, primarily for nickel, in the Baldface Creek drainage about 12 miles west of O'Brien just outside the Kalmiopsis Wilderness.

The company also has claims in other drainages.

"This withdrawal does not prohibit or restrict any other authorized uses on these lands. The withdrawal protects these watersheds from possible adverse effects of mineral development.

"Also, while this action prohibits the location of new mining claims, it does not prohibit ongoing or future mining exploration or extraction operations on valid pre-existing mining claims."

Baldface Creek drains into the North Fork Smith River, prized by rafters and an important spawning tributary for salmon and steelhead.

At public meetings in Grants Pass and Cave Junction in 2015, sentiment was heavier toward protecting the watersheds, but others from the mining community were dismayed over shutting down land to extraction of natural resources.

Nickel is an alloy metal that among other things is used in the production of stainless steel.

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Feds Block Mining In 100K Acres of Southwest Oregon

By [LIAM MORIARTY](#) • JAN 13, 2017



The Smith River, near Crescent City, California
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Opponents of proposed mining projects in the Klamath Mountains in the southwest corner of Oregon are praising a federal order withdrawing more than

100-thousand acres in the area from mining activity.

The area forms the headwaters of the Smith and Illinois rivers. The rivers are a popular destination for backcountry fishing and camping. They're also the drinking water source for more than 10,000 people. Over the past few years, proposals for open-pit

nickel mines in the area have triggered vigorous resistance from everyone from conservation groups to elected officials in both Oregon and California.

The announcement that the area would be withdrawn from mining projects for 20 years brought cheers from mining opponents. Still, Joseph Vaile, with the Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center in Ashland, says this is a stopgap measure.

“This administrative withdrawal essentially gives time for Congress to come up with a long term solution that would just remove the strip mining threat to these rivers and streams once and for all,” he says.

The action will ban new mining, but the fate of pending mining proposals is unclear. Mining industry sources have condemned the withdrawal and are calling for the new Congress to reverse it.