



Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations, represent millions of hunters and anglers, fish and wildlife professionals and businesses, and others who recreate on and enjoy our public lands. For many years, Congress has considered reform of the General Mining Law of 1872. We urge you to take action on modernizing the 135-year-old mining law this Congress, and we offer our assistance and support.

Public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Forest Service harbor some of the most important fish and wildlife habitat and provide some of the finest hunting and angling opportunities in the country. For example, public lands contain well more than 50 percent of the nation's blue-ribbon trout streams and are strongholds for imperiled trout and salmon in the western United States. More than 80 percent of the most critical habitat for elk is found on lands managed by the Forest Service and the BLM, alone. Pronghorn antelope, sage grouse, mule deer, salmon and steelhead, and countless other fish and wildlife species are similarly dependent on public lands.

On Thursday, October 18, the House Natural Resources Committee is scheduled to markup, **H.R. 2262, The Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2007**, introduced by Committee Chairman Rahall and Subcommittee Chairman Costa. The bill, as originally introduced provides sensible reform needed to protect our hunting and fishing heritage. A revised draft was circulated last week and because it contains provisions that are especially helpful (highlighted below), we support HR 2622, but we also urge the Committee to consider a few key strengthening amendments (also highlighted below) prior to its approval."

We believe that any reform of the 1872 Mining Law should contain the following provisions:

- **Recover a royalty from any minerals taken from public lands** The original H.R. 2262 included this critical provision but the revised version requires only royalty payments for future operations. As a result millions of taxpayer dollars will be lost and inadequate funds will be available to restore fish and wildlife habitat compromised by mining operations. **Reform must include all mining operations, present and future.**
- **Recognize the importance of fish and wildlife habitat and hunting and fishing recreational opportunities on public lands.** The 1872 Mining Law gives mining priority use over fish and wildlife habitat and hunting and fishing opportunities. The original H.R. 2262 included language that recognized the inherent value of public lands for other important uses, including hunting and fishing opportunities and fish and wildlife habitat. This is a major priority for hunters and anglers in order to provide more authority to public land managers. **The revised version does not contain this critical language, and it needs to be re-inserted.**
- **Conserve valuable fish & wildlife habitat by placing special places including national forest roadless areas "off limits" to new mining claims.** Special places provide exceptional hunting and fishing experiences. We believe in keeping the provision on special places with the addition of **National Wildlife Refuges.**
- **Provide "Good Samaritans," who have no connection to the abandoned mine waste or interest in re-mining it for profit, reclamation incentives and commonsense liability relief.** At this time H.R. 2622 does not contain this important provision.
- **Prohibit the patenting or sale of public lands under this law.** This provision is contained within H.R. 2622 and is vital to the millions of hunters and anglers of average means across the country. **Keep public lands in public hands.**

Thank you for considering our recommendations, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that a stronger HR 2262 that includes vital protections for fish and wildlife resources is ultimately passed by the House.

Sincerely,

Tom St. Hilaire
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Chris Wood
Trout Unlimited

Jim Lyon
National Wildlife Federation