



May 8th

Dear Senator,

We, the undersigned organizations, represent millions of hunters and anglers, fish and wildlife professionals, 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 137-year-old mining law this Congress, by co-sponsoring S. 796, the Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2009, introduced by Energy and Natural Resources Chairman Jeff Bingaman.

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. Unfortunately, millions of acres of fish and wildlife habitat on our public lands have been degraded and are at risk. Hardrock mining methods governed under the 1872 Mining Law have severely degraded fish and wildlife habitat and natural systems. They have left a legacy of hundreds of thousands of abandoned, un-reclaimed mines that are a threat to public health and severely pollute streams and watersheds.

S. 796 would help to protect our public lands from future mining abuses and establish an abandoned mine land fund to help restore vital public lands important to clean water and fish and wildlife habitat. **S. 796** would keep public lands in public hands and give public land managers the ability to review and approve mines and mining methods that would protect clean water and fish and wildlife habitat.

We look forward to working with Senator Bingaman and other senators to modernize this 19th century law.

Sincerely,

Jim Lyon
National Wildlife Federation

Chris Wood
Trout Unlimited

Tom St. Hilaire
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership