



**News for Immediate Release**

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## **Senate Progresses Toward Mining Law Reform at Hearing**

*Congress continues deliberating revision of 137-year-old mining law at Senate hearing; sportsmen renew calls for measures safeguarding public-lands fish and wildlife habitat*

WASHINGTON – At a hearing of its Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the U.S. Senate today took one more step toward instituting reform of the 1872 General Mining Law, a move that sportsmen heralded as critical toward conserving America’s public lands and the habitat and outdoor opportunities these lands provide.

Sportsmen United for Sensible Mining, a coalition of organizations and grassroots partners led by the National Wildlife Federation, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and Trout Unlimited, has advocated reform of the 1872 Mining Law as a means to better manage public-lands fish and wildlife resources and promote reclamation of thousands of abandoned mines located throughout the American West. In April, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chair Jeff Bingaman introduced the Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2009 (S. 796), which took unprecedented action toward revision of the 137-year-old law.

“Sportsmen, and every citizen who cares about and enjoys our nation’s public lands, have reason to applaud Senator Jeff Bingaman for introducing this historic reform measure and praise the Senate for considering the legislation,” said Chris Wood, chief operating officer of TU, “which takes strides toward instituting long-overdue revision of America’s most archaic natural resources law.”

“Today’s Senate hearing demonstrates the willingness and interest by our nation’s leaders to revise this outdated law and put an end to the destructive public-lands management practices it enables,” said Tom St. Hilaire, vice president for campaign management for the TRCP. “The fact that Interior Secretary Ken Salazar willingly offered testimony at this important event further drives home the administration’s support of mining law reform – and that such reform cannot wait another year.”

The Senate's consideration of mining law reform follows efforts initiated in the U.S. House of Representatives earlier this year. The House bill, H.R. 699, is identical to a bill passed by the House last year in a 244-166 bipartisan vote.

“As Congress continues to move toward revision of the 1872 Mining Law, American sportsmen emphasize the critical elements of common-sense reform,” said NWF Senior Vice President Jim Lyon, “including strong conservation measures, reasonable royalties on minerals extracted from public lands, an abandoned mine cleanup fund that considers impacts to fish and wildlife, discretion for land managers and prohibition of public-lands patenting.”

“We thank Secretary Salazar for his testimony in regards to abandon mine clean-up,” said Land Tawney, NWF senior manager for sportsmen leadership. “With more than 40 percent of Western watersheds contaminated with mining waste, our world-class fisheries are at risk. We have a duty to future generations to clean up these abandoned mines and restore fish and wildlife habitat, thus perpetuating our hunting and fishing heritage.”

Subsequent action on S. 796 is expected after the Senate Energy Committee completes its work on the energy bill later this summer.

Under the 1872 General Mining Law, more than 270 million acres of federal land are open to hard-rock mining, mostly in the Rocky Mountain West. Absent meaningful revision of the law, many of America's most treasured public lands remain at risk, including important wildlife habitat and hunting areas, valuable fisheries, popular recreation sites, vital municipal water supplies and sensitive roadless areas.

[\*Learn more about Sportsmen United for Sensible Mining\*](#)

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