



**Great Basin  
Resource Watch**



**EARTHWORKS**



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Trump Administration Slaps Communities with an Unprecedented 5-day Comment Period on Expansive Mining Exploration Project**

On March 26, 2025, the Trump administration proposed to allow exploration for a massive new mine in the McDermitt Caldera in southeastern Oregon. Anticipated drilling, road building and other infrastructure would affect as many as 7,200 acres of sagebrush grasslands that are home to imperiled species, such as greater sage-grouse and Lahontan cutthroat trout, irreplaceable cultural resources, boundless recreational opportunities and generational ranching operations. Mineral exploration on these public lands would be detrimental to these resources and values, and yet the administration has only allowed the public five days to read and understand, raise questions and express concerns over this controversial new plan.

Issued by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the [McDermitt Exploration Project Environmental Assessment](#) is a draft "plan of operations" including complex data and analyses comprising more than 800 pages. The BLM's guidance recommends planners provide at least 30 days for public review and comment on such a document and, in fact, the agency has for decades allowed ample time for public participation in planning. A mere five-day comment period for a plan of operations may be both unprecedented and intended to thwart public input on the plan.

The McDermitt Caldera is the homeland for the Fort McDermitt Paiute, Shoshone and Bannock tribes. Tribal members continue to identify with caldera today, seeking both spiritual and physical sustenance from the landscape as their ancestors did for millennia.

The Caldera also provides increasingly rare intact and contiguous habitat for dozens of species of native flora and fauna, serving as a stronghold for the charismatic sage-grouse and beautiful Lahontan cutthroat trout, essential habitat for pronghorn, winter range for mule deer and a refuge for the tiny pygmy rabbit.

Ranchers have also stewarded these lands for over 100 years, while recreationists have more recently come to love the caldera for adventure by day and perfectly dark skies for stargazing at night.



*Northern McDermitt Caldera proposed for exploration. Disaster Peak in the background. Photo: John Aylward*

## Reaction to the Proposed McDermitt Exploration Project Environmental Assessment

“A 5 day comment period is a terrible way to start off with our local communities and tribes. My peoples land, water, cultural, and spiritual places are under direct threat from HiTech’s drilling exploration,” said **Daranda Hinkey, People of Red Mountain and Fort McDermitt tribal member**. “These large disturbances to a sensitive sagebrush ecosystem will have everlasting effects. From the cold creeks to medicinal plants to the thriving animals, the Caldera holds countless teachings that require an intact landscape. The Native people insist on a longer comment period for drilling that will directly impact our tribe and children’s future.”

“We are 6th generation ranchers in the Caldera where the cattle, fish, and sage-grouse have coexisted over time, and yet we get 5 days time to comment on the biggest impact of our lifetime and generations to come,” said **April Wilkinson of GJ Livestock LLC**. “Our voices will be heard even in a short period of time. We hope that the people are heard and the Caldera is saved.”

“In my 30 years of commenting on NEPA, EIS’s and EA’s I have never seen this short of a comment period for mining activity of this scale. It is clear that the Trump Administration does not care about these rural directly affected people and the place they call home,” said **John Hadder, Director of Great Basin Resource Watch**. “For a mine exploration of this scale and the location there should be a full Environmental Impact Statement allowing at least two months to review.”

“The Bureau of Land Management has spent a decade planning for sage-grouse conservation in Oregon’s high desert, and now the Trump administration has allowed the public just five days to comment on how mineral exploration will unravel those protections for sage-grouse and countless other critters in the caldera,” said **Anne White, Policy Manager at Oregon Natural Desert Association**. “We’ll meet the challenge, but that’s just ridiculous.”

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