



**Great Basin  
Resource Watch**



**People of  
Red Mountain**

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EARTHWORKS



OREGON  
NATURAL  
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ASSOCIATION

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## **Bureau of Land Management Approves Expansive and Destructive Mining Exploration Project**

*The approval of Jindalee Lithium's McDermitt Exploration Project threatens invaluable  
sagebrush habitat and tribal cultural resources*

On December 8, 2025, the Bureau of Land Management authorized extensive and damaging exploration for a potential lithium mine in the McDermitt Caldera which spans the Oregon/Nevada border. The project, located on the Oregon side, threatens as many as 7,200 acres of public lands that preserve irreplaceable cultural resources, provide habitat for numerous imperiled species, and have supported a family ranch for six generations.

The Final Environmental Assessment fails to adequately analyze the significant impacts the project will have on protected species and tribal culture. Although the federal government has now approved the project, no work can continue until permits are approved by the state of Oregon.

The approved McDermitt Exploration Project, proposed by HiTech Minerals Inc., a subsidiary of Australian-owned Jindalee Lithium Limited, would eliminate habitat on public land through development of an expansive network of new roads and 168 drill sites. The project would also pump huge amounts of groundwater needed for drilling operations.

The McDermitt Caldera is the homeland for many Indigenous Peoples, including the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe located just 20 miles from the project area, who continue to seek both spiritual and physical sustenance from the landscape as their ancestors have since time immemorial.

“The Caldera and its surrounding landscapes are crucial to teaching tradition and practicing culture. Once one lithium mine opens then another and another will, which means our people’s connection to ancestral territory is forever severed. What will that mean for our people’s future? It is clear that the BLM serves corporate interests and simply ignores the concerns of locals and those most connected to the land,” said **People of Red Mountain** in a statement.

The BLM's determination that there will be no significant effects to cultural resources is shortsighted and fails to account for the cumulative loss of cultural landscapes in the Caldera, including resources already damaged by the Thacker Pass Lithium Mine, which is currently under construction. It also downplays the project's potential to permanently injure the lifeways and traditional practices of the local Indigenous community. The BLM's own analysis indicates that there are seven newly recorded sites eligible for listing under the National Register Historic Places within the project footprint.

“Mineral extraction and exploitation of the natural world is speeding down the road of destruction that will cause irreversible harm to cultural landscapes that native people hold close to our hearts. When will people understand that destruction to the earth's life sources is destruction to humanity?” said **Fermina Stevens, Executive Director of the Western Shoshone Defense Project.**

The Caldera features uninterrupted rolling sagebrush hills and desert creeks that provide intact and connected habitat and vital water resources for dozens of flora and fauna species, including the greater sage-grouse, federally threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout, pygmy rabbit, and big game. BLM's analysis of impacts to this ecological haven from mining exploration is superficial and narrowly focused, often concluding that effects will be insubstantial and short-term even as they describe habitat degradation, long-term population decline, and impacts to surface water quality.

“Sagebrush ecosystems take decades to recover in ideal conditions. Increasing drought and variable weather, invasive species and wildfire among other threats complicate restoration efforts and can make it all but impossible for an area to ever recover to what it once was,” said **Anne White, Policy Manager at Oregon Natural Desert Association.** “Nothing proposed under this plan will be minimal or short-term, and it's irresponsible of BLM and the project proponent to claim so.”

"The groundwater in this area has not been well studied, and we're not really going to know what happens to the groundwater when all that drilling takes place because the BLM's monitoring requirements don't include enough monitoring wells to know what's actually happening," said **Kelly Fuller, Mining Justice Organizer at Great Basin Resource Watch.**

Unlike at other mining exploration projects in ecologically and culturally sensitive areas, BLM analyzed only one alternative to the company's proposal in detail. This drastically limits both the agency's own analysis and the public's ability to provide input on different alternatives that may limit and mitigate harm to the environment and the local community.

“Due to the size of this project, we should have seen a more rigorous analysis,” said **Kassandra Lisenbee, Earthworks Southwest Mining Organizer.** “The current administration's push to fast-track permitting while gutting the agencies meant to analyze the harms of these projects will likely result in community opposition to international corporate polluters getting an all-access pass to our public lands.”

“This 7,200-acre plan of operations is enough to put a ranching family with six generations and their legacy to a stop. No future for the rancher, the cow, sage-grouse, or cutthroat trout. All the money spent in the past on permits, conservative grazing, water/land studies, and preventative measures to ensure the survival of the ecosystem in the Caldera were all a waste. It’s a slap in the face to all the ranchers, biologists, botanists, hydrologists, and conservationists who spent countless hours and money believing in a future that will be destroyed by Jindalee’s exploration,” said **Hyland and April Wilkinson, GJ Livestock LLC.**

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