

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Mexico Environmental Advocates Urge Congress to Vote No on Mining Bill that would Weaken Federal Protections for Public Lands

Silver City, NM— Weakening mining regulations and expanding pollution of public lands, not clarity, would be the outcomes of the pending Mining Regulatory Clarity Act. Environmental groups from across New Mexico, including the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment, Amigos Bravos, Gila Resources Information Project, Southwest Research and Information Center, and the New Mexico Environmental Law Center, are urging the New Mexico Congressional delegation to vote no on H.R.1366, The Mining Regulatory Clarity Act (MRCA), which could be voted on as early as this week.

MRCA, if passed, would give more control of our public lands to the mining industry than is already allowed under the antiquated 1872 Mining Law. In addition to recent Executive Orders that explicitly call for federal land managers to prioritize mining above all other uses of public lands, provide funding and loans for mining projects, and accelerate permitting processes, the MRCA would put New Mexico's public lands and frontline communities at even more risk from the impacts of mining.

The MRCA would allow mining companies to claim an indefinite number of so-called "millsites" on public lands without meaningful limitations. Mine operators would be allowed to permanently dump toxic waste and construct mining infrastructure, blocking public lands from ever being used for more suitable purposes.

Additional loopholes created for the mining industry by the MRCA would allow all mining related activities, including exploration activities, to be redefined as "operations", even when they are not located directly on a mining claim. This would allow mining companies to build pipelines, roads, and powerlines and conduct other activities across public lands without ever having to get a permit for them.

"The hardrock mining industry is the nation's #1 toxic polluter, responsible for contaminating 40% of headwaters in the U.S. that are critical for community water supplies. We can't afford to go backwards and give mining companies more control over our public lands through the Mining

Regulatory Clarity Act. This giant giveaway of our country's valuable natural resources to mining corporations would put people's health at risk," stated Allyson Siwik, Executive Director of Silver City-based Gila Resources Information Project.

"Here in New Mexico we have long been at the frontlines of hardrock mining and current federal laws do not adequately protect our public lands and communities from mining impacts. The Mining Regulatory Clarity Act makes this situation worse by creating loopholes in the law that would give mining companies free reign over our public lands. This bill threatens some of our most cherished places here in the Land of Enchantment, such as the Santa Fe National Forest and Pecos River and the Gila National Forest in southwest New Mexico," said Sarah Knopp, Policy Specialist with Taos-based Amigos Bravos.

"Recent research reveals that the vast majority of critical mineral resources in the U.S. are located within 35 miles of Indigenous land. In New Mexico, the Indigenous Peoples and adjacent sovereign nations have paid disproportionately in the costs of energy extraction and health impacts from uranium extraction since the Cold War. Protection of our future generations' culture is of utmost importance to not create laws that impact more mining risks on sacred land." Wendy Atcitty, Environmental Scientist with Southwest Research and Information Center.

H.R. 1366 could be voted on in the House as early as this week. We urge our New Mexico delegation to oppose H.R.1366, The Mining Regulatory Clarity Act (MRCA).