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Now Public Lands Are Being Militarized for Mining



**Action Alert - Public Comment on McDermitt Caldera Closes 3/31
BLMA gives unprecedented 5-day public comment period for Hi-Tech Lithium
Draft Environmental Analysis**

The Bureau of Land Management (“Bureau”) has issued the HiTech Lithium Exploration Plan of Operation (“EPO”) draft environmental assessment (“EA”) (DOI-BLM-ORWA-V000-20230045-EA) on March 26, 2025. The comment period for the HiTech EPO concludes on March 31, 2025—just five days after the draft EA was released—offering just three business days to review the EA for a plan that has been in process for years. This is an unprecedented move and a concerning forecast for community involvement in future operations on public lands.

We are calling on your help for two ways to take action!

- 1) submit public comments on the HiTech Lithium Exploration Plan of Operation (“EPO”) draft environmental assessment (“EA”)
- 2) call/email the BLM Vale District Office to voice concerns on a 5-day public comment period

Action 1 - Public Comment

- - [EplanningUi](#) - Here you can find information on the Public Comment Period
- - Public comment is important to have your concerns heard on a project and to give standing for any future actions concerning this project
- - Tips for comments - Make sure to comment on things that are important to you. It can include water, wildlife, culture, traffic, reclamation, air etc.
- - Comment period closes 3/31/2025

The Bureau of Land Management is seeking public comment on a proposal to explore for lithium in the McDermitt Caldera near Nevada in Malheur County, Oregon. If approved, HiTech Minerals Inc. could modify approximately 100 acres with 267 exploration drill sites across 7,200 acres of public lands.

Additional information is available at the BLM National NEPA Register where comments may be submitted through the ‘Participate Now’ option (preferred). [EplanningUi](#) Comments may also be submitted via email to BLM_OR_VL_LithiumHiTech@blm.gov

Action 2 - Call BLM out on their 5-day comment period

The Trump Administration is providing an unheard-of short comment period of only 5 days to review over 800 pages of documents. Many of these documents are technical in nature and require working people easily more than a month to review and comment.

According to the BLM Handbook H-3809-, “It is recommended that any public review or comment sought on the EA be concurrent with the 30-day public comment period required on the Plan of Operations by 43 CFR 3809.411(c).” This has been the decades old practice to provide a minimum of 30 days for a significant EA such as the McDermitt Exploration Project.

The EA and FONSI are 136 pages. The Plan of Operation and its attachments total 637 pages. You can read more about it in this article here [BLM rushes review of Oregon lithium project following Trump’s executive order - OPB](#)

You can call or write to ask for an extension and or voice concerns over the egregiousness of this timeline. Contact

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- [Supreme Court seems likely to OK \\$8 billion phone and internet subsidy for rural, low-income areas](#)

From paper to progress: The \$60 million project transforming California's water rights data



“California is taking a major step forward in transforming how water is managed and monitored with the roll out of a groundbreaking tool aimed at modernizing water rights data. Launching this summer, the State Water Board’s \$60 million Updating Water Rights Data for California (UPWARD) project is set to replace the outdated, paper-based system with a streamlined, user-friendly platform. By tackling the inefficiencies of the current system, UPWARD will provide timely, accessible information for better decision-making, especially critical during water shortages and droughts. This innovative effort promises to enhance the state’s ability to safeguard its most precious resource. The overarching goal of the UPWARD project is to create new digital infrastructure and data governance processes to improve the quality and accessibility of water rights data. The project will replace the current eWRIMS system with a modern data system, digitize paper records and make them accessible online, and create the teams, policies, and protocols to properly manage the data into perpetuity. ... ” [Read more from Maven’s Notebook](#).

Inside the decades-long battle to restore the Klamath River

“Last year, Indigenous tribes in California and Oregon realized a longstanding dream: the removal of four hydroelectric dams on the Klamath River. It was the largest such environmental restoration project in U.S. history, opening the way for salmon to return home to the Klamath and for tribes and other advocates to begin restoring the ecosystem that once flourished there. And last week, Grist’s Jake Bittle and Anita Hofschnider published a five-part, 14,000-word feature delving into the decades-long history of how it all happened. In their story, they describe the dam removal as “the result of an improbable campaign that spanned close to half a century, roped in thousands of people, and came within an inch of collapse several times. Interviews with dozens of people on all sides of the dam removal fight, some of whom have never spoken publicly about their roles, reveal a collaborative achievement with few clear parallels in contemporary activism.” Over many months, Bittle and Hofschnider interviewed dozens of people — tribal leaders, activists, farmers, former members of Congress, and beyond — about the battle to remove the dams. “It’s hard to do a call on this topic that’s, like, less than two hours long,” Hofschnider said. They paired these in-depth interviews with archival newspaper research to piece together the story as it had unfolded across decades, in many cases rebuilding scenes from years ago. ... ” [Read more from Grist](#).

NV legislators, conservation groups demand action on lower rates, clean energy



"As a mother myself, it hurts me to know the hard choices so many of my neighbors and their families are facing. And like so many mothers, I want a better future for my children and all of Nevada's children," said Kristee Watson, NCL executive director. (Nevada Conservation League)

Nevada legislators and conservation groups this week [stood up for policies they say will help lower energy bills, protect the outdoors and grow the state's economy](#).

Kristee Watson, executive director of the [Nevada Conservation League](#), said NCL is working to hold utility monopolies such as NV Energy and Southwest Gas accountable. A recent survey found that almost 90% of respondents agree that both utility companies must do more to keep bills affordable.

Watson said Nevada families are crunching numbers to cover expenses.

"It is our job to show up and tell our legislators that we're going to advocate for ourselves and the rest of everyday Nevadans," she said. "Times are tough, the fight is hard, I am frustrated, I am exhausted, I know all of us are. But this is also a worthwhile fight."

Watson said they're advocating for legislation to create ratepayer protections to ensure utilities spend customer dollars wisely and responsibly. Meanwhile, companies such as NV Energy and Southwest Gas have contended they're forced to raise rates to ensure all Nevadans receive quality service. NV Energy says it uses grants and other payment options to reduce consumer costs. Earlier this year, the company asked the state's Public Utility Commission to increase its base-rate charges.

Assemblyman Howard Watts, D-Las Vegas, called conservation and clean energy "quality of life issues." He said now is the time to address issues such as excessive heat, drought and wildfires by unlocking the potential of renewables. That's why he's sponsoring [Assembly Bill 458](#), also

known as the Solar-Power Affordable Housing bill, which he said "will expand the use of rooftop solar power in affordable-housing communities. These are residents who are dealing with these issues every day, but unfortunately they've been locked out from the benefits that solar energy can provide."

AB 458 awaits action in the Committee on Growth and Infrastructure.

Assemblyman Steve Yeager, D-Las Vegas, sponsored the bill that led to the creation of the Nevada Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant Program. He said the initiative provides outdoor experiences for Nevada students, and that continued support is vital.

"This grant is about equity and sustainability," he said. "It is about making sure that future generations inherit not just the beauty of Nevada's outdoors but the ability to enjoy it safely and responsibly."

In Our View: Columbia River treaty reversal requires explanation

The Columbian editorial board writes, "Because Washington shares a 427-mile border with Canada, it is not surprising that President Donald Trump's bizarre feud with our neighbors to the north has a large impact on our state. ... Trump's tariffs upon goods from Canada — and Canada's countertariffs — have drawn much attention. So have his musings about Canada becoming our 51st state. But perhaps his most counterproductive move regarding our neighbors involves the Columbia River Treaty. The treaty dates to 1961, defining flood mitigation practices throughout the Columbia River basin — an area roughly the size of Texas. Negotiations to modernize the treaty began in 2018, and last year the Biden administration announced a tentative agreement. Now, however, the Trump administration has paused the continuing negotiations. This comes from a president who has said that tapping into the Columbia River could solve water shortages in California. ... " [Read more from The Columbian](#).

Bipartisan Arizona bill would help fund project bringing water to 215 Navajo Nation homes

"A [bipartisan bill](#) that would put state funds toward a water pipeline project on the Navajo Nation passed the state Senate on Tuesday. SB 1579 would allocate \$340,000 to help with the design, planning and construction costs for the Ganado Chapter Waterline Extension Project. ... " [Read more from KJZZ](#).

US Supreme Court hears arguments over where environmental challenges should be heard

"U.S. Supreme Court justices heard oral arguments Tuesday in a case that could allow states to challenge federal environmental rules in more favorable courts. The case could determine whether certain U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations are reviewed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit — which has more liberal judges — or in regional courts, where certain states and industry groups would prefer to make their arguments. The dispute centers around EPA's decision that 21 states' plans for ozone pollution failed to meet federal Clean Air Act standards. Oklahoma and Utah challenged that disapproval in the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which spans six Western states. The federal agency argued the challenge should be heard in the D.C. Circuit. ... " [Read more from Stateline](#).

Gov. Joe Lombardo last week came out in support of President Donald Trump's [executive order](#) seeking to dismantle the US Department of Education, a move that would threaten nearly \$1 billion per year in funding for Nevada schools and students.

In an [op-ed](#) for the right-wing news outlet Breitbart, Lombardo said that Trump "delivered one of the most influential reforms yet of his presidency" by signing his executive order.

[Read the whole article](#)

Trump halts historic orphaned well-plugging program

"The billions of dollars approved by Congress to clean up abandoned oil and gas wells have been frozen as part of President Donald Trump's sweeping cuts to government spending, creating concerns that the cleanup will be halted just as it's getting started. President Trump's barrage of executive orders included a January directive called "Unleashing American Energy," which, among other provisions, ordered that federal agencies stop distributing money appropriated by President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The Trump administration titled this section of the order "Terminating the Green New Deal." But in freezing this congressionally approved spending, the administration halted a program that paid for plugging and reclaiming so-called "orphaned" or abandoned oil and gas wells. ... " [Read more from High Country News](#).

SEE ALSO: [The economics of America's aging oil wells](#), from KVPR

FEMA on the chopping block

"Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has privately voiced support for dramatically shrinking the Federal Emergency Management Agency, six people told POLITICO's E&E News. Noem told Trump administration officials in a meeting Tuesday at Department of Homeland Security headquarters that she wants to eliminate FEMA's role in funding long-term rebuilding efforts and halt multibillion-dollar grant programs that help communities prepare for disasters. No decisions have been made, and it is unclear if certain FEMA functions would be removed from the federal government or be relocated to another agency or department. ... " [Read more from E&E News](#).

SEE ALSO: [Local disaster officials prepare for 'a world without FEMA'](#), from E&E News

UNR Extension to host small scale egg production workshop (carsonnow.org)

— The University of Nevada, Reno Extension is hosting a workshop on small-scale poultry egg production on April 23. Held at the Main Station Farm Science Building in **Reno**, this event covers topics from startup costs to disease prevention.

Trump's executive order on Smithsonian targets funding for programs with 'improper ideology'

President Donald Trump on Thursday revealed his intention to force changes at the Smithsonian Institution with an executive order that targets funding for programs that advance “divisive narratives” and “improper ideology,” the latest step in a broadside against culture he deems too liberal. [Read more.](#)

Why this matters:

- The order, signed behind closed doors, puts Vice President JD Vance, who serves on the Smithsonian Institution's Board of Regents, in charge of overseeing efforts to “remove improper ideology” from all areas of the institution.
- The Smithsonian Institution is the world's largest museum, education and research complex. It consists of 21 museums and the National Zoo. Trump singled out for criticism the National Museum of African American History and Culture, which opened in 2016 near the White House, the Women's History Museum, which is in development, and the American Art Museum.

Report highlights how communities hardest hit by climate change can build resilient water systems By DORANY PINEDA

Malynndra Tome was helping to map livestock ponds in the [Navajo Nation](#) when she saw something that inspired her to act. An elderly woman was filling milk jugs with water at the back of a gas station in the Native American reservation, where about 30% of people live without running water.

“How can we be living in the United States of America ... one of the most powerful countries in the world, and people are living like this here?” asked Tome, a citizen who grew up in the community of Ganado, Arizona, in the nation's largest Native American reservation at 27,000 square miles (69,930 square kilometers) in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah.

A [report published Tuesday](#) identifies ways historically neglected communities most vulnerable to [climate change](#), like Tome's, can create resilient water and wastewater systems. Its highlights include nature-based solutions, tailoring approaches to each community and using technology — all the while recognizing barriers to implementing them.

“What we hope to do with this report, what I hope, is that it actually gives people hope,” said Shannon McNeeley, a report author and senior researcher with the Pacific Institute, which published the report with DigDeep and the Center for Water Security and Cooperation. “In spite of some of the major federal funding sources becoming uncertain and possibly not available, I think people will find other ways.”

Climate impacts and the Trump administration

Weather extremes made worse by climate change have disrupted people's access to water.

In September, [more than 100,000 residents](#) in western North Carolina were under boil-water notices for nearly two months after Hurricane Helene destroyed much of a local water system. In January, several [water providers](#) declared their drinking water unsafe after wildfires roared through Los Angeles. One utility in Pasadena, California, sent out its first notice since it began serving water more than a century ago.

Aging water systems leak [trillions of gallons](#), leaving residents in some of the country's poorest communities with a substantial financial burden to fix them.

An estimated 30% of the population in the Navajo Nation lives in homes that don't have running water, and many residents drive long distances to get water from public spigots, according to the Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The report also notes that some federal resources and funding have become unavailable since [Donald Trump](#) returned to the White House. The Trump administration has cut or paused funding for critical [water infrastructure](#) projects, touted a reversal of diversity, equity and inclusion policies, and eliminated environmental justice policies meant to protect the communities the report centers on.

Greg Pierce, director of the Human Right to Water Solutions Lab at the University of California, Los Angeles, said the report "comes at a very depressing moment where we're not going to see federal action in this space, it doesn't seem, for the next four years."

Solutions come with challenges

The report synthesizes existing literature about water, climate change and solutions. Its authors reviewed academic studies, government and private reports and interviewed experts to identify ways low-income and communities of color can build water and wastewater systems to withstand extreme weather.

The report highlights technology like rainwater harvesting and gray water reuse systems that can decrease water demand and increase resilience to drought. But it adds that implementing and maintaining technology like it can be too expensive for poorer communities.

The report also advocates nature-based solutions such as wetlands, which [studies](#) find can reduce the length and severity of droughts, provide flood control, reduce or remove pollutants in water and protect water supplies. Communities across the country are increasingly recognizing the benefits of wetlands. In [Florida's Everglades](#), for example, officials have spent billions of dollars to build engineered wetlands that clean and protect a vital drinking water source.

The report argues for government-funded water assistance programs to help poorer households pay water and sewer bills, like the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program launched during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But some are benefiting communities

Gregory Moller, a professor in the soil and water systems department at the University of Idaho, notes that some approaches are too complex and expensive for smaller or poorer communities.

“Our innovations also have to be on a scale and stage that is adaptable to small systems,” he said. “And that’s where I think some of the most serious challenges are.”

Some solutions the report highlights are benefiting communities. In the Navajo Nation, hundreds of solar-powered home water systems have brought running water to more than 2,000 people. Kimberly Lemme, an executive director at DigDeep, which is installing the systems, said it can be a complex and lengthy process. But it shows that solutions do exist.

“Water is a basic human right,” said Tome, whose encounter with the elderly woman inspired her to pursue a doctorate in water resources. “And in order for people to live productively, to have healthy lives, I think water is a big part of that.”

Now Public Lands Are Being Militarized for Mining

Because nothing says freedom like bulldozing the backcountry with Pentagon funding.

WILL PATTIZ AND MORE THAN JUST PARKS

Turns out, the only thing standing between your favorite national forest and a host of shiny new industrial-scale lithium mines was a little paperwork.

First, they came for the trees—with an executive order making logging the default use of federal forests.

Then, they came for the land—starting by trying to nix two national monuments in California, with many more already under review.

Now, they’re coming for the very earth itself.

Just Thursday, the Trump administration signed an earthshaking (literally) executive order directing federal agencies to fast-track mineral extraction on public lands. And this time, they’re invoking *national defense* to do it.

If there’s one thing you read today, let it be this line—straight from the order itself:

“Within 10 days of the date of this order,” it states, “the Secretary of the Interior shall identify... all Federal lands known to hold mineral deposits... [and] shall prioritize mineral production and mining related purposes as the primary land uses in these areas.”

The primary land uses. That sentence marks a fundamental shift in federal land policy. Not toward balance, or planning, or even profit—but toward extraction as the default.

If the first Trump term was about shrinking boundaries and auctioning leases, this one is about erasing the idea of public lands as anything but resource stockpiles. And now, with the Defense Production Act in play, the fight over public lands isn't just political—it's being framed as a matter of national security.

What exactly does this order do?

How fast is this happening?

And which landscapes are now on the chopping block?

Let's break it down.



What the Executive Order Actually Does (and Why It's a Big Deal)

The executive order is long—over 3,000 words—and packed with acronyms, cross-agency mandates, and language about “resilient supply chains.” But strip it down, and here's what it really says:

Step aside. We're mining.

The administration is justifying this under the guise of national security and economic independence. It points to the growing demand for minerals used in electric vehicles, smartphones, batteries, and wind turbines—but the actual mechanism is raw industrial policy, not climate strategy.

At the center of it all is the Defense Production Act—a Cold War-era law that gives the federal government sweeping authority to direct private industry in the name of national defense. It was

originally designed for wartime mobilization. Now, it's being used to bulldoze permitting requirements and bankroll mining operations on public lands.

The order invokes that authority, waives multiple oversight provisions, and hands significant power to the Department of Defense to finance and accelerate mineral extraction. It directs agencies—not just Interior, but also Defense, Energy, Agriculture, and the Export-Import Bank—to identify mining sites, approve leases, and inject capital at speed.

And they're not wasting time.

- **Within 10 days:** Agencies must submit lists of all pending mineral project applications.
- **Within 20 days:** Those projects will be flagged for priority fast-tracking.
- **Within 30 days:** Federal lands with mineral reserves must be listed for leasing and commercial use.
- **Within 45 days:** Financial programs, loan mechanisms, and bid solicitations for mineral supply will be operational.

No legitimate environmental review.

No tribal consultation requirements.

No public comment periods.

Just a list of known deposits—and a directive to get shovels in the ground.

Electric vehicles may get name-dropped, but this isn't about clean energy. It's a sweeping, top-down reclassification of public lands as strategic assets in a wartime economy. The kind of dictatorial move that rewrites long-standing land use principles under the justification of “emergency.”

And it's already underway.

The Zombie Law That Just Got a National Security Upgrade

This executive order doesn't create a new legal framework. It exhumes an old one—a fossil from the 19th century, pulled straight from the era of pickaxes, telegraphs, and railroads that hadn't yet reached the Pacific.

The **Mining Law of 1872**—yes, *eighteen seventy-two*—was signed by President Ulysses S. Grant to help settlers dig westward and extract gold, silver, and other “useful” minerals from public lands. It predates the automobile, the telephone, the national park system, and every modern environmental law on the books.

And somehow, it still governs hardrock mining on federal lands today.

Under this law, mining companies can:

- Stake claims on public land for a few bucks an acre.
- Pay no royalties on the minerals they extract.
- Walk away from toxic messes with minimal legal obligation to clean them up.

It's less a regulatory framework than a permission slip, written in an age when "land management" meant "take what you can carry."

The EO doesn't fix that. It builds on it. It directs the Chair of the so-called National Energy Dominance Council to work with Congress to "clarify" how waste rock, tailings, and mine waste should be handled under the 1872 law. Which, in plain English, means: clear the way to dig, dump, and move fast—no questions asked.

Rather than reform the law, the administration is reviving it—with Defense Department funding, fast-tracked permits, and a national security pretext layered on top. It's the Mining Act of 1872, back from the dead, and now wearing body armor.



There's more, (Monday), but if you cannot wait to find out some more details:

[https://morethanjustparks.substack.com/p/now-public-lands-are-being-militarized/comments?](https://morethanjustparks.substack.com/p/now-public-lands-are-being-militarized/comments?publication_id=1594349&post_id=159541687&isFreemail=true&comments=true&action=post-comment)

[publication_id=1594349&post_id=159541687&isFreemail=true&comments=true&action=post-comment](https://morethanjustparks.substack.com/p/now-public-lands-are-being-militarized/comments?publication_id=1594349&post_id=159541687&isFreemail=true&comments=true&action=post-comment)