

April 24, 2024

Re: H.R. 3397, the Western Economic Security Today (WEST) Act of 2023

Dear Speaker Johnson and Leader Jeffries,

On behalf of the 115 undersigned organizations and their millions of members, we urge you to vote NO on H.R. 3397, the *Western Economic Security Today (WEST) Act of 2023*. This dangerous legislation circumvents the administrative process, stifles public input, ignores the law, and halts the implementation of an overdue regulatory update which balances management of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The final [Public Lands Rule](#), released by the Biden administration on April 18, 2024 clarifies that conservation, access to nature, and safeguarding wildlife and cultural values are an integral part of the BLM's multiple-use mission, as mandated by Congress. Despite a broad-ranging multiple-use mission outlined in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, 90% of BLM-managed public lands are currently open to energy extraction and other industrial development. Energy and mining infrastructure can often restrict public access to public lands, fragment wildlife habitat, pollute local communities' air and water, and conflict with cultural and historical resource protection. The new rule seeks to provide balance in future land management decisions by placing conservation on equal footing with development – helping to ensure that public interests like addressing nature loss, protecting wildlife and cultural areas, and safeguarding outdoor access and recreation opportunities are prioritized for critical public lands.

The new rule also highlights collaboration with Tribal Nations and local communities as essential to achieving successful land use planning outcomes, and provides flexibility and adaptability through multiple tools to advance conservation that will help support sustainable local economies and healthy communities.

The Public Lands Rule does not preclude any uses, as the messaging around H.R. 3397 would have you believe. Rather, it puts conservation on equal footing with grazing, mining and energy production, and promotes restoration, provides for responsible development, and conserves intact healthy landscapes. The rule also provides for compensatory mitigation and improves land health; vital tools to ensure responsible renewable energy projects proceed and that the BLM may continue to produce a sustained yield for American taxpayers.

Since the release of the draft rule in 2023, there have been inaccurate claims made that it is illegal and inconsistent with the BLM's "multiple use and sustained yield" mission. In response to these claims, legal experts have repeatedly confirmed that the rule upholds BLM's core mission, including [8 state attorneys general](#) and [27 law professors](#). In a letter to BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning, the law professors stated: "At the highest level, the proposed rule tracks closely to and is consistent with Congress's clearly expressed intentions in FLPMA that BLM manage the public lands for conservation, as well as consumption, that is, 'for multiple use and sustained yield.'" (See [BLM's Conservation Rule and Conservation as a "Use"](#), *Legal Article, Environmental Law Reporter, Nov. 2023*)

Finally, the rule is widely popular and resulted from a transparent and accessible public process. A 90-day comment period and numerous public meetings provided meaningful opportunities for the agency to hear what recreationists, Tribal communities, ranchers, energy developers, hunters/anglers and many others grapple with on public lands. [92% of the public comments](#) supported the rule. In addition to public comments, [Members of Congress](#), [local elected officials](#), [legal scholars](#), [scientists](#), [Attorneys General](#), [former BLM officials](#), [sportsmen](#) and [over 100 businesses](#), all weighed in to support the BLM Public Lands Rule. The [Salt Lake Tribune](#), [Denver Post](#), [Albuquerque Journal](#) and other Western papers also editorialized in support.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote no on H.R. 3397.

Sincerely,

Alabama Rivers Alliance
Alaska Wilderness League Action
Alta Peak Chapter of California Native Plant Society
Amargosa Conservancy
American Bird Conservancy
Apex Protection Project
Buffalo Field Campaign
Californians for Western Wilderness
CalWild
Center for Biological Diversity
Civilized Humanity
Colorado Farm & Food Alliance
Colorado Wildlands Project
Conservation Colorado
Conservation Lands Foundation
Conservation Northwest
Conserve Southwest Utah
Corday Natural Resources Consulting
Creation Justice Ministries
Defenders of Wildlife
Dolores River Boating Advocates
Earthjustice
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Protection Information Center - EPIC
For Love of Water (FLOW)
Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society
Friends & Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area
Friends of Arizona Joshua Tree Forest
Friends of Blackwater, Inc.
Friends of Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument
Friends of Gilham Butte

Friends of Gold Butte
Friends of Heber Valley
Friends of Nevada Wilderness
Friends of the Dunes
Friends of the Inyo
Friends of the Lost Coast
Friends of the Organ Mountains Desert-Peaks
Friends of the River
Friends of the San Pedro Inc
Friends of Wisconsin Wolf and Wildlife
Friends of Yaquina Lighthouses
Georgia Interfaith Power and Light
Get Outdoors Nevada
Grand Canyon Trust
Grand Staircase Escalante Partners
Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association
Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance
Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Great Old Broads for Wilderness Tucson Broadband
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
GreenLatinos
High Country Conservation Advocates
Hispanic Access Foundation
Honor the Earth
Idaho Conservation League
Idaho Rivers United
Islanders for the San Juan Islands National Monument
John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute
Kettle Range Conservation Group
King Range Alliance
Klamath Forest Alliance
League of Conservation Voters
Los Angeles Audubon Society
Los Padres ForestWatch
Mattole Restoration Council
Micah Six Eight Mission
Mojave Desert Land Trust
Montana Conservation Voters
National Federation of Federal Employees
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wolfwatcher Coalition
Natural Environments, Inc.
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nevada Conservation League

New Hampshire Audubon
New Mexico Wild
Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness
NY4WHALES
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Oregonians For Wild Utah (OFWU)
Piedras Blancas Light Station Association
Predator Defense
Project Eleven Hundred
Resource Renewal Institute
Rocky Mountain Wild
Rural Utah Project
San Juan Citizens Alliance
Sierra Club
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Standing Trees
The International Wildlife Coexistence Network
The Urban Wildlands Group
The Wilderness Society
Trail Access Project
Trinidad Coastal Land Trust
Tuleyome
Upper Gila Watershed Alliance
Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment
Voices of Wildlife in New Hampshire
Waterkeeper Alliance
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Western Environmental Law Center
Western Slope Conservation Center
Western Watersheds Project
Wild Arizona
Wild Montana
Wilderness Workshop
Winyah Rivers Alliance
Wyoming Interfaith Network
Wyoming Outdoor Council
Wyoming Wilderness Association