



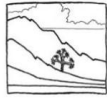
The Wilderness Society



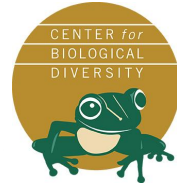
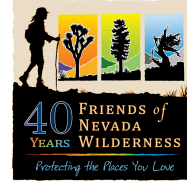
CONSERVATION LANDS FOUNDATION



National Wildlife Refuge Association



Basin and Range Watch



INSTITUTE FOR A PROGRESSIVE NEVADA



Great Basin Resource Watch

Working with Communities to Protect Their Land, Air, and Water



SIERRA CLUB TOIYABE CHAPTER



EARTHWORKS



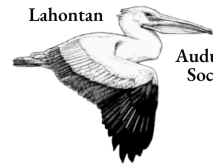
CALWILD



CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



NEVADA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



Lahontan

Audubon Society



NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION



NEVADA CONSERVATION LEAGUE



NATIVE AMERICAN LAND CONSERVANCY

2/13/2024

The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator
333 Las Vegas Boulevard South
Suite 8016
Las Vegas, NV 89101

The Honorable Jacky Rosen
United States Senator
333 Las Vegas Boulevard South
Suite 8203
Las Vegas, NV 89101

The Honorable Steven Horsford
United States Representative
2250 N Las Vegas Blvd
Suite 500
North Las Vegas, NV 89030

The Honorable Susie Lee
United States Representative
7785 W Sahara Ave
Suite 203
Las Vegas, NV 89117

The Amargosa Conservancy works toward a sustainable future for the Amargosa River and Basin through science, stewardship, and advocacy.

Dear Senator Cortez Masto, Senator Rosen, Representative Horsford, and Representative Lee,

Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge is a crown jewel of Southern Nevada, a cherished cultural asset to local communities, and one of the most significant biodiversity hotspots in North America. We need your help to save it from the impacts of drilling for the benefit of generations to come.

Nestled in the heart of the Amargosa Desert on the border of Death Valley National Park is the shimmering vibrant oasis of Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. In one of the hottest and driest deserts on Earth, Ash Meadows and the flowing waters of the Amargosa River provide sanctuary for a thriving ecosystem of rare plant and wildlife species. In just 24,000 acres of natural springs, wetlands, and lush wooded habitat, Ash Meadows is a refuge for at least 26 species that live nowhere else, including the Devils Hole pupfish: the most endangered species of fish in the world. A place of rare beauty, cultural significance, and ecological diversity, Ash Meadows is a testament to life's ability to thrive in the most extreme of landscapes, earning it a special place in the hearts and minds of Nevadans and of visitors from around the world.

Ash Meadows is a sacred site and part of the ancestral homelands of the Timbisha Shoshone, Southern Paiute, and other Tribes of the Newe and Nuwu peoples. The same aquifer underlying the region that sustains springs in Ash Meadows extends to reservation lands around Death Valley Junction and Furnace Creek, CA. The residents of these reservation lands and more than 40,000 people living in the communities of the Amargosa Basin depend on the Amargosa River for their lives and livelihoods.

Despite being protected as a wildlife refuge nearly 40 years ago, Ash Meadows remains under serious threat. **As the largest oasis in the Mojave Desert, the health and safety of Ash Meadows depends on the management of the groundwater that sustains it.** Over the last few decades, stakeholders and decision makers have been confronted with the challenge of delicately balancing the needs of the communities with the needs of the environment and wildlife, all of whom depend on water for survival.

But now Ash Meadows and these communities face a new and urgent challenge: safeguarding their waters from the threat of industrial mining operations on their doorsteps. Projects are currently being proposed that would seek to conduct exploratory and open-pit mining activities, some within just feet of Ash Meadows, with the potential to permanently impact groundwater relied upon by numerous endangered species and frontline communities.

A diverse coalition led by Tribal Nations, nonprofit organizations, and the local governments and communities of the Amargosa Basin has formed to take a stand for this irreplaceable landscape and to respond to this looming threat. We believe we have an opportunity to significantly enhance protections for Ash Meadows, and we look to your support and advocacy and the powers of Congress to help make it a reality.

Given the need to act quickly in response to imminent threats facing Ash Meadows and the communities, we believe that an administrative or congressional mineral withdrawal for sensitive lands surrounding Ash Meadows is the most appropriate course of action at this time. Such an action would

The Amargosa Conservancy works toward a sustainable future for the Amargosa River and Basin through science, stewardship, and advocacy.

significantly enhance the security of Ash Meadows by preventing potentially catastrophic and irreversible impacts associated with mining operations from occurring in this sensitive ecological region. This process would also leave open possible other land status or use changes in the future following ongoing public consultation and scientific analysis.

We need your support in elevating Nevadans' concerns to the Department of the Interior, urging them to initiate the mineral withdrawal processes to protect Ash Meadows. We stand ready to work together with you and the Department of the Interior, providing essential information and facilitating stakeholder and community outreach where appropriate, toward a shared goal of ensuring Ash Meadows and the Amargosa Valley remain safe for generations to come. The future of Ash Meadows, its neighboring communities, and its wild inhabitants depends on immediate and scientifically-grounded actions taken in the present. We look forward to making history by saving history together.

Sincerely,

Mason Voehl
Executive Director
Amargosa Conservancy

Geoffrey L. Haskett
President
National Wildlife Refuge Association

Mike Senatore
Senior Vice President of Conservation Programs
Defenders of Wildlife

Shaaron Netherton
Executive Director
Friends of Nevada Wilderness

Jose Witt
Mojave Desert Landscape Director
The Wilderness Society

Bertha Gutierrez
Program Director
Conservation Lands Foundation

Miranda Bell Tilcock
President
California-Nevada Chapter, American Fisheries Society

Shelbie Swartz
Executive Director
Institute for a Progressive Nevada

Kyle Roerink
Executive Director
Great Basin Water Network

Patrick Donnelly
Great Basin Director
Center for Biological Diversity

Neal Desai
Senior Program Director, Pacific Region
National Parks Conservation Association

Ian Bigley
Southwest Region Staff
Earthworks

John Hadder
Executive Director
Great Basin Resource Watch

Linda Castro
Assistant Policy Director
CalWild

Kelly Herbinson
Executive Director
Mojave Desert Land Trust

Vinny Spotleson
Chair
Sierra Club Toiyabe Chapter

Kevin Emmerich
Co-Founder
Basin and Range Watch

Cameron Mayer
Executive Director
Friends of the Amargosa Basin

The Amargosa Conservancy works toward a sustainable future for the Amargosa River and Basin through science, stewardship, and advocacy.

Wendy Schneider
Executive Director
Friends of the Inyo

Nick Jensen
Conservation Program Director
California Native Plant Society

Suzie Reynolds
President
Lahontan Audubon Society

Kristee Watson
Executive Director
Nevada Conservation League

Cassandra Pino
Policy Manager
Native American Lands Conservancy

Appendices

I. Protected and Endemic Species of Ash Meadows NWR

Ash Meadows NWR endemic or near-endemic species protected under the ESA:

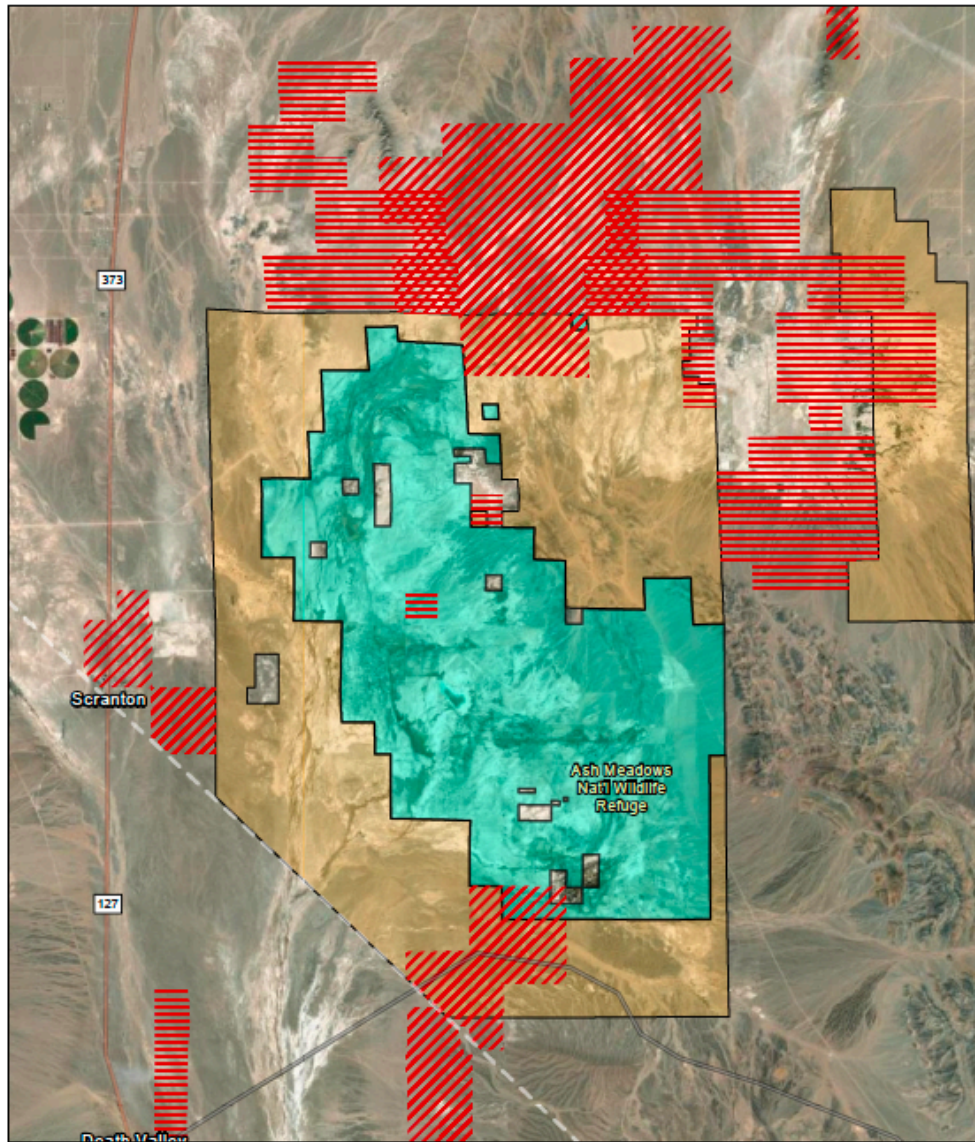
- Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish (*Cyprinodon nevadensis mionectes*), endangered;
- Ash Meadows speckled dace (*Rinichthys osculus nevadensis*), endangered;
- Warm Springs pupfish (*Cyprinodon nevadensis pectoralis*), endangered;
- Ash Meadows blazing star (*Mentzelia leuciphylla*), threatened;
- Amargosa niterwort (*Nitrophila Mohavensis*), endangered;
- Ash Meadows milkvetch (*Astragalus phoenix*), threatened;
- Ash Meadows sunray (*Enceliopsis nudicaulis corrugata*), threatened;
- Ash Meadows gumplant (*Grindelia fraxinoperatensis*), threatened;
- Ash Meadows ivesia (*Ivesia Kingii* var. *eremica*), threatened;
- Spring-loving centaury (*Zeltnera namophila*), threatened;
- Ash Meadows naucorid bug (*Ambysus amargosus*), threatened;

Additional endemic or near-endemic non-protected species found at Ash Meadows NWR:

- Warm Springs naucorid bug (*Ambysus relictus*)
- Devils Hole warm spring riffle beetle (*Stenelmis calida calida*)
- Ash Meadows pebblesnail (*Pyrgulopsis erythropoma*)
- Crystal Spring springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis crystalis*)
- Distal-gland springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis nanus*)
- Elongate gland springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis isolatus*)
- Median-gland Nevada springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis pisteri*)
- Fairbanks Spring springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis fairbankensis*)
- Minute tryonia (*Tryonia ericae*)
- Point of Rocks tryonia (*Tryonia elata*)
- Sportinggoods tryonia (*Tryonia angulata*)
- Amargosa tryonia (*Tryonia variegata*)
- *Pyrgulopsis licina*
- *Pyrgulopsis sanchezi*
- Death Valley blue eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium funereum*)
- Ash Meadows ladies-tresses (*Spiranthes infernalis*)

II.

Mining Claims surrounding Ash Meadows





9/11/2023

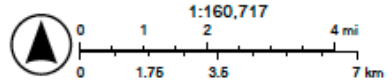
BLM Natl MLRS Mining Claims Not Closed

 Lode Claim

 Placer Claim

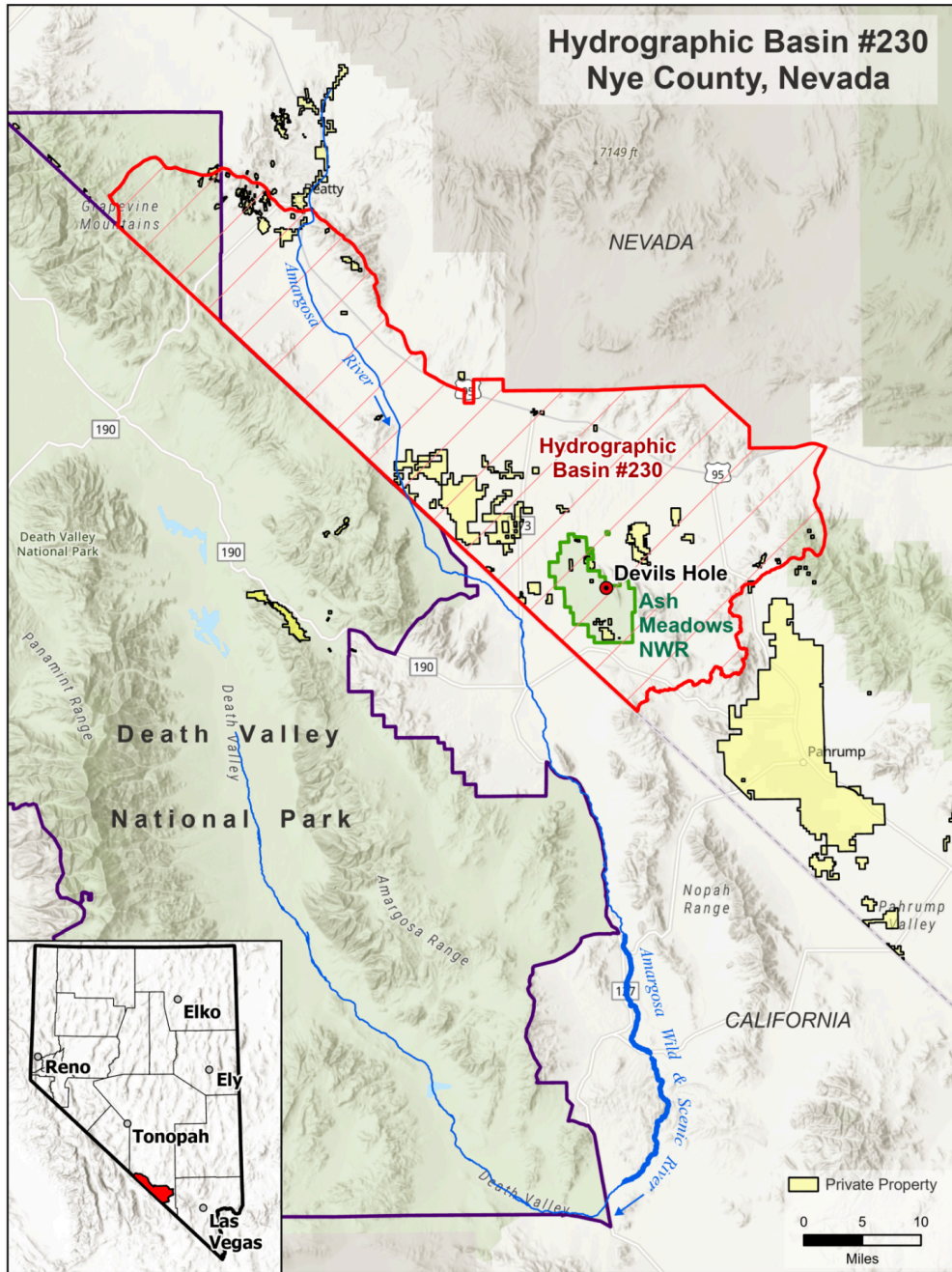
 BLM NV Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

 Fish and Wildlife Service



California State Parks, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, METINASA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, USDA, Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

III. Study Area of Proposed Mineral Withdrawal Area



The Amargosa Conservancy works toward a sustainable future for the Amargosa River and Basin through science, stewardship, and advocacy.