

Beatty Town Advisory Board
PO Box 837
Beatty, Nevada 89003
775-553-2050



Senator Cortez-Masto

Sent via email: zach_zargoza@cortezmasto.senate.gov

May 10, 2024

Greetings Senator Cortez-Masto,

In November of 2023 The Beatty Town Advisory Board supported the Amargosa Conservancy's pursuit of an Administrative or Congressional Mineral Withdrawal of the Ash Meadows Wildlife Refuge.

We now call upon you, as our representatives, to take action to protect the Ash Meadows Refuge located in the Amargosa Valley in Nevada by adopting the proposed Ash Meadows Mineral withdrawal boundary presented to you by the Amargosa Conservancy as the area of analysis for an Administrative Mineral Withdrawal.

In 1972, The United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife Division of Realty published a Reconnaissance Appraisal Report of a "Proposed Desert Pupfish Reserve" in Nye County, Nevada and Inyo County, California, which would in 1984 be designated as Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. In this report, it was stated that three unique desert pupfishes had become extinct and more could be lost if their habitats were not saved and protected. In this same report the acquisition of roughly 168,000 acres by purchase, withdrawal or transfer was proposed. The recommended area would include principal habitats and enough of the underground basin to give some assurance the springs would continue.

We believe that the total withdrawal area proposed by Amargosa Conservancy and supported by the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe and numerous nonprofit partners is in keeping with the 1972 recommendation to protect this natural resource and underground basin, and it should be adopted.

Our concerns about water drawdown and recovery are valid. There are preliminary studies including 50-year and 100- year simulations that show continued growth in the cone of depression. The example drawdown at Devil's Hole were 23 feet and 30 feet for the 50-year and 100-year simulations, respectively. We cannot consider allowing any type of activity that could create or cause this situation.

In July of 2023 the BLM rescinded the approval of Rover Metals Let's Go Lithium Project 1.0 and put the requirement for plan a of operations draft in place and stated that NEPA must be conducted. In response, Rover Metals modified the project plan by reducing the number of boreholes along the Ash Meadows Wildlife Refuge. The new modified project is known by us as the Let's Go Lithium Project 2.0.

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Projects like the Rover Critical Minerals' Let's Go Lithium Project, 2.0 which, according to Rover Metals will have 21 boreholes up to 150ft in depth or until groundwater is encountered cannot be allowed in this area. It is clear for all to see that Ash Meadows is a critical habitat and the groundwater basin cannot be placed at risk by the drilling of boreholes. We cannot rely on common sense and environmental concern to govern companies. As stated by Rover Critical Minerals' CEO Judson Cutler, they have doubled down on their pivot into critical minerals and remain resolute in their focus on advancing the Let's Go Lithium project in the Amargosa Valley of Nevada.

The Secretary of the Interior and or Congress must act to protect Ash Meadows, a recognized RAMSAR Wetland of International Importance, known as the Galapagos of the Desert which is home to at least 26 endemic species: species that live nowhere else in the world. Protecting the Amargosa Basin by adopting the proposed map and enacting a mineral withdrawal will protect a Basin that is home to people in Beatty, Pahrump, Crystal, and Amargosa Valley in Nevada and Furnace Creek, Shoshone, Tecopa, and Charleston View in California.

The adoption of the proposed map as the area of analysis for a mineral withdrawal will help to protect critical habitat for endemic and endangered species and protect a critical resource to health and wellbeing of the residents living within the Amargosa Basin.

Please take action now to protect us, your constituents, our homes, and the Ash Meadows Wildlife Refuge for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Erika Gerling,
Beatty Town Advisory Board Chair

cc: B. Jabbour; Nye County Board of Commissioners Chair, M. Labadie; Nye County Natural Resources Office Director, T. Sutton; Nye County Manager, T. Bolling; Nye County Public Works Director, G. Hafen; NV Assemblyman, J. Rosen; US Senator, S. Horsford; US Representative, J. Raby; NV BLM State Director, BLM Southern Nevada District Office, N. Pay; BLM PFO Manager, M. Reynolds; Death Valley National Park Superintendent, M. Voehl; Amargosa Conservancy Executive Director