

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 25, 2017

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Montana businesses say Yellowstone bill will protect jobs

Bill also responds to local concerns, protects private property, and offers a permanent Montana-made solution

(EMIGRANT, Mont.) – Montana business owners applauded a bill announced today by Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) that will prevent new large-scale gold mining at the gateway to Yellowstone National Park, and protect Montanans' jobs and way of life.

The *Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act* will permanently protect more than 30,000 acres of public lands north of Yellowstone from gold mine proposals.

Members of the [Yellowstone Gateway Business Coalition](#) (YGBC) said the bill is a step that protects jobs and private property, responds to local concerns, and offers a permanent Montana-made solution. Some 340 local businesses have joined YGBC to protect the local economy from two proposed large-scale gold mines on the northern edge of Yellowstone National Park.

"Sen. Tester is making a decision based on the support and overwhelming will of the community, that public lands in the corridor to Yellowstone National Park and the Yellowstone River are worthy of protection, for future generations and for the local economy," said Colin Davis, owner of Chico Hot Springs Resort, one of YGBC's founding members.

Sen. Tester's bill blocks new gold mining on specific public lands in Emigrant Gulch and Crevice Mountain. The bill does not impact management of the public lands, meaning these areas will still be public land, open for outdoor recreation. The bill will also have no impact on private land, or on the valid existing rights of claim holders on public lands.

The Yellowstone Gateway Business Coalition and others asked the Montana delegation to introduce bipartisan legislation that would enact a permanent mineral withdrawal on these public lands while protecting private property rights, similar to the bipartisan *North Fork Watershed Protection Act*, sponsored by both US Senators Jon Tester and Steve Daines in 2013.

According to the business coalition, it's refreshing to see elected officials from both sides of the aisle doing their homework, and responding to Montana businesses.

“As private land and business owners in Emigrant Gulch, my family really appreciates how Sen. Tester, along with (Interior) Secretary (Ryan) Zinke, Montana Legislature House member Alan Redfield, past County Commissioner Marty Malone, and Montana House candidate Greg Gianforte, all did their own research, looked at the issue thoughtfully, and came out against these gold mines instead of bowing their necks and taking a political stand. That’s the way democracy is supposed to work,” said Bryan Wells, owner of Emigrant Creek Cabins.

“As a business that has supported the Yellowstone Gateway Business Coalition and the effort to protect the land and water around Yellowstone National Park, we wholeheartedly support Senator Tester’s bill and applaud him for following through on the commitment he made last November,” said Diane Bristol, senior director of employee and community engagement at Simms Fishing Products in Bozeman.

Sen. Tester pledged last November to introduce a bill to permanently protect Yellowstone’s gateway from gold mines. Meanwhile, the two-year pause on new mining on these public lands [announced last November](#) by the Forest Service, is still undergoing its full public process to analyze whether to keep this pause in place. Earlier last year, the Yellowstone Gateway Business Coalition had [asked the Forest Service to initiate the two-year pause](#).

Local elected officials also welcomed the bill.

"I'm certainly pleased to hear about Sen. Tester's proposed legislation to permanently withdraw federal lands near Emigrant Gulch and Crevice Mountain from mineral leasing," said Park County Commission chair Steve Caldwell. "The withdrawal will go a long way toward sustaining the diversity of our local economy while protecting resources critical to the health of that economy. The withdrawal also helps maintain the long-term viability of local public finance revenues while respecting the integrity of property rights."

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