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Montana businesses say mining pause will protect jobs

Temporary decision also responds to local concerns, protects private property, and paves way for a permanent Montana-made solution

(EMIGRANT, Mont.) – Over 100 community members, sportsmen and local business owners were on hand at Chico Hot Springs Resort today to witness U.S. Dept. of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell announce a two-year time-out on public lands gold exploration near Yellowstone National Park.

Members of the [Yellowstone Gateway Business Coalition](#) (YGBC) hailed the temporary decision as a crucial step that protect jobs and private property, responds to local concerns, and gives them time to work toward a permanent Montana-made solution. The business coalition is made up of more than 250 local businesses united to protect the local economy and community from two proposed gold mines on the northern edge of Yellowstone National Park.

“We’re grateful this temporary solution protects our local jobs, respects our private property rights, and gives the local community the time we need to hash out a long-term solution,” said Colin Davis, owner of Chico Hot Springs Resort and a leader of the business coalition. “We simply can’t let large-scale mining operations get a firm foothold on the very lands that fuel our livelihoods and way of life.”

Today’s decision immediately initiates a temporary two-year pause on new mining activities on some 31,000 of public lands in Emigrant Gulch and Crevice Mountain, during which no new mining claims may be staked or mining activity approved within these areas. During that time, a public process will analyze whether to keep the administrative withdrawal in place.

The withdrawal does not impact management of the public lands, meaning these areas will still be public land, open for outdoor recreation. The withdrawal will also have no impact on private land or the rights of existing claim holders on public lands.

According to the business coalition, it’s refreshing to see the government respond to sustained pressure from Montana businesses. In June, the business coalition requested the U.S. Forest Service initiate the temporary mineral withdrawal.

“Stewardship of our public lands work best when the government listens to the people, and we have more than 250 businesses and local community members speaking out right now,” said Davis. “We went from 0-60 almost overnight, and decision-makers really took notice of that.”

According to the business coalition, the start of today's public process also provides the Montana Congressional delegation the opportunity to work together to develop a permanent bipartisan solution while mining activity on public lands is paused.

The Yellowstone Gateway Business Coalition and others have asked the Montana delegation to help them craft 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.

"Bipartisan commitments from our entire delegation working alongside local businesses and local people is how we will ultimately get this done," said Bryan Wells, the owner of Emigrant Creek Cabins. "The bottom line is that Montana cannot afford any proposal that will pollute our clean water, hurt our businesses and threaten our jobs."

Senator Tester has already stated that that he is considering introducing legislation to prohibit the federal government from granting mining permits in these two areas.

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