



# Mining

## Position Statement

*Humans have been mining minerals since the Stone Age. The scale and nature of its implementation in modern times is destructive of ecosystems and often impacts the health of humans and wildlife.*

- Modern mining operations have many harmful impacts including surface disturbance where vast acres are covered with overburden from open pit mines and toxic tailings ponds. Frequent failures of tailings pond dams pollute soil, surface waters and underlying ground waters. In addition, water seeping from mines is often contaminated with heavy metals and acids which also pollute soil and surface waters.
- In an era of climate change-driven persistent drought, especially in the western U.S., Broads advocates for innovations and regulations to substantially reduce water use in mining operations. Exorbitant use of ground water for mining operations (extractions and ore processing) depletes natural springs and seeps and threatens water sources necessary for human, wildlife and ecosystem health.
- Broads works to protect public lands and waters from impacts of mining operations wherever they occur, including Designated Wilderness, Wildlife Refuges, Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, roadless areas, and critical wildlife habitat and corridors. Furthermore, new legislation to designate protected areas should prohibit all new mining exploration, extraction and refining of ore.
- Broads supports a complete overhaul of the 1872 Mining Law to include comprehensive environmental protections, cleanup requirements, payment of royalties and full-cost bonding for post-operation restoration. Under the existing 1872 Mining Law, hard rock mining has been among the most egregious producers of toxic pollutants among all industries and has polluted the headwaters of 40 percent of western watersheds. Tax payers have been burdened with the cost of cleanup in the absence of any royalties being paid by mining corporations for extraction of public resources.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

**The 1872 Mining Law must be completely overhauled to include financial and environmental protections.**



**Until then, engagement through the NEPA process for new permits is critical.**



**All conserved landscapes should be protected from impacts of mining.**

*The activities undertaken by Great Old Broads for Wilderness are guided by the overriding principle that the focus of attention must be on what is best for the land and water, for Mother Earth.*

## Great Old Broads for Wilderness–Mining Position Statement (Cont.)

- Absent an overhaul of the 1872 Mining Law, Broads actively engages through NEPA with state and federal land managers to implement the maximal environmental protections possible. While land managers currently have no power to deny permits outright to mining corporations, new mining claims cannot be filed in designated wilderness.
- Broads supports closure of coal mines on public lands. Coal mining has ecosystem impacts similar to hardrock mining.
- Broads oppose mining and processing of uranium and other radioactive minerals because they pose unique risks to ecosystem health. Nuclear power generation is promoted as a 'climate friendly' solution, but it pollutes soil, air and water with radioactive waste throughout its lifecycle.

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