

December 9, 2005

The Honorable Judd Gregg, Chair
Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Pete Domenici, Chair
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Ranking Member
Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

The undersigned national, regional, and local organizations, representing millions of human-powered recreationists, urge you to oppose the mining provisions in the Budget Reconciliation Bill (HR 4241), that if passed into law will result in an unprecedented sell-off of public lands.

We strongly oppose the giveaway and privatization of our treasured public lands and the controversial proposals that threaten natural resources and recreation opportunities enjoyed by tens of millions of Americans. The ill-conceived mining subtitle in HR 4241 would open up hundreds of millions of acres of federal land for sale to corporate interests and have a devastating impact on popular recreation destinations and trails in many areas across the West, including the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains, desert Southwest, Alaska, and many other places. We urge you to help prevent its passage.

Once sold, these lands—which belong to the American people and are enjoyed by millions who hike, camp, paddle, climb, birdwatch, mountain bike, horseback ride, cross-country ski, and snowshoe—would become off limits for recreational uses. More than 150 million Americans participate in these and other outdoor recreation activities every year, and they turn to our national parks, forests, and public lands for their scenic landscapes, clean air and water, and to experience solitude and inspiration.

Disguised as a budgetary measure and an attempt to promote economic development, the subtitle would worsen the already weak and antiquated Mining Law of 1872 and allow anyone—including real estate developers and oil and gas companies—to purchase our American heritage for any reason, without regard for other important public uses such as recreation.

Corporations would not even be required to prove discovery of a valuable mineral deposit or even perform a mineral examination. By simply claiming an interest in mining an area and paying a small fee, companies could buy public lands for private use, exposing hundreds of millions acres of federal land to privatization and potential commercial development.

The mining subtitle in the Budget Reconciliation Bill will restrict access to public lands that countless Americans use and depend on to experience our rivers, climbing areas, and hiking and biking trails—with no public input from the recreational users that frequent these special places. This bill presents a very real and immediate threat to many of our nation's most cherished natural resources and the ability of Americans to enjoy our public lands.

We urge you to oppose the mining subtitle in the Budget Reconciliation Bill, and the controversial proposals that threaten resources and recreation opportunities on our federal public lands. Thank you for your attention to this urgent and critical issue.

Sincerely,

Access Fund
Steve Matous, Executive
Director
Boulder, CO

AccessNJ
John Anderson, State
Director
Mt. Holly, NJ

Action Committee for
Eldorado
Chris Archer, Director
Boulder, CO

Alaska Center for the
Environment
Randy Virgin, Executive
Director
Anchorage, Alaska

American Canoe Association
Pamela Dillon, Executive
Director
Springfield, VA

American Hiking Society
Gregory A. Miller, Ph.D.
President
Silver Spring, MD

American Whitewater
Mark Singleton, Executive
Director
Cullowhee, NC

Appalachian Trail
Conservancy
David N. Startzell, Executive
Director
Harpers Ferry, WV

Arizona Mountaineering
Club
Erik Filsinger, Land
Advocacy Chair
Scottsdale, AZ

Backcountry Snowsports
Alliance
Kim Hedberg, Executive
Director
Eldorado Springs, CO

Backcountry Trail Patrol
Hans Erdman, Director
Robbinsdale, MN

Bigfoot Country Climber's
Association
Bennett Barthelemy, Founder
& Lead Liaison
Arcata, CA

Mike Lanza
President, Boise Climbers
Alliance
Boise, ID

Carolina Climbers Coalition
Sean Cobourn, President
Inman, SC

Central City Trails
Committee
Pat Carlson, Chairman
Central City, NE

Central Idaho Recreation
Coalition
Gabriella Hess, Director
McCall, ID

Central Oregon Backcountry
Skiers
Dale Neubauer, President
Bend, OR

Central Savannah River Land
Trust
Hazel Langrall, Stewardship
Coordinator
Augusta, GA

Central Texas Mountaineers
Georgia Shaw, Access Fund
Coordinator
Austin, TX

Chattanooga Hiking Club
Doug Cooper, President
Chattanooga, TN

Climbers Alliance of Mid-
Missouri
Ben Williams, President
Columbia, MO

Coalition For Safe and
Appropriate Winter Sports
Gail Ferrell, President
Reno, NV

Coastwalk
Linda Hanes, President
Sebastopol, CA

Colorado Mountain Club
Vera Smith, Conservation
Director
Golden, CO

Continental Divide Trail
Alliance
Bruce Ward, Executive
Director
Pine, CO

Eastern Iowa Climbers'
Coalition
Evan Fales, Vice President
Iowa City, IA

El Sendero, NCW
Gus Bekker, President
Wenatchee, WA

Friends of Alpine and Nordic
Winter Sports
Jim McAllister, President
McCall, ID

Friends of Great Falls Simon Carr, Chairman Great Falls, VA	Mountain High Hikers Club Roberta Tower Blairsville, GA	Southern Sierra Climbers' Association Eric McGee, President Shaver, CA
Friends of Indian Creek Jason Keith Moab, UT	National Coast Trail Association Al LePage, Executive Director Portland, OR	Superior Hiking Trail Association Gayle Coyer, Executive Director Two Harbors, MN
Friends of the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge Rick Moore, President Colville, WA	New Mexico-Climbers' Resource and Advocacy Group Bryan Pletta, President Albuquerque, NM	Swan Ecosystem Center Kathleen Koors Swan Valley, MT
Friends of the Routt Backcountry Leslie Lovejoy, Director Steamboat Springs, CO	Nordic and Backcountry Skiers Alliance Bob Jonas, President Sun Valley, ID	Teton Valley Trails and Pathways Christian Santelices, Director Driggs, ID
Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association, Inc. Larry E. Madden, President Rome, GA	Nordic United Wally McFarlane, President Logan, UT	Togwotee Pass Backcountry Skiers Ken Doerr, President Riverton, WY
Illinois Climbers Association Jeff D. Stockton, President St. Louis, MO	Oregon Climbers Coalition Larry Brumwell, Chairman Bend, OR	Utah State University Outdoor Recreation Center Kevin Kobe, Director Logan, UT
Keystone Trails Association William E. Dietrich, Jr., President Confluence, PA	Prescott Climbers Coalition Titiana Shostak-Kinker Prescott, AZ	Ventana Wilderness Alliance Jon Libby, President Santa Cruz, CA
Las Vegas Climbers Liaison Council Trish Gumina, Director Las Vegas, NV	Red Lodge Hiking Club Red Lodge, MT	Washington Climbers Coalition Matt Perkins, President Seattle, WA
Mammoth Nordic Brian Knox, President Mammoth Lakes, CA	Red River Gorge Climbers Coalition Bill Strachan, President Lexington, KY	Western Massachusetts Climber's Coalition Jeff Squire, President South Hadley, MA
Mohican Trails Club Jim Gordon Perrysville, OH	Rumney Climbers Association Jim Shimberg, President Rumney, NH	Winter Wildlands Alliance Mark Menlove, Executive Director Boise, ID
Montanans for Quiet Recreation Pat McKenna, President West Yellowstone, MT	Snowlands Network Ellen Lapham, President Nevada City, CA	Wisconsin Outdoor Access Phil Kerckhoff, President Madison, WI
	Southeast Idaho Recreation Coalition Dana Olson, Director Pocatello, ID	