United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

JUL 16 2020

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman, Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski:

Enclosed are responses to the follow-up questions from the June 24, 2020, oversight hearing on the Impact of COVID-19 on Mineral Supply Chains before your Committee. These responses were prepared by the United States Geological Survey.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Cole Rojewski
Director
Office of Congressional
and Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Joe Manchin
Ranking Member

Questions for the Record
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Oversight Hearing on *The Impacts of COVID-19 on Mineral Supply Chains*
June 24, 2020

Question from Ranking Member Joe Manchin III

Question: The U.S. is a net exporter for a handful of minerals. Of the minerals for which the U.S. is a net exporter, have there been any trends involving a decrease in the commodities export percentage, and what is the reason for the decrease?

Response: In 2019, the United States was a net exporter[1] of 18 nonfuel mineral commodities: abrasives (metallic), boron, clays, diatomite, gold, helium, iron and steel scrap, iron ore, kyanite and related minerals, molybdenum concentrates, rare earth mineral concentrates, sand and gravel (industrial), soda ash, titanium dioxide pigment, wollastonite, zeolites (natural), zinc ores and concentrates, and zirconium ores and concentrates. Additionally, the United States was previously a net exporter of alumina (recently in years 2011, 2014, 2015, and 2016), cadmium (for certain forms), and selenium (2007-2017).

Over the past 5 years (2015-2019), U.S. exports have either increased (e.g., for iron ore) or not declined in a significant and progressive manner for any of the above-mentioned commodities except alumina.[2] U.S. alumina[3] exports have declined from 2,210 thousand metric tons ($912 million in value) in 2015 to 200 thousand metric tons ($391 million in value) in 2019. Over the past five years, U.S. alumina exports have been shipped to more than 100 countries, with Canada being the largest export partner. The decline in U.S. exports of alumina can be attributed to decreased production resulting from the closure of two alumina refineries in 2016.[4] Importantly, U.S alumina production is derived exclusively from imported metallurgical-grade bauxite.

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[1] As reported in the 2020 Mineral Commodity Summaries (USGS, 2020) on the basis of quantity.
[2] U.S. exports of a few of the above-mentioned commodities (e.g., certain forms of cadmium, gold, selenium, and titanium dioxide pigments) have declined in recent years but none have had both their export quantities and export values decline in such a significant manner as they have for alumina.
[3] Specifically, aluminum oxide (HTS code 2818.20.0000) and aluminum hydroxide (HTS code 2818.30.0000), combined using calcined weight equivalence.
[4] In September 2016, Sherwin Alumina Co. LLC (a subsidiary of Glencore International AG) permanently shut down its 1.65-Mt/yr. refinery in Gregory, TX. Sherwin filed for bankruptcy protection in January 2016 citing a price dispute with its bauxite supplier, Noranda Aluminum Holding Corp. (Franklin, TN), and low prices for alumina. Alcoa Corp.'s 2.3-Mt/yr. alumina refinery in Point Comfort, TX, was temporarily shut down in March 2016. In December 2019, Alcoa Corp. announced that this refinery was now permanently closed.

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JUL 0 2 2020

The Honorable Alan Lowenthal
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Lowenthal:

Enclosed are responses prepared by the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement to the questions for the record submitted following the Subcommittee's March 10, 2020, oversight hearing titled "*Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement.*"

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this material to the Committee.

Sincerely,

Cole Rojewski
Director
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure
cc: The Honorable Paul Gosar, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Committee on Natural Resources

House Natural Resources Subcommittee on
Energy & Mineral Resources
Hearing on FY 2021 Budget Request
March 10, 2020

Questions from Chairman Lowenthal

1. **Director Angelle, please see the letter accompanying these QFRs and provide the requested documents.**

   Response: The request is currently under review.

2. **Director Angelle, how many formal and informal Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints have been filed in each calendar year by BSEE personnel since January 2017?**

3. **Director Angelle, how many formal and informal EEO complaints are currently pending at BSEE?**

   Response to Questions 2 and 3: Consistent with the requirements of the NO FEAR Act, the Department of the Interior makes complaint data publicly available on its website. This data, which is up-to-date as of March 31, 2020, can be found at this link: https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/reports-repository. Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement-specific complaint data can be found here: https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/bsee-no-fear-act-report. Pre-complaint statistics, updated through FY 2018, can be found here: https://edit.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/final-fy-2018-doi-md-715-report.revisionandedit.kly-dts.pdf

4. **How many EEO complaints have named you in the complaint, and how many individual claims in total are covered by those complaints?**

   Response: The Department does not publicly discuss the details of personnel matters, including the EEO complaint process.

5. **How many sexual harassment, hostile workplace, discrimination, or other complaints have been filed with the BSEE Human Resources office, by year, since 2011?**

   Response: The Department's Personnel Bulletin 18-01, dated March 23, 2018, removed barriers to initiating complaints and implemented more robust response mechanisms to harassing conduct. Prior to issuance of that bulletin, the Human Resources office was not designated as a possible recipient of discrimination complaints. In addition, the underlying actions that are the subject of the complaints may have taken place as many as 7 years before the corresponding complaint was filed. With this in mind, a total of 110 complaints were filed with the BSEE Human Resources Office from 2011 through the early part of calendar year 2020.

6. **Of the complaints filed with BSEE Human Resources since you became the Director, how many named you in the complaint, and how many individual claims in total are covered by those complaints?**

   Response: The Department does not publicly discuss the details of personnel matters.

7. **Director Angelle, what role did the Gulf Energy Alliance have in shaping the Risk Management, Financial Assurance and Loss Prevention proposed rule currently under review by the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs?**

   Response: BSEE and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management are in the process of developing a joint rule to revise existing financial assurance policies. Matters under BOEM's jurisdiction are a significant part of that joint rule. While BSEE staff is not aware that Gulf Energy Alliance had a role in the process, it defers to BOEM with regard to matters under that bureau's jurisdiction. BSEE is aware that Gulf Energy Alliance was one of a number of industry participants that met with the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs under the E.O. 12866 process, which follows well known procedures and participants of the meeting are publicly disclosed on Reginfo.gov.

8. **Director Angelle, what are the reasons for and against BSEE using an oil and gas operator asset retirement obligation when estimating plugging and abandonment costs?**

   Response: The Asset Retirement Obligation is an accounting function used by lessees. An asset's ARO is constantly changing, as it is amortized against income over the life of the asset. Generally speaking, AROs are estimates projected years into the future, whereas BSEE's program estimates the costs a third-party would require in order to perform decommissioning work in the current period. BSEE's concern is thus what the cost is currently to on behalf the Federal Government and American taxpayers. As noted in the response to the previous question, BOEM and BSEE are in the process of developing a joint rule to revise existing financial assurance policies.

9. **Director Angelle, in late August 2018, Vincent DeVito left his position at the Interior Department, and on September 4, 2018, it was announced that Mr. DeVito had joined Cox Oil and Executive Vice President and General Counsel. Did you have any role in the weeks and months leading up to the September 4 announcement in helping Mr. DeVito secure a job with Cox Oil?**

   Response: No.

10. Director Angelle, have you communicated with Mr. DeVito since September 4, 2018, about BOEM and BSEE offshore decommissioning regulations, including the Risk Management, Financial Assurance and Loss Prevention proposed rule currently under review by the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs?

Response: No.

11. Director Angelle, please provide the committee all unredacted drafts of its "Change Management Action Plan" document.

a. What is "Goal #32" in the BSEE Change Management Action plan dated 11/09/2017 09:30 am?

b. Please provide an update on the status of the goals and action steps listed in the latest version of the BSEE Change Management Action Plan.

Response to a and b: As indicated in the Bureau's budget justifications, these initiatives are internally identified initiatives to improve BSEE's effectiveness and are focused on creating an organization that has strong and smart programs and processes moving forward; improving and streamlining processes; ensuring the efficient use of resources within BSEE; developing an accountable, competent, and engaged workforce; and integrating effective stakeholder engagement. The initiatives are not public documents but are developed by BSEE staff and management to achieve improvements to the BSEE organization and the accomplishment of our mission.

House Natural Resources Subcommittee on
Energy & Mineral Resources
Hearing on FY 2021 Budget Request
March 10, 2020

Questions from Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA)

1. **Please describe any relationship between the Bureau of Transportation Statistics and BSEE and when these discussions began.**

   Response: BSEE first entered into an Interagency Agreement (IAA) with the Bureau of Transportation and Statistics (BTS) during the previous Administration, in 2013, to receive and process data through the *SafeOCS* program which was created to encourage operators to voluntarily report near-miss incidents. The IAA is consistent with the policies of the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA) as *SafeOCS* was designed to protect the confidentiality of information submitted and promote failure reporting without fear of reprisals. BTS was designated by BSEE as the third party to receive mandatory equipment failure reporting required by the revised Production Safety System Rule (2018) and the revised Well Control Rule (2019).

2. **Did the Bureau of Transportation Statistics provide any input toward the Well Control Rule revisions in 2018? If so, when did this information become available and was it available to BSEE in 2016?**

   Response: BSEE utilized the BTS' *Blowout Prevention Safety System – 2017 Annual Report* to inform its rulemaking process. At the time it was drafted, the 2016 Well Control Rule did not have the benefit of the data contained in this report. It should be noted that the availability of this data is a significant reason cited in the preamble of the 2019 Well Control Rule in support of BSEE's revisions. 84 Fed. Reg. 21,917-18, and 21,924 (May 15, 2019).

3. **Where did the concept for a 21-day interval for BOP pressure testing with a health monitoring system under a Shell pilot program come from – BSEE headquarters or the GoM regional office?**

   Response: This concept came from the BSEE Gulf of Mexico Regional office.

4. **Could you please share with the committee information on BOP pressure testing frequency regulations in other countries?**

   Response: As a member of the International Regulators' Forum, BSEE maintains a relationship with top offshore safety regulators around the globe who focus on sharing best practices for safety and environmental protection in offshore oil and gas activities. Brazil, Denmark, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands allow a 21-day BOP testing frequency. 84 Fed Reg. 21918 (May 15, 2019).

5. **You mentioned a relationship with the Argonne National Laboratory and BSEE as it pertains to the testing interval for BOPs. Could you please expand upon this relationship – specifically, when it started and any conclusions from Argonne regarding the testing interval?**

Response: In September 2012, BSEE entered into an Interagency Agreement (IAA) with the Department of Energy (DOE) to avail BSEE of the research capacities of the Argonne National Laboratory (ANL). In March 2017, BSEE issued the study task order for ANL to investigate the effects of pressure testing frequency on blowout preventers (BOP). The goal of the project was to examine the potential impact of extending the time-based BOP pressure test interval beyond the 14-day regulatory requirement.

Several significant findings from the ANL's research include the following:

- The probability for failure on demand is increased during a 14-day testing interval when compared to a 21-day testing interval: "[t]he overall conclusion of the analysis is that an extension of the time-based BOP pressure testing interval offers a significant net benefit."

- An extension of the time-base BOP pressure test interval could result in a decrease of several risk factors for both personnel and operational safety, including:
  - Reduction in the number of instances a drill string must be pulled off bottom
  - Reduced exposure of rig and crew to high pressure operations
  - Reduced potential for choke/kill system misalignment"

- The main finding of the analysis is that there is a balance between the growth in cumulative fatigue damage from the pressure tests and the reduction in standby failure due to conducting a test. If the fatigue damage from the pressure test is sufficiently greater than the standby failure rate, then extending the time-based pressure test interval will yield a reduction in PFD_{TOT}. [Potential for Failure on Demand-Total]"

This independent report confirmed that the changes made to the 2016 Well Control Rule, as expressed in the 2019 Well Control Rule, regarding this issue, are likely to reduce the probability for failure on demand.

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JUL 01 2020

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Chair
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Haaland:

Enclosed are responses prepared by the Bureau of Land Management to questions for the record submitted following the June 5, 2019, legislative hearing on pending legislation including: H.R. 1373, the *Grand Canyon Centennial Protection* Act, and; H.R. 2181, the *Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act of 2019.*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this material to the Committee.

Sincerely,

Cole Rojewski
Director
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Don Young, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Committee on Natural Resources

Questions for the Record
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
House Committee on Natural Resources
Legislative Hearing
June 5, 2019

Questions from Representative O'Halleran

1. Mr. Nedd, much was made about abandoned mines near the Grand Canyon, but that debate focused mainly on proximity to the Rim, rather than on the impacts these mines have had on communities and the environment.

a. How far is the Orphan mine from the Rim?

Response: According to the National Park Service (NPS), the Orphan Mine is located on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon below Maricopa Point in Grand Canyon National Park, in Coconino County, Arizona.

b. What has the Department of the Interior done to prioritize remediation of the Orphan mine?

Response: The NPS advises that it has performed preliminary environmental investigations of the upper mine area and identified areas of elevated radiation levels and other contamination associated with historic mining activities at the site. NPS determined that further evaluation of the site pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) is needed.

The NPS is proceeding with studies to determine whether a CERCLA cleanup action is required to reduce potential risks posed by hazardous substances present at the site through the development of an Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) for the upper mine. Once complete, the EE/CA Report (including any cleanup recommendations) and supporting documents will be made available to the public for review and comment.

c. How much longer will this process take?

Response: The NPS advises that it does not have an estimate for the amount of time it will take to complete the process.

d. How much will it cost?

Response: The NPS advises it does not have an estimate for the total cost of the process at this time.

2. During the hearing, it was suggested that uranium imports are a national security and energy supply risk.

a. Why do utilities support the import of Uranium? Is it less expensive?

Response:
The BLM is unable to make a determination as to whether utilities support the import of uranium or why.

b. Does the United States import uranium from a diverse group of nations? Are the majority of imports from long-standing allies?

Response:
The Department is not involved in the importation of uranium.

c. What percentage of uranium is imported from Russia?

Response:
The Department is not involved in the importation of uranium.

3. **Is it true that Wyoming and New Mexico have by far the largest Uranium reserves and constitute over two-thirds of the national supply?**

Response:
There are known uranium reserves located on BLM-managed lands within the Farmington and Rio Puerco field offices of New Mexico and the Buffalo, Casper, Lander, and Rawlins field offices of Wyoming. The BLM does not have information about uranium reserves that are not located on BLM-managed lands.

a. Are mines in these states already developed?

Response:
Uranium mines have been developed on the BLM-managed lands in New Mexico and Wyoming.

b. Are these mines free from contamination?

Response:
The BLM is unaware of any contaminated active uranium mine operating on BLM-managed lands in Wyoming and New Mexico. It is the BLM's understanding that there is a legacy problem with abandoned uranium mines on BLM-managed lands in New

Mexico and Wyoming. The BLM is working with the Department of Energy to evaluate abandoned uranium mines on BLM-managed public lands.

c. What is the remediation plan for these mines?

Response:
The BLM is working with Federal partners, State, and local governments to actively assess abandoned uranium mines on BLM-managed lands in Wyoming and New Mexico. To date, the BLM has cleaned up four uranium mines in New Mexico that were determined to have levels of radiation that required a response action.

4. Much was made of USGS ongoing studies in the region.

a. Have these studies ever been funded at the level recommended in their strategic plans?

Response: The USGS advises that a multidisciplinary "15 Year Science Plan" (Science Plan) was developed by the USGS, in cooperation with USFS, BLM, NPS, and FWS, to address data and information gaps regarding the Grand Canyon watershed that were identified in the 2012 Record of Decision for the Northern Arizona Withdrawal. The Science Plan estimated costs of $24.9M for investigations through FY19. To date, $9.0M have been received for these studies, most resulting from a FY2015 Congressionally appropriated increase of $1.242M to the base budget of the USGS Environmental Health Mission Area programs for thework in the Grand Canyon..

b. At current funding levels, when will these studies be completed?

Response: According to the USGS, monitoring and data collection activities described and budgeted in the Science Plan were originally scheduled to be completed in 2027, with years 2028–2029 to be used for final data synthesis and reporting activities. At current funding levels, not all studies described in the Science Plan will be completed by 2027.

c. Will these studies complete all of the goals outlined in their initial planning documents?

Response: According to the USGS, while it has addressed some scientific data gaps, not all studies described in the Science Plan will be completed by 2027 based upon current funding levels and the price decline in uranium. Several studies in the Science Plan were designed as "before, during, and after" mining studies at individual mine sites with approved operating plans as of the effective date of the Northern Arizona Withdrawal. However, falling uranium prices have forced some mines to be placed on interim management status, which has hampered the USGS's ability to complete work on the mining studies.

5. One issue with detecting uranium in the Grand Canyon region is that, as experts have testified in the past, groundwater hydrology is not well understood.

a. Does USGS currently have a detailed mapping of groundwater flow patterns throughout the region's that would be impacted by mining?

Response: No. The groundwater system in the Grand Canyon watershed is deep, complex, and poorly understood. Owing to the remoteness of the area and the great depth to groundwater, monitoring wells are expensive to install and thus few exist in the area (currently one deep monitoring well exists near the areas north of Grand Canyon that would be subject to the proposed legislation). Without more groundwater level data, mapping of groundwater flow patterns is not possible. The USGS is currently developing a conceptual model of the groundwater system, with goals of describing what is known about the system, what is hypothesized about flow paths, and where the greatest uncertainties exist.

b. Can USGS say definitively what the impacts of mining on groundwater have been?

Response: The USGS advises that, in lieu of monitoring groundwater quality directly through the installation of new wells near former, current, and planned mines in the area, it has initiated extensive spring water sampling to establish baseline water quality conditions. Springs are a cost-effective way of collecting groundwater samples but are not as direct a measure of potential mining impacts as samples from near-mine monitoring wells.
Initial results at one uranium "hot spot" in the area (Pigeon Spring) indicate that elevated uranium concentrations in groundwater at the site are likely natural and not related to nearby mining activities. The USGS is also investigating elevated uranium concentrations in the Horn Creek drainage in Grand Canyon National Park, downslope from the historical Orphan Mine to determine if the uranium is mining-related or natural.

c. How many well sites does USGS maintain around each operating mine in the region?

Response: With additional support from BLM, the USGS installed a single monitoring well in the shallow groundwater system (not the regional aquifer, which is deeper) adjacent to the Canyon Mine uranium mine (near Tusayan). This is the only monitoring well that the USGS maintains in the region. The USGS also collects annual water samples from the regional groundwater well at the Canyon Mine, which is operated and maintained by Energy Fuels. This sampling is done with permission from the mining company, which can be revoked at any time. Additionally, the USGS periodically collects water samples from a regional groundwater well north of Grand Canyon on public lands within the Pinenut Mine site, also with permission from Energy Fuels. Once mining activities at these sites are complete, the wells will be closed, thus

eliminating all available monitoring of groundwater quality in the regional aquifer near the mines.

Questions from Representative Curtis

1. Chairwoman Haaland read a statement from Representative Lujan during the hearing:

> **"The BLM has testified that this legislation would not affect tribal interests or allottees, while the bill itself includes language that recognizes the rights of Navajo allottees such as yourself, Ms. Hesuse, to continue to develop their lands." Rep's Haaland and Lujan were referring to testimony from you on May 16th before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forest and Mining regarding S. 1079. In answer to this question from Senator Mike Lee: "Do you know how tribal allottees and horizontal drilling on allotted lands might be affected by the protection zone and by this legislation?" you answered, "It is my understanding that Tribal and allottees would not be affected by this withdrawal. However, there will be challenges given the intermixing of public, tribal and private land and of course the geography of the lands."**
>
> **Were you referring to a specific analysis that BLM has done of the allottee resources contained within the exclusionary zone that shows how they will be affected by the withdrawal, or was it a general answer to the plain language of the bill? If there has been an analysis, how thorough was it? Did the study asses the resource potential, ownership of the fluid minerals, and geological factors that would affect how well allottee resources could be developed if the exclusionary zone were enacted, and the economic impacts of stranded minerals?**

Response:
For clarification, the BLM's statement does not refer to any specific analysis completed. While the proposed legislation does not withdraw Tribal or allottee interests, the impact of the proposed withdrawal of BLM-managed mineral estate on a number of allottee resources may need to be studied further on a case-by-case basis to determine any challenges to development.

Questions from Rep. Gosar

1. **Chairwoman Haaland read a statement from Representative Lujan during the hearing:**

The BLM has testified that this legislation would not affect tribal interests or allottees, while the bill itself includes language that recognizes the rights of Navajo allottees such as yourself, Ms. Hesuse, to continue to develop their lands." Rep's Haaland and Lujan were referring to testimony from you on May 16th before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forest and Mining regarding S. 1079. In answer to this question from Senator Mike Lee: "Do you know how tribal allottees and horizontal drilling on allotted lands might be affected by the protection zone and by this legislation?" you answered, "It is my understanding that Tribal and allottees would not be affected by this withdrawal. However, there will be challenges given the intermixing of public, tribal and private land and of course the geography of the lands."

Were you referring to a specific analysis that BLM has done of the allottee resources contained within the exclusionary zone that shows how they will be affected by the withdrawal, or was it a general answer to the plain language of the bill? If there has been an analysis, how thorough was it? Did the study asses the resource potential, ownership of the fluid minerals, and geological factors that would affect how well allottee resources could be developed if the exclusionary zone were enacted, and the economic impacts of stranded minerals?

Response:
For clarification, the BLM's statement does not refer to any specific analysis completed. While the proposed legislation does not withdraw Tribal or allottee interests, the impact of the proposed withdrawal of BLM-managed mineral estate on a number of allottee resources may need to be studied further on a case-by-case basis to determine any challenges to development.

2. **Besides uranium, flagstone, sand and gravel, vanadium, copper, oil, coal, rare earths as well as other critical and strategic metals would be locked away forever under Rep. Grijlava's bill. Deputy Director Nedd, are you concerned that H.R. 1373 seeks to lock away critical and strategic minerals on a one-million-plus-acre swath of land forever?**

Response:

Critical minerals are vital to the Nation's security and economic prosperity. The Executive Order signed by the President on December 20, 2017, titled "A Federal Strategy to Ensure Secure and Reliable Supplies of Critical Minerals" and Secretarial Order 3359, which implements it, both direct the Department to identify ways to improve access to lands to explore for and develop critical minerals, among other things. The Department has concerns about the size and scope of the withdrawal contained in the legislation; at over 1 million acres, the withdrawal covers an area that is 80 percent of the size of the state of Delaware. The proposed legislation could prevent the exploration and future growth of critical minerals necessary to build renewable energy infrastructure like solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries. The Department will continue to study the impacts of mining in the area proposed for permanent withdrawal to provide policymakers with the scientific data necessary to make informed decisions.

3. Uranium is critical for nuclear power, the most reliable and clean zero-emission energy source. If the socialists pushing the Green New Deal really want to transition off fossil fuels, it defies logic and common sense that they oppose all domestic mining and think we can just import enough of those minerals from Russia and China to make this transition occur. Sheer insanity. Deputy Director Nedd, is there enough domestic mining taking place in this country for us to transition to 100% wind, solar and batteries for all our energy needs and have all the minerals necessary for those energy sources and that transition be produced in America?

Response:
Critical minerals are vital to renewable energy infrastructure like solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries. In 2018, the United States was 100 percent reliant on foreign sources of several critical minerals vital to the production of solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries. *See* USGS Mineral Commodity Summaries 2019 Report. In June 2019, the Administration released "A Federal Strategy to Ensure Secure and Reliable Supplies of Critical Minerals." This strategy directs DOI to locate domestic supplies of those minerals, ensure access to information necessary for the study and production of minerals, and expedite permitting for minerals projects.

Mining remains the most important method for acquiring critical minerals, and Federal lands provide significant opportunities for mining. Prolonged Federal permitting and land management policies have created challenges to the access and the development of domestic critical minerals, which has contributed to an increased reliance on foreign sources. The Administration's critical minerals strategy calls on the BLM to undertake a comprehensive review of its permitting, land classifications, and management plans to

reduce unnecessary permitting delays and increase access to critical minerals. Additionally, the Administration is evaluating alternatives, such as recycling, processing mine waste, extraction from seawater, or even filtering critical minerals from energy byproducts. The USGS will assist other Federal agencies, including the BLM, with evaluating unconventional methods for bolstering the traditional supplies of critical minerals.

4. You testified that Uranium is on the critical minerals list. Deputy Director Nedd, is importing 99% of the uranium we need for nuclear reactors an energy security risk? How about a national security risk?

Response:
The dependency of the United States on foreign sources of critical minerals creates a strategic vulnerability for both our economy and our military with respect to adverse foreign government actions, natural disasters, and other events that could disrupt supply. The Administration is dedicated to ensuring that we have the natural resources critical to our national security and economic growth. The Department will work expeditiously to implement the President's strategy from streamlining the permitting process to developing domestic supplies of minerals.

5. The breccia pipe formations in the withdrawal area in H.R. 1373 represent the largest deposits of uranium in the United States and contain the largest quantities of reserves and the highest grades of American uranium ore by a factor of 6. The withdrawal area constitutes the bulk of a 326,000,000 acre uranium reserve which the Nuclear Energy Institute estimates would provide California's 45 million residents 22.5 years of electricity. Are you concerned that H.R. 1373 seeks to lock away the largest quantities of reserves and the highest grades of American uranium in the country?

Response:
The Colorado Plateau of northern Arizona is one of the largest uranium provinces in the nation and is host to numerous breccia pipes, many of which are mineralized by uranium. That said, the province as defined stretches over four states: Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and Colorado. There are fewer than a dozen historically producing mines on BLM-managed lands in the proposed withdrawal footprint. The actual loss associated with the proposed withdrawal is specific to the future exploration of resources that are not already subject to valid mining claims, and future growth of the existing approved mines, to the extent valid existing rights are determined not to exist.