

Tab 1

Subject: 39 Organizations Request the Denial of all Oregon permits for HiTech Minerals Inc.'s McDermitt Exploration Project and the Aurora Uranium Project in the McDermitt Caldera

To: Governor Tina Kotek

CC: DEQ Director Lead Feldon, DOGAMI Board Chair Anne MacDonald

Dear Governor Tina Kotek,

The 41 undersigned groups and organizations stand united in opposing the HiTech Minerals Inc. proposal for an extensive exploration operation and eventual proposal of a harmful and destructive mining operation. We call on you to halt any forward progress for the McDermitt Exploration Project and the Aurora Uranium Project in the McDermitt Caldera in Southeastern Oregon.

We are requesting that your administration uphold Oregon's strongest environmental standards and require ample opportunities for public comment, and that your agencies deny all relevant state permits for the McDermitt Exploration Project.

The Project

On December 8, 2025, [Donald Trump's Bureau of Land Management \(BLM\) authorized an extensive and damaging lithium exploration project in the McDermitt Caldera](#), which spans the Oregon and Nevada border. The project, located on the Oregon side, threatens as much as 7,200 acres of public lands that preserve [irreplaceable cultural resources, provide habitat for numerous imperiled species, and have supported a family ranch for six generations](#).

The McDermitt Exploration Project, proposed by HiTech Minerals, a subsidiary of Australian-owned Jindalee Lithium Limited, would eliminate habitat, develop an expansive network of new roads, create 168 drill holes, and pump groundwater, in an area of Oregon that frequently experiences extreme to severe drought. [Other exploration projects](#) this size or smaller have required extensive analysis through an Environmental Impact Statement. Yet this project was approved under an Environmental Assessment, a significantly less rigorous review process. Due to this project's extensive impacts and incomplete analysis the approval by BLM is currently under legal challenge, case #: 2:26-cv-00833-HL.

Although the federal government has fast tracked the approval of the McDermitt Exploration Project, permits and oversight are required from the state of Oregon, including an exploration and mining permit from the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI).

Oregon should not issue any permits for mining exploration proposals in the McDermitt Caldera, and, at minimum, should not move anything forward until ongoing litigation resolves. Additionally, we are concerned that these State processes are moving forward without public comment periods or hearings in concerned communities across Oregon

No Mining District

In 2021, the BLM approved a massive new lithium project nearby in the southern portion of the McDermitt Caldera, called Thacker Pass. The existing Thacker Pass mine can produce 30,000 metric tons of lithium per year. [If it were a country, this mine would make the Thacker Pass project the second largest producer of lithium in the world.](#) Thacker Pass is estimated to emit [over 150,000 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent annually.](#) Thacker Pass has already done extreme harm to the ecosystems and communities surrounding the McDermitt Caldera, and allowing further mining in this region would be devastating.

The Aurora Uranium Project is another detrimental project proposed to move forward this year, the Aurora Uranium Project. Eagle Nuclear Energy Corp is rapidly progressing permitting and exploration phases to begin drilling this year in what they claim to be the largest uranium deposit in the country. Uranium open-pit mining generates radioactive waste rock and process water with elevated uranium, radium, radon, and arsenic that contaminate drinking water for the surrounding communities. There is a well established precedent for the lasting devastation by mining in the McDermitt Caldera. The DEQ currently monitors groundwater contaminated with these dangerous elements in the White King and Lucky Lass uranium mines 17 miles from Lakeview, Oregon. These mines were closed in the 1960s but continue to poison groundwater today. [The Trump Administration has slashed federal regulations meant to protect us from the dangers of nuclear development directly leading to the fast tracking of the Aurora Project.](#)

The combined effects of all of these projects amplifies impacts. By allowing these projects to go forward in our state we're consenting to poisoning our community members in southeastern Oregon.

Local Impacts

This proposal would cause irreversible harm to the Fort McDermitt Paiute Shoshone Tribe of Nevada and Oregon, including harm to cultural sites, water, air, wildlife, and traditional foods and medicines. Other Oregon Tribes with ties to this special landscape include Burns Paiute, Klamath Tribes and Warm Springs. Tribal governments have not been properly consulted on this proposal. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, allows Indigenous Peoples the right to give or withhold permission for the advancement of projects that would affect them or their land, or substantive community participation.

The town of McDermitt has existing arsenic problems in their water supply tracing back to the Cordero and McDermitt Mercury Mines that were closed in the 1980s. Mercury spoils from these mines were spread on streets and roads in McDermitt and on Fort McDermitt Reservation. History shows how mining leaves lasting damage on the surrounding communities' health and safety.

Mining in the McDermitt Caldera would also cause irreparable harm to the habitat of many [Oregon's Sensitive Species](#) already suffering from habitat loss, including [sage grouse, Lahontan](#)

[cutthroat trout](#), [golden eagle](#), [pygmy rabbit](#), [mule deer](#), and [pronghorn antelope](#). Southeastern Oregon contains some of the [largest continuous blocks of sagebrush habitat](#) in the Great Basin which serves as a vital wildlife corridor between other remaining intact natural areas.

Standing Up for Oregon

With the Trump administration now stockpiling so-called critical minerals, including lithium, for military uses, we are concerned mined materials from Oregon would be used to exacerbate his deadly wars.

Oregon can also help reduce the need for newly mined minerals. Oregon must invest in community solutions, like [public transit and reducing energy consumption](#), while respecting Indigenous sovereignty and protecting ecosystems. These solutions decrease the need for lithium batteries in individual electric cars and other green technology.

While the world works to transition off fossil fuels, we must not allow communities, the environment, and Oregon's limited water resources to be sacrificed for greenwashed technologies and weapons for war.

Governor Kotek, please do the right thing by stopping HiTech Minerals Inc.'s proposal to turn the McDermitt Caldera into a sacrifice zone for lithium mining in Oregon and halt any forward progress for the Aurora Uranium Project that will undoubtedly cause devastating damage to Oregon's people, wildlife, and natural surroundings. The time is now to stand strong against federal fast-tracking that puts profit over the people and the environment. It is not too late to stop these dirty, dangerous projects. Our 41 organizations and the tens of thousands of people we represent demand that the McDermitt Caldera is protected from these dangerous and harmful exploration proposals.

Thank you,

350 Tacoma

350Hawaii

Alliance for Democracy

Alliance for Democracy - Oregon

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.

Center for Biological Diversity

Central/Eastern Oregon Chapter of Great Old Broads for Wilderness

Columbia Riverkeeper

Divest Oregon

Earth Action, Inc.

Earthworks

Endangered Species Coalition

Food & Water Watch

Inform Media
Mukwa
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment(NACCE)
Northwest American Indian Coalition, Inc.
Not Affiliated, Community Member
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Oil and Gas Action Network
Oil Change International
Oregon Conservancy Foundation
Oregon Just Transition Alliance
Oregon PeaceWorks
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Peace House
People of Red Mountain
Progressives for Climate
Putnam Progressives
Red Boot Bookkeeping
Risky Business
Rogue Climate
S.P.I.R.I.T.S
Sierra Club Oregon
Siskoyou Rising Tide
Southern Oregon Climate Action Now
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene Earth Action Justice Group
Williams Community Forest Project