

Mining, Exploration, and the Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act

April 2016

The proposed Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act is designed to benefit Pershing County by:

- 1) Expanding private landholdings to stimulate economic development and increase the County's tax base;
- 2) Resolving the decades-long standstill on wilderness designations;
- 3) Facilitating the expansion and development of existing mining projects; and
- 4) Establishing a process that will provide numerous stakeholders an opportunity to acquire certain public lands for development purposes while protecting preexisting uses on these lands.

The following provides background information on how the proposal addresses mining and mineral exploration.

Q: Will the proposed Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act reduce lands available for mineral exploration?

A: No. Some of the lands proposed for wilderness are currently designated as wilderness study areas (WSA). Within these areas, mineral development must comply with strict regulations that prohibit surface disturbance and the impairment of wilderness characteristics. As a result, WSAs are effectively closed to mineral exploration. Further, the proposal will release over 120,000 acres of WSAs, thus opening these areas to new mineral exploration. **The net result is an increase in the amount of land available to mineral exploration compared to what is available now.**

Q: How will future potential sale or exchange of lands in the checkerboard protect existing claims on those lands?

A: The Pershing County Commissioners will have complete control over which lands are selected for sale or exchange. Lands with preexisting mining claims will not be sold or exchanged to third parties without the consent of the claim owner. (Other preexisting, third-party rights must also be preserved as a prerequisite for the County to select the lands as suitable for sale or exchange.)

Q: How will the proposal benefit mine development in Pershing County?

A: The proposal authorizes the sale of specific public lands to certain claimholders with operating mines and advance projects to facilitate the expansion and development of these projects and to ensure the smooth and continued operation of mines in Pershing County. Future mine proponents with claims in the checkerboard on lands designated as suitable for sale or exchange (the lands in blue on the map) could similarly benefit by asking Pershing County to select their project areas to allow them to purchase the land.

Q: How will the proposal benefit mineral exploration in Pershing County?

A: Public lands in the checkerboard area will remain open to claim location and development. Claim owners would have the potential opportunity to purchase claims on the lands shown in blue on the map, which could stimulate interest and investment in mineral exploration in the County.