

# Public Lands Foundation Supports Responsible Critical Minerals Development on Public Lands

*Recommendations to the BLM and Interior on the need to ensure public lands remain available for exploration and development of strategic minerals.*

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The Public Lands Foundation (PLF), in response to the President's determination on March 31, 2022 to invoke the [Defense Production Act](#) and secure domestic sources of strategic

and [critical minerals](#), has released a position statement and provided recommendations to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Director and Secretary of the Interior on the need to ensure public lands remain available for exploration and development of critical and strategic minerals.



Potential deposits of many critical minerals, including lithium that is critical to the increased demand for electric vehicle batteries, are located on the public lands managed by the BLM. The Presidential determination under the Defense Production Act requires the Secretary of Defense to consult with the Secretary of the Interior to expand sustainable and responsible domestic production of strategic and critical minerals by supporting feasibility studies for mining projects. However, the determination does not waive any of the requirements for mining projects to comply with Federal and State permitting requirements and environmental health and safety laws.

Mary Jo Rugwell, PLF President, said "it is important that sufficient federal lands remain open to mineral entry for exploration and discovery of valuable critical mineral deposits. The supply chain for these mineral resources is critical and federal lands will be valuable targets for future domestic critical and strategic mineral resources and reserves."

The PLF position statement includes recommendations to update policies to recognize the

importance of critical and strategic minerals on the public lands to the nation's economic and security interests. Mineral development is an appropriate multiple-use of public lands under Section 103(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). The 1872 Mining Law also provides for the exploration and development of mineral resources on public lands and the BLM is responsible for the regulations, including environmental reviews and procedures to prevent unnecessary and undue degradation, that oversee this development in the 11 western states and Alaska. However, millions of acres of these public lands have been placed off limits to mineral exploration through land withdrawals to preserve other important resources.

The Public Lands Foundation (PLF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to keep America's public lands in public hands, professionally and sustainably managed for responsible common use and enjoyment. Founded in 1987, the PLF advocates for sound public land management, provides scholarships to students, cosponsors a Student Congress biannually, and provides opportunities for Bureau of Land Management retirees to stay involved in public land management issues. The PLF position statement is available on the PLF website at [www.publicland.org](http://www.publicland.org).

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