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PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD OPENS FOR CONTROVERSIAL MINING PROJECT ON CALIFORNIA DESERT TRIBAL LANDS

The general public is encouraged to submit comments on the proposed project before August 30th

BISHOP, CA — Today, the Bureau of Land Management announced the opening of the public comment period for the proposed mining project at Conglomerate Mesa, located on traditional homelands of the Paiute-Shoshone and Timbisha Shoshone and about one mile from California's Death Valley National Park. K2 Gold's proposal will impact at least 12 acres of Conglomerate Mesa. The company proposes to drill 1,000 feet down at seven locations to collect samples for gold analysis and to develop nearly three miles of new roads. Mining and drilling in the region would permanently destroy cultural resources and traditional cultural use sites, as well as threaten water supplies, wildlife and plants, and recreation.

The public comment period will last 30 days and the general public is encouraged to submit comments on the controversial project before the August 30th deadline. Comments can be submitted via the [Bureau of Land Management's website](#) (click "participate now"). Following this initial scoping period, the Bureau of Land Management will review public comments and issue a draft Environmental Assessment. The general public will also be able to submit comments on this draft EA in the later summer.

"Conglomerate Mesa is a sacred landscape to the Indigenous people of this area. We have protected and cared for these lands since the dawn of time," said **Kathy Bancroft, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone**. "Not only is this landscape a place of traditional pinyon nut gatherings, but it is also a transition zone between the Timbisha Shoshone and Paiute Shoshone traditional homelands. We have an obligation to protect the homelands we have and stand in

opposition to this project every step of the way. We hope the people will stand with us and make public comments. Now is the time to make your voice heard.”

Conglomerate Mesa is used by tribes native to Payahuunadü/Owens Valley and Death Valley/Timbisha. The drill sites at Conglomerate Mesa are located among pinyon nut gathering sites, hunting grounds, mule deer migration routes, potential burial sites, and numerous individual artifacts.

K2 Gold and Mojave Precious Metals, a Canadian company leading the exploratory drilling project, is also threatening rare desert plants and the region’s scenic beauty. Rare species include the Inyo rock daisy, and the Badger Flat threadplant - a species new to science. Mature and juvenile Joshua trees, currently a candidate species under the California Endangered Species Act, occur along K2 Gold’s proposed road at Conglomerate Mesa and would likely be impacted by road construction. The Inyo rock daisy is local to the Inyo Mountains and found nowhere else in the world and the core of its distribution is centered on Conglomerate Mesa.

Phase 1 of K2 Gold’s exploration is complete. Following exploration, K2 Gold aims to sell the rights to another company to develop an industrial-scale, cyanide heap leach gold mine in Conglomerate Mesa. Cyanide heap leach mining uses cyanide to extract gold from the earth and poses [significant hazards to local residents, plants and animals](#). Further, cyanide leach mining is very water intensive and uses hundreds of millions of gallons of water. K2 Gold [recently admitted](#) it does not know where water supplies for this project will come from. Advocates assert that there is not enough water available in the area for an industrial mine.

“Allowing a large mining project to proceed here at Conglomerate Mesa will devastate the natural environment, threaten endangered desert species, harm wildlife and their migration corridors and further stress scarce water supplies in Inyo County,” **said Wendy Schneider, Executive Director, Friends of the Inyo.** “The region’s cultural significance, beauty, and unique plants and wildlife are beloved by local communities and it’s our collective responsibility to make sure all of it remains intact for future generations.”

California Senator Dianne Feinstein [has expressed opposition](#) to the project. Tribal leaders, local officials, conservation groups, business owners, and local residents also [oppose mining and drilling](#) in the region.

“Lone Pine’s public lands attract visitors from all around the county and the world, and that helps sustain our local economies,” **said Michael Prather, a 40-year resident of Lone Pine and retired teacher.** “At the same time, many boom and bust mining ventures throughout history brought little economic security in the long run as seen at Darwin, Keeler, Cerro Gordo and Panamint City. The landscape-scale destruction of open pit mining at Conglomerate Mesa is a direct threat to communities

and economies throughout the greater Death Valley National Park area and is strongly opposed by many of us here in Inyo County.”

“The unparalleled uniqueness of Conglomerate Mesa makes it a stronghold for western Joshua trees as climate change advances,” **said Ilene Anderson, senior scientist with the Center for Biological Diversity.** “Protecting Conglomerate Mesa will stem the current extinction crisis for Joshua trees and other plants and animals that call the Mesa home - it’s no place for a gold mine.”

Conglomerate Mesa comprises approximately 22,500 acres of public lands that are designated as California Desert National Conservation Lands and an Area of Critical Environmental Concern for their cultural significance, biodiversity, and recreation opportunities. Threatened Joshua trees, Inyo rock daisies and a number of other sensitive plant species call the Mesa home. Visitors enjoy hiking, striking valley views, camping, backpacking, hunting, photography, stargazing and more.

To submit a comment on the proposed project, please visit [here](#) and click “participate now.”

Background on the Conglomerate Mesa Coalition

The Conglomerate Mesa Coalition comprises a diverse group of organizations, tribal nations, and local businesses that support the immediate protection of Conglomerate Mesa for the land’s cultural, historical, conservation, and recreation values from extractive industries like mining. These entities also oppose all mining activities by K2 Gold on Conglomerate Mesa. For more information about the Conglomerate Mesa Coalition, [click here.](#)

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