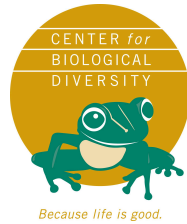




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Contact: Kayla Browne, Desert and Renewable Energy Policy Director, Friends of the Inyo, 313.719.0860, kayla@friendsoftheinyo.org

CONTROVERSIAL MINING PROJECT ON CALIFORNIA DESERT LANDS GREENLIGHTED DESPITE WIDESPREAD OPPOSITION

LONE PINE, CA — On April 6, 2026, the Bureau of Land Management approved a proposal for an expanded mining exploration drilling project at Conglomerate Mesa, located on traditional homelands of the Paiute-Shoshone and Timbisha Shoshone and about one mile west of California’s Death Valley National Park.

In a letter of opposition, the Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Reservation stated, “The Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Tribe has concerns for the area, as it was used by our people long ago when they traveled through to other areas; our people picked pine nuts, hunted, and camped there. Traces of our uses are still relevant today. It would be a shame to open it up to mining, which we are opposed to.”

In this next phase of destructive gold mining exploration, Canadian company K2 Gold, through its subsidiary Mojave Precious Metals, had proposed significant new road construction and 120 drill holes at 30 sites on Conglomerate Mesa. After receiving over 14,000 public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), mostly in opposition to the project, the BLM and the mining company decided to opt for an alternative that limits the exploration to 76 drill holes at 22 sites,

with no road construction and access via “helicopter only”. This is the second time in 7 years that the BLM has considered mining exploration on Conglomerate Mesa and has allowed only helicopter access, a tacit acknowledgment of the destructive effects that new roads would have on the area. Though the chosen alternative will eliminate the damage caused by new roads, it still allows gold exploration in this fragile desert ecosystem, disrupting wildlife and endangering the habitat of threatened species such as the Inyo rock daisy.

“Conglomerate Mesa represents the heart of the California Desert National Conservation Lands and deserves to be protected from industry-scale mining, ” said **Jora Fogg, California Associate Program Director, Conservation Lands Foundation**. “The Mojave Precious Metals project threatens this culturally significant and biologically dynamic desert landscape. Giveaways of our protected public lands to mining companies are another way this administration is robbing future generations of the intrinsic benefits of nature and their opportunity to experience and appreciate it.”

Conglomerate Mesa comprises approximately 22,500 acres of public lands designated as California Desert National Conservation Lands and as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern for their cultural significance, biodiversity, and recreational opportunities. It was formerly designated as a Wilderness Study Area and retains outstanding wilderness values - no roads and a landscape unmarred by development.

“Conglomerate Mesa is an incredible landscape, between the Sierra Nevada and Death Valley, home to rare plants and wildlife, and one of California’s Joshua Tree woodlands most likely to survive climate change,” said **Jared Naimark, Western Mining Senior Manager, Earthworks**. “It has been stewarded since time immemorial by Shoshone and Paiute peoples who continue to use the area for traditional Pinyon gathering, and who advocate for protection of its historic and tribal cultural sites. We must do all we can to protect the Mesa from being destroyed by needless gold mining.”

A thorough analysis of tribal cultural resources, an ethnographic study, and in-depth conversations with local tribes led the BLM to identify one traditional cultural place (Conglomerate Mesa TCP) and 29 archeological sites, of which 4 precontact sites are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The precontact sites include one lithic scatter, two rock art sites, and one temporary camp with associated rock art. In addition, 6 historic era charcoal production sites are eligible for the NRHP because they could yield important information about site use, charcoal production lifeways, and the evolution of the local mining industry.

“A large exploratory drilling project would be a loss for many members of our community, as such a project would close access to much of the area for anyone other than the miners,” **said Wendy Schneider, Executive Director, Friends of the Inyo.** “The area is prized for its recreational opportunities, including hunting, birdwatching, and dark sky experiences.”

In addition to removing recreational public access to the area and negatively impacting recreational opportunities in Death Valley National Park, the proposed project threatens rare desert plants, including the state-listed Threatened Inyo rock daisy, and the Badger Flat threadplant - a species new to science. “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,” **said Maria Jesus, botanist, California Botanic Garden and Conservation Chair, Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society.** “Furthermore, the project will negatively impact a thriving Joshua tree woodland that includes many new generations of trees. The Mesa provides a climate refuge for the species at a time when they are predicted to disappear from the majority of their range in the coming decades,” **added Nick Jensen, Conservation Program Coordinator for the California Native Plant Society.**

“The Trump administration’s decision to resurrect this reckless gold mining exploration project on lands set aside for conservation shows complete disdain for our wild lands and the people who care about them,” **said Lisa Belenky, a senior counsel at the Center for Biological Diversity.** “A mine in this area could push the Inyo rock daisy to extinction, all in the name of short-term profit. We’ve spent years fighting for this fragile desert landscape, and we’re more determined than ever to defend it.”

“It is very disappointing that the Bureau of Land Management is greenlighting this second phase of exploratory drilling at Conglomerate Mesa, which will undoubtedly lead to more impacts to the Mesa’s many ecological, cultural, recreational, historic, and scenic values,” **said Linda Castro, Assistant Policy Director, CalWild.** “It is incomprehensible that water that is needed for the continued survival of local residents (human and wildlife) will be diverted to this project. California doesn’t need another foreign corporation mining for gold in the California Desert.”

Following exploration, K2 Gold intends to sell the rights to another company to develop an industrial-scale, cyanide heap-leach gold mine at Conglomerate Mesa. Cyanide heap leach mining uses cyanide to extract gold from the earth and poses [significant hazards to local residents, plants and animals](#). Furthermore, cyanide leach mining is highly water-intensive, consuming hundreds of millions of gallons.

"It breaks my heart to see land so beautiful – studded with bright pink and red cactus flowers, carpeted with purple milkvetch and apricot mallow, dotted with Joshua trees throughout – torn up by roads and drill pads," **said Lynn Boulton, a member of the Sierra Club's Toiyabe Chapter.** "The high price of gold isn't driven only by economic speculation; it also fuels mineral projects that damage our shared public lands – lands that are already under threat from climate change."

"The utter destruction of Conglomerate Mesa, a few miles east of Keeler, by an open-pit, heap leach gold mining project would be a permanent and painful loss to our local communities and residents. We camp, go pine nutting, hunt, and explore on our public lands. It is why we live here", said **Michael Prather, a 40-year resident of Lone Pine and retired teacher.**

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's cultural, historical, conservation, and recreational values from extractive industries such as mining. These entities also oppose all mining activities by K2 Gold on Conglomerate Mesa. For more information about the Conglomerate Mesa Coalition, go to ProtectConglomerateMesa.com

To review the BLM Record of Decision and other project documents, go to:

<https://tinyurl.com/EPlanningMPM>

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Photo caption: Fruited Joshua tree on Conglomerate Mesa. Conglomerate Mesa provides a climate refugia for this iconic species.