

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 2, 2018

Mr. Glenn Casamassa, Regional Forester  
U.S. Forest Service Region 6  
1220 SW 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue  
Portland, OR 97204

Mr. Merv George, Supervisor  
Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest  
3040 Biddle Road  
Medford, OR 97504

Dear Regional Forester Casamassa and Supervisor George:

It has come to our attention that Red Flat Nickel Corporation (RFNC) has submitted a mining Plan of Operation for Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest (RR-SNF) lands located within Southwestern Oregon Mineral Withdrawal Area (withdrawal area), also known as Public Land Order 7859. We ask that you provide regular, timely updates as the U.S. Forest Service reviews the proposal.

As you are new to your respective positions, we want to inform you of our long-standing interest in protecting the lands within the withdrawal area. It is an exceptional part of the National Forest System and corresponds to the federal public lands under consideration for protection in the Southwestern Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act of 2017 (H.R. 310 and S.192).

The purpose of Public Land Order 7859 is “to protect the [withdrawal area] from possible adverse effects of mineral development,” while Congress considers legislation to permanently withdraw these lands. We are aware that under existing law, the withdrawal is subject to valid existing rights, and that submission of a mining plan of operation in a withdrawn area triggers a Valid Existing Rights (VER) Determination.

As you review the proposal, we request:

- 1) Information on the process and steps the RR-SNF will take in responding to the RFNC proposal and an estimate of the time required for each step of the RR-SNF review of the RFNC Plan of Operation;
- 2) The type and amount of surface disturbance anticipated from any activities that RFNC will take in order to gather additional data to assist in the VER determination;
- 3) Updates on your progress in evaluating the RFNC application, including any significant changes in the process or any additional proposed exploratory activities, including drilling activities, in the withdrawal area;
- 4) A copy of the mineral examiners report, when available; and

5) Timely notice of our offices of all public meetings and U.S. Forest Service requests for public comment.


As you are aware, the withdrawn area contains the headwaters of Hunter Creek and Pistol River, as well as sections of the Rough and Ready and Baldface Creeks. It also provides some of the cleanest drinking water in the nation to communities in Southwest Oregon and Northern California, and contains one of the highest concentrations of rare and endemic plants in North America. There is strong community support for the withdrawal by residents, businesses, and local officials. We ask that you exercise the utmost due diligence as you move forward.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress



Ron Wyden  
U.S. Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
U.S. Senator



Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

Cc: U.S. Forest Service Interim Chief Vicki Christiansen