

San Jose, California
September 9, 2012

Congressman Doc Hastings
House Committee on Natural Resources
WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE
1203 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

James G. Kenna, State Director
Bureau of Land Management
California State Office
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-1623
Sacramento, CA 95825

Mike Pool, Acting Director
BLM Washington Office
1849 C Street NW, Rm. 5665
Washington DC 20240

Dear Sirs:

My name is William Spence. I am the President of the [San Francisco] Bay Area Mineralogists, a representative of the American Lands Access Association, and the Public Lands chairman of the Santa Clara Valley Gem & Mineral Society in San Jose, California.

I am writing to express the concern of myself and the above groups concerning HR 6286 (Farr), the "Clear Creek National Recreation Area and Conservation Act of 2012". This bill relates to the BLM-administered area in San Benito County, California known as the Clear Creek Management Area ("CCMA"). CCMA has historically been one of the premier off-road motorcycling venues in the US as well as one of the most uniquely mineralized rockhounding areas in the world. Since 2008, CCMA has been closed by BLM to all forms of recreation based on a highly controversial EPA study claiming that naturally occurring asbestos in CCMA poses an inordinate health hazard to those who recreate there. For more than 4 years BLM has been revising the CCMA Resource Management Plan ("RMP") which is now due to be implemented late this year. That Plan will allow limited use of CCMA for rockhounding and other recreational purposes under permit, but off-road motorcycling will be prohibited.

HR 6286 is a desperate attempt by the motorcycle groups to regain access to CCMA by declaring it a national recreation area, despite the fact that such a designation would leave CCMA subject to yet another RMP cycle under NEPA with no assurance that off-roading would be preserved thereunder. In return the drafters of HR 6286 have offered (as a concession to Sen. Harry Reid and the wilderness lobby) to convert 20,000 acres of land adjacent to CCMA to "Wilderness" status, and 10,000 acres of stream watershed adjacent to CCMA to "Wild and Scenic River" status. (The 5 streams so designated are dry most the year, and BLM has previously determined that they are not appropriate for inclusion in the WSR network.) Altogether these 30,000 acres are prime rockhounding, grazing and hunting areas on the perimeter of CCMA, and we strenuously object to any lands designation that would further restrict recreational access.

We therefore respectfully ask that you kill HR 6286 and prevent inclusion of its content in any end-of-session omnibus bill. While our groups take no position on the off-road biking issue, we believe that this bill, as drafted, would casually and permanently sacrifice prime rockhounding areas adjacent to CCMA to the wilderness lobby for the sole—and limited—benefit of the bikers. Help us to maintain public recreational access to our public lands.

Thank you for your support. If you wish to communicate further on this topic, you may contact me at billspence@amlands.org

Sincerely yours,

William H. Spence