



*Great Basin  
Resource Watch*

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## **BLM Land Sale at Anaconda Mine is Not in the Public Interest**

**(Reno, NV)** — On December 11, 2020 the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) dropped notification for public comment regarding an Environmental Assessment (EA) to sell 2,062 acres of land in and around the abandoned Anaconda mine site in Yerington, NV to Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO). The proposal was requested by ARCO, and mirrors the previous attempt to transfer public land at the site to ARCO through Representative Amodei's bill HR 5347.

BLM held an online public scoping meeting on January 5, 2021 on the land sale (disposal) only 6 days before public comments were due on January 11, 2021. According to BLM's scoping information the land sale will expedite the clean-up work at the mine, allowing ARCO to walk away from the site sooner.

The site of the abandoned Anaconda mine site in Yerington, NV continues to be a point of concern with Nevadans who are worried about lasting health effects from the mine contamination. Over the holidays, the Bureau of Land Management rushed into a process to sell the land in and around the mine site that paves the way for responsible parties to walk away sooner than expected. Privatization of this land will benefit ARCO, but may move Nevada further away from the solution of a comprehensive cleanup of all contamination both in and around the mine site.

The Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN) and Great Basin Resource Watch (GBRW) submitted public comments with our concerns on January, 11th 2021 which can be found at:

<http://gbrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/GBRW-PLAN-Anaconda-Land-Disposal-EA-comments-1-11-21.pdf>

### Summary of PLAN's and GBRW's Primary Concerns

1. This sale must be made to support the public interest. The current explanation is that the privatization of land will allow for ARCO to negotiate with only one regulating agency, and would thus speed up their clean up activities at the site. However, the expedited process could mean that the scope and level of cleanup will be reduced. PLAN and

GBRW do not believe that a reduction of public oversight is in the best interest of the public.

2. We are concerned that re-mining of the site will not be included in the EA analysis as a reasonably foreseeable action. At the scoping meeting, the BLM stated that since ARCO has not expressed plans to re-mine, it will not be considered. However, Signaste Peak Resources LLC is conducting exploration activities at the site and has publicly spoken to their plans to re-mine the site. The National Environmental Policy Act requires that all “reasonably foreseeable actions” are to be considered, which BLM during the scoping meeting agreed would be adhered to.
3. An Environmental Assessment is insufficient to address the analysis needed to comprehensively understand the full impacts of the land sale. The consequences of this proposed action on the affected community and environment would be significant, especially when all foreseeable actions are properly included. The data and analysis contained in the environmental reports needs to be part of the EA and EIS itself.
4. A portion of the Walker River is within the lands proposed to be sold. The Walker River is navigable water, and therefore the banks and bed of the river are property of the state of Nevada. The BLM has no authority to sell lands that include the Walker River.
5. The lands included for sale are part of the traditional territory of the Yerington Paiute Tribe. This sale will impact cultural sites of significance to the Tribe.

#### Comment(s) Conclusion

BLM needs to fully comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and Federal Land Policy and Management Act to conduct a complete analysis and provide justification for the loss of public oversight. Given that BLM is currently not planning to address re-mining of the site, we are not convinced that BLM will conduct the analysis in sufficient breath and detail necessary to make the case that the land disposal is in the best public interest and consistent with US law.

#### Quotes for publication

“This proposed reduction of oversight opens the door for corners to be cut to speed up cleanup at the expense of the health of Nevadans for generations,” said *Ian Bigley, PLAN Mining Justice Organizer*

“There have been disagreements on cleanup when EPA was the lead agency, and then during the Trump administration EPA was replaced under a deferment agreement as the lead agency by the state of Nevada. Under the proposed land disposal BLM will be removed from oversight. The BLM’s responsibility is to the public interest in lands that it has been entrusted to protect, not to cater to the desires of private corporations,” said *John Hadder, Director of Great Basin Resource Watch*.

“Too often consultation with Tribes is insufficient. The chain of title will always revert back to the local Tribe. The BLM needs to support the interests of Tribes in protecting lands before the interests of corporations in commodifying lands” said *Vernon Rogers, Yerington Paiute Tribe Member and Land Defender*

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