

## For Immediate Release

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### **Digging Further Delayed at the Thacker Pass Lithium Mine Site**

**RENO, Nev.** — Today the Bureau of Land Management and Lithium Nevada Corporation committed in a [court-enforceable stipulation](#):

"THEREFORE, the Parties agree and stipulate: 1. Neither Lithium Nevada nor Federal Defendants will conduct any ground disturbance activities in the Project area in connection with the Thacker Pass Project as challenged in Plaintiffs' [Western Watersheds Project, Great Basin Resource Watch, Basin and Range Watch, Wildlands Defense] Complaint before July 29, 2021."

Previously, digging and excavation were expected to begin as soon as June 23rd.

"Attorneys for the Lithium Nevada asked the court for extra time to respond to our lawsuit," said Kelly Fuller, Energy and Mining Campaign Director for Western Watersheds Project. "So it's only fair that disturbance to the land also be delayed. It's critically important that the court has time to consider our motion before ground disturbance begins and wildlife and habitat are put at risk."

This stipulation was requested by the four conservation and public accountability groups who [filed for a preliminary injunction](#) in the Federal District Court in Reno on May 27th, asking the court to prohibit ground disturbance associated with the Thacker Pass lithium mine until the merits of their case against the mine's approval could be fully heard and considered by the court.

"We are committed to and doing everything in our power to prevent any damage from ground-disturbing activities by Lithium Nevada or the Bureau of Land Management, before our filed complaint has its day in court," said John Hadder, Executive Director of Great Basin Resource Watch. "We are open to delaying the briefing of the preliminary injunction, so long as ground disturbance is also appropriately delayed."

Surface disturbance, mechanized trench excavation, and removal of wildlife habitat and vegetation at the mine site could now begin as early as July 29th.

"It is important to prevent any ground disturbance from occurring as Lithium Nevada responds to our complaint," said Kevin Emmerich, Director of Basin and Range Watch. "The initial excavation and digging would disturb sage grouse and other wildlife on the site and cause the spread of invasive species. This ground disturbance is just the beginning of the irreversible impacts that would be inflicted by the lithium mine."

Thacker Pass is a key habitat linkage between the Double H Mountains and the Montana Mountains. The pass also provides lower-elevation habitat that wildlife need to survive the winter. It contains thousands of acres of the most important type of greater sage-grouse habitat, designated as Priority Habitat in federal plans, and two pronghorn migration corridors. Golden eagles nesting in the nearby cliffs and canyons forage here for food to feed their chicks. Local springs are the only place in the world where the Kings River pyrg, a rare type of springsnail, are known to live.

“The sagebrush plant and animal community in the Montana Mountains already faces great threats, and is in the grips of a mega-drought,” said Katie Fite, Director of Public Lands at Wildlands Defense. “It’s ecological madness to build a gargantuan water-guzzling, aquifer-draining, dynamiting, habitat-obliterating, polluting open-pit mine in this fragile place.”

The motion for preliminary injunction and the prior legal complaint allege that the Bureau of Land Management violated federal laws when it approved the Thacker Pass Lithium Mine’s Plans of Operation on January 15, 2021 including the National Environmental Policy Act and Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

The fast-tracked mine was approved by the Bureau of Land Management in January of 2021, only five days before the end of the Trump administration and less than one year after the mine began its environmental review process. The four groups filed [federal litigation](#) challenging the mine approval in February of 2021.

The four groups further argue that BLM failed in its duty to protect public resources by permitting a mine that will be a source of groundwater pollution for at least 300 years.

According to Lithium Nevada Corporation’s Plans of Operation, the mine would entail:

- excavation of a large open pit roughly 2.3 miles long by about half a mile at the widest
- removal of up to 17.2 million tons of rock and ore per year
- direct surface disturbance of 5,694 acres (total project size would be 17,933 acres)
- on-site sulfuric acid plant – up to 5,800 tons of acid per day
- ultimately pumping up to 1.7 billion gallons of water per year
- estimated active surface mining for 41 years, and 5 years of reclamation

The Thacker Pass mine would be built on the traditional lands of the Paiute and Shoshone peoples, who have not given their consent to the mine.

Attorneys from Western Mining Action Project and Western Watersheds Project represent Western Watersheds Project, Great Basin Resource Watch, Basin and Range Watch, and Wildlands Defense in the litigation.

*Western Watersheds Project is a nonprofit environmental conservation group dedicated to protecting and restoring wildlife and watersheds throughout the American West.*

*Great Basin Resource Watch is a nonprofit public interest organization that works with communities to protect their health, land, air, water, and wildlife of the Great Basin from the adverse effects of mining and resource extraction.*

*Basin and Range Watch is a nonprofit working to conserve the deserts of Nevada and California and to educate the public about the diversity of life, culture, and history of the ecosystems and wild lands of the desert.*

*Wildlands Defense works to inspire and empower the preservation of wild lands, wildlife and biodiversity in the West.*

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