



# ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

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April 10, 2024

[Congressman/Congresswoman/Senator's Name]

[Office Address]

[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [Congressman/ Senator's Name],

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Montana Legislature's Environmental Quality Council to request your support for a critical initiative that has the potential to address our nation's dependence on foreign sources of rare earth elements. We urge you to consider allocating funding to support further development of a project for the recovery of rare earth elements (REEs) and critical minerals at the Berkeley Pit in Butte, as well as evaluate the feasibility at other permitted and/or abandoned mine sites in Montana for REE and critical minerals recovery.

As you may know, REEs are vital components in numerous modern technologies, including electronics, renewable energy systems, and defense applications. However, the United States currently relies heavily on imports from foreign countries, particularly China, for the supply of these essential materials. This overreliance poses significant economic and national security risks, as demonstrated by recent geopolitical tensions and trade disputes.

The Berkeley Pit presents a unique opportunity for the recovery of rare earth elements and critical minerals. The water treatment plant waste stream from this former open-pit copper mine contains high concentrations of cerium, gallium, neodymium, yttrium, zinc, and much more. Furthermore, similar opportunities to recover REEs and critical materials are likely to exist at other abandoned mine sites, as well as at currently operating mine operations.

By investing in this proposal, Congress can stimulate economic growth, create new jobs, and enhance our national security; it aligns with broader efforts to promote domestic resource development and strengthen America's position in the global marketplace.

We respectfully urge you to consider this Defense Subcommittee programmatic appropriation request. Your leadership on this issue is crucial to advancing our nation's strategic interests and ensuring a sustainable supply of REEs and critical minerals for generations to come.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your favorable response and continued advocacy for policies that promote American innovation, competitiveness, and security.

Sincerely,

Rep. Steve Gunderson, chairman  
Environmental Quality Council