

February 19, 2020

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman:

On behalf of the 400 members of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (NSSGA), I am writing to express our concern with certain provisions included in H.R. 803, the “Protecting America’s Wilderness and Public Lands Act”. Our members take extraordinary strides to responsibly produce construction materials and we oppose legislation that arbitrarily and permanently prohibit the development of aggregates operations on millions of acres of federal lands,

NSSGA represents aggregates producers and those who manufacture equipment and services that support the construction industry. Our members are essential to the work of this country, and we represent more than 90 percent of the crushed stone and 70 percent of the sand and gravel consumed annually in the United States. Our members employ more than 100,000 hard-working men and women and are responsible for the essential raw materials found in every home, building, road, bridge and public works project.

NSSGA is most concerned with Section 802 that would permanently ban aggregate production on millions of acres of land in Arizona. Such a ban would severely diminish the ability for communities to access key resources that are necessary for building roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, homes and businesses. Allowing this ban to proceed would have a significant impact on the cost of public works projects due to the necessity for stone, sand and gravel required to develop and repair infrastructure and buildings to be imported into the area. These products are expensive to transport and would further strain the budgets of local communities and federal entities that are seeking to make infrastructure investments in Arizona including improvements to National Parks like the Grand Canyon.

Further, permanently banning aggregate operations on these federal lands would greatly impact the region and our nation’s energy development. Industrial sand is a key component in energy production. Under the proposal access to these essential materials would be limited, driving up production costs that would likely be passed along to customers – families and businesses that are facing uncertainty during the pandemic.

While this legislation will clearly create a competitive disadvantage that has negative economic impacts for the families in the impacted communities, it will also have significant environmental impacts. Delaying and increasing the cost of improvements to congested roads or eliminating access to a material that is needed to develop a new clean water project and cleaner energy sources will have real environmental impacts on establishing cleaner air and water and access to public lands.

Instead of taking broad, unilateral actions to withdraw access to these lands, NSSGA urges Congress to consult with local stakeholders and communities to find more tailored approaches to preserve treasured lands. NSSGA members strongly promote conservation in both their business practices and personal lives. Our member companies have advanced award-winning environmental stewardship projects to build critical habitats, promote biodiversity and drive greatest access to recreational activities. Further, as most NSSGA member quarries and plants have literally served as the bedrock of their communities of decades, they take great pride in engagement and are actively involved to giving back to their local communities.

Rather than rushing through the legislative process to advance H.R. 803 on the floor of the House of Representatives, NSSGA urges the Committee to move this large public lands package through regular order in order to allow more input, dialoged and discussion of these important issues from all involved stakeholders.

We appreciate your consideration of our views and please do not hesitate to reach out if NSSGA may be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Johnson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael W. Johnson
President and CEO
National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association