



Resolution 5B, 2007

SUBJECT: GENERAL MINING LAW OF 1872

WHEREAS, mining of hard rock minerals in the United States is governed under antiquated 19th century rules that were signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant, and

WHEREAS, the “General Mining Law of 1872” allows private mining companies to take valuable minerals like gold, copper, silver, and uranium from public lands without paying royalties on any of the minerals they extract, and

WHEREAS, since this law was passed, the U.S. government has given away hundreds of billions of dollars of mineral reserves by means of this royalty-free mining program, and

WHEREAS, many of the companies who have benefitted from this law are foreign owned, and

WHEREAS, this law mandates government agencies to offer public land for sale at \$5 an acre, the same fee charged in 1872, and

WHEREAS, the General Mining Law of 1872 authorizes the patenting of public lands for mining with no regard for other potential values or uses of public lands or consideration for the impact to clean water and wildlife, and

WHEREAS, each year since 1994 Congress has inserted a temporary moratorium on patenting of public lands in the annual Interior Appropriations bill stating that none of funds appropriated or otherwise made available shall be obligated or expended to accept or process applications for a patent for any mining or mill site claim located under the general mining laws, and

WHEREAS, literally hundreds of thousands of hard rock mines have been abandoned across the U.S., leaving the American taxpayer liable for the cost of cleaning up the environmental mess left behind, and

WHEREAS, unlike the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund financed by the coal industry, no designated fund exists to finance the clean up of abandoned hard rock mines and the federal government has not appropriated adequate funds for reclamation, and

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, mines have polluted more than 40 percent of the headwaters of watersheds in the western United States.

(Over)

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation urges the United States Congress to replace the “General Mining Law of 1872” with more modern legislation which: assesses royalties and severance taxes that reflect the current fair market value of the minerals extracted to provide a fair return to taxpayers for extraction of publicly owned minerals; updates and makes retroactive the fee mining companies pay to maintain their unpatented claims on public lands; eliminates mineral patenting, which amounts to the giveaway of public lands; gives consideration to other values of public lands and the impact mining will have upon local citizens, air, water, and wildlife; establishes a reclamation fund to reclaim abandoned hard rock mines on public lands; requires reclamation bonds sufficient to cover all required short and long term reclamation activities; allows additional public participation in mine siting and permitting decisions; and gives government agencies the authority to set environmental performance and reclamation standards for mining companies.

Adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation in convention assembled, 4 March 2007, in Gonzales, Louisiana.