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Office of the Mayor

October 17, 2007

The Hon. Nick J. Rahall II, Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Rahall:

On behalf of the people of Boise, I write in support of legislation to reform the General Mining Law of 1872 and ask that provisions be restored to House Resolution 2262 that would help protect municipal water supplies, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreational resources from mining activities.

Such protections would benefit the half-million residents of the Treasure Valley, who live in the lower watershed of one of the most pristine urban rivers in the nation. The Boise River is one of our city's greatest natural assets, providing tremendous scenic and recreational opportunities as well as an increasing percentage of our drinking water. At present, the integrity of that valuable resource is directly threatened by a proposed cyanide heap-leach gold mining and extraction facility proposed by a Canada-based company on the headwaters of the Boise River.

Although I have publicly stated my opposition to this menace to our community's livability, and the Boise City Council has passed a resolution to that effect, the City of Boise has no jurisdiction over mining activities on federal land, even when they pose an unacceptable hazard to human health and the environment. Moreover, the General Mining Law of 1872 gives hard-rock mining activities priority over protection of drinking water supplies – an antiquated and unacceptable policy.

I urge Committee members to restore the protections to HR 2262 that would place 21st century values ahead of 19th century customs and bring genuine reform to mining law in the United States.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David H. Bieter
Mayor