

Mineral withdrawal proposal announced

MAZAMA — The U.S. Bureau of Land Management has announced the release of a 20-year mineral withdrawal proposal in the upper Methow River drainage.

The withdrawal proposal includes 340,079 acres of national forest system land in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest near Mazama in Okanogan County.

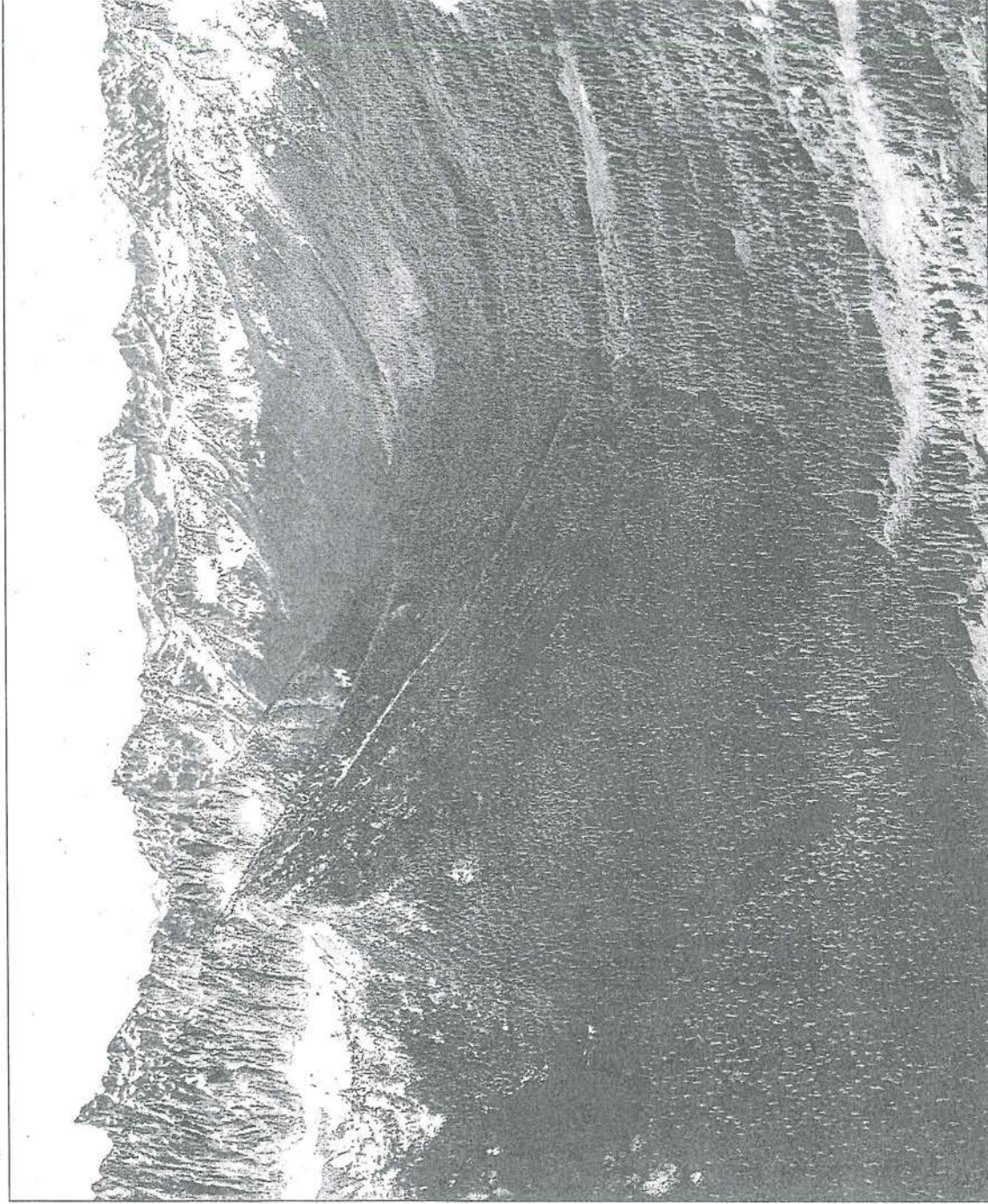
The proposed action would withdraw the lands from mineral and mining settlement, sale, location and entry under public land laws for 20 years while Congress considers legislation introduced by U.S. Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, both D-Wash., to permanently withdraw those areas.

While the action would prohibit the location of new mining claims, it would not prohibit ongoing or future mining exploration or extraction operations on valid, pre-existing mining claims, the agencies said.

The withdrawal also would not prohibit any other authorized uses on the lands such as forest restoration or recreation activities.

"The Methow Valley is too significant to allow mining exploration that threatens our clean water. I'm glad to see the department continuing work on the withdrawal application, and I will stay focused on ensuring the process moves quickly to protect this pristine region," Cantwell said.

In May 2016, Cantwell introduced the Methow Headwaters Protection Act of 2016 to prevent development



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of a copper mine on Flagg Mountain near Mazama.

The Methow Headwaters

Campaign has been fighting the mining proposal.

"We enjoy a solid economy

in the Methow Valley and its resilience is built on the value of clean air and water," said

Farms, Winthrop.

"It is the town's obligation to protect our water..."

Soo Ing-Moody
Mayor of Twisp

administration's decision to move the withdrawal process forward is a vital step in keeping our valley special and the local economy strong."

"It is the town's obligation to protect our water, the local economy and the well-being of our citizens," said Twisp Mayor Soo Ing-Moody.

"That's why this summer the Twisp Town Council passed a resolution supporting the Methow Headwaters' mineral withdrawal. (The

announcement about the withdrawal is good news that reinforces our efforts on behalf of Twisp residents and future generations."

The BLM withdrawal was published in the Federal Register on Dec. 30.

The notice began the official start of a 90-day public comment period that ends March 30.

Written comments can be sent to the Bureau of Land Management, Oregon State Office, P.O. Box 2965, Portland, OR 97208-2965, or may be sent electronically to BLM_OR_WA_WITHDRAW ALS@blm.gov.