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**Board of County
Commissioners
Nye County, Nevada**

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William P. Beko Justice Facility
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Fax (775) 482-8198

September 3, 2025

BLM California State Office
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W1623
Sacramento, CA 95825

Subject: Activities to Advance Mineral Exploration Near Ash Meadows Refuge in the North Amargosa Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

To Whom It May Concern:

The Nye County Board of County Commissioners (Board) respectfully expresses its opposition to exploratory drilling and mining operations that may impact water in the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge (refuge) and surrounding communities.

The refuge, located in the Amargosa Desert of southern Nevada, encompasses one of the largest remaining networks of desert springs in North America. These springs are sustained by the Amargosa River system, where groundwater generally flows south and west into California. This region is internationally recognized as an ecological hotspot, providing critical habitat for more than 26 endemic species, including the endangered Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish and the Ash Meadows speckled dace. Nearby Devils Hole also supports the critically endangered Devils Hole pupfish, a species so sensitive to groundwater drawdown that its protection was upheld in *Cappaert v. United States* (1976).

The Amargosa Desert Basin functions as an interconnected groundwater system. Disruptions to recharge or flow in one location can propagate across the basin, with cascading ecological and economic consequences for hydrologically connected areas. As more scientific data becomes available, modeling shows that even activities west of the gravity fault that bisects this system can induce measurable drawdown at Devils Hole and the refuge's spring-fed habitats. Seismic events originating thousands of miles away have been recorded to affect water levels at Devils Hole, underscoring the aquifer's sensitivity to disturbance.

Exploratory drilling and mining operations occurring downstream of the refuge pose significant risks to these fragile groundwater-dependent ecosystems. Penetration of the water table during drilling could induce dewatering, disrupt spring discharge, and irreversibly damage the aquifer. Though proposed projects may fall outside of Nye County's jurisdictional boundaries and beyond the County-supported mineral entry withdrawal area surrounding the refuge, their hydrologic impacts would directly affect Nye County's water resources and groundwater-dependent communities.

For those reasons, the Board continues to take proactive steps to safeguard the refuge, the

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Amargosa River system, and the broader hydrologic network from long-term degradation caused by mineral exploration and development.

The Board urges the Bureau of Land Management California State Office to engage with the County and the Nevada Division of Water Resources when evaluating projects with potential cross-jurisdictional water impacts. We respectfully request meaningful consultation to ensure that precautionary and science-based management governs decisions in this sensitive region.

We appreciate your consideration of these concerns and welcome collaboration with the agency to ensure responsible management of shared water resources and the long-term stability of the region's communities and economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Boskovich", with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Ron Boskovich, Chair, Nye County Board of County Commissioners

cc:

Inyo County Board of Supervisors
Timbisha Shoshone Tribal Council
Bureau of Land Management – Barstow Field Office
Bureau of Land Management – California Desert District Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Palm Springs Office
National Park Service – Death Valley National Park
California Department of Fish and Wildlife – Inland Deserts Region (6)
Nevada State Engineer's Office
Amargosa Valley Town Board
Beatty Town Advisory Board