

TITLE IV--NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA AND NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

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ESTABLISHMENT OF STEESE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

§401. (a) In order to provide for the immediate and future protection of the lands in Federal ownership within the framework of a program of multiple use and sustained yield and for the maintenance of environmental quality, the Steese National Conservation Area is hereby established.

(b) The Steese National Conservation Area shall include approximately one million two hundred twenty thousand acres of public lands, as generally depicted on the map entitled "Steese National Conservation Area proposed" and dated October 1978. Special values to be considered in planning and management of the area are: caribou range and Birch Creek.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

§402. (a) Subject to valid existing rights, the Secretary, through the Bureau of Land Management, shall administer the Steese National Conservation Area established in §401 pursuant to the applicable provisions of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 dealing with the management and use of land in Federal ownership, and shall, within five years of the date of enactment of this Act, develop a land use plan for each such area, and for the area established in §403.

(b) No public lands within the national conservation area shall be transferred out of Federal ownership except by exchange pursuant to §206 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. Where consistent with the land use plans for the area, mineral development may be permitted pursuant to the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended, and supplemented (30 U.S.C. 181-287) or the Materials Act of 1947, as amended (30 U.S.C. 601-603). Subject to valid existing rights, the minerals in Federal lands within national conservation areas are hereby withdrawn from location, entry, and patent under the United States mining laws (30 U.S.C. 22-54). Where consistent with the land use plan for the area, the Secretary may classify lands within national conservation areas as suitable for locatable mineral exploration and development and open such lands to entry, location, and patent under the United States mining laws (30 U.S.C. 22-54).

(c) Subject to valid existing rights, all mining claims located within any such unit shall be subject to such reasonable regulations as the Secretary may prescribe to assure that mining will, to the maximum extent practicable, be consistent with protection of the scenic, scientific, cultural, and other resources of the area and any patent issued after the date of enactment of this Act shall

convey title only to the minerals together with the right to use the surface of lands for mining purposes subject to such reasonable regulations as the Secretary may prescribe as aforesaid.

ESTABLISHMENT OF WHITE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

§403. There is hereby established the White Mountains National Recreation Area containing approximately one million acres of public lands, as generally depicted on the map entitled "White Mountains National Recreation Area proposed", and dated October 1978. Subject to valid existing rights, the Secretary shall administer the area in accordance with the provisions of [§1312](#) and other applicable provisions of this Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and other applicable law. In planning for the recreational use and management of this area, the Secretary shall work closely with the State of Alaska.

RIGHTS OF HOLDERS OF UNPERFECTED MINING CLAIMS

§404. (a) The term "unperfected mining claim" as used in this section, means a mining claim which is located on lands within the boundaries of the White Mountains National Recreation Area or Steese National Conservation Area established pursuant to this title with respect to which a valid mineral discovery within the meaning of the mining laws of the United States, was not made as of the date of the withdrawal of such area from further appropriation under the mining laws of the United States.

(b) MORATORIUM ON CONTEST PROCEEDINGS.--Any holder of an unperfected mining claim seeking to protect such claim pursuant to this section must have maintained and must continue to maintain such claim in compliance with applicable Federal and State laws, and where applicable, must have obtained and complied with any mining access permit requirements imposed by the Department of the Interior during the 1979 mining season. Prior to September 30, 1982, no unperfected mining claim which has been maintained in accordance with this subsection shall be contested by the United States for failure to have made a valid mineral discovery within the meaning of the mining laws of the United States: Provided, That such claim shall be diligently prosecuted during this moratorium on contest proceedings as a condition for the moratorium. Any mining operation undertaken pursuant to this subsection, including but not limited to exploration, development, and extraction, shall be subject to such reasonable regulations as the Secretary may prescribe to assure that such operations will, to the maximum extent practicable, be consistent with protection of the scenic, scientific, cultural, and other resources of the Steese National Conservation Area or the White Mountains National Recreation Area or any affected conservation system units established or expanded by this Act.

(c) VALID MINERAL DISCOVERY.--If the holder of an unperfected mining claim notifies the Secretary by filing an application for a patent that, as a result of mining operations in compliance with the requirements of subsection (b), he has made a valid mineral discovery on such claim within the meaning of the mining laws of the United States, and if the Secretary determines that such claim contains a valid mineral discovery, the holder of such claim shall be entitled to the issuance of a patent only to the minerals in such claim pursuant to the mining laws of the United States. The holder of such a patent shall also be entitled to the use of so much of the surface estate of the lands comprising the claim as may be necessary for mining purposes: Provided,

That all mining operations conducted upon a claim after such a valid mineral discovery has been made, shall be in accordance with such reasonable regulations as may be issued by the Secretary pursuant to the authority granted in subsection (b) of this section.

(d) **VALIDITY DETERMINATION.**--If an application for a patent is filed by the holder of an unperfected mining claim pursuant to subsection (c) or if a contest proceeding is initiated by the United States after September 30, 1982, the validity of each claim shall be determined as of the date of the patent application or September 30, 1982, whichever is earlier. The holder of an unperfected mining claim not subject to a patent application filed prior to September 30, 1982, shall submit to the Secretary within one hundred and eighty days after such date all mineral data compiled during the contest proceeding moratorium which would support a valid mineral discovery within the meaning of the mining laws of the United States. Failure to submit such data within the one-hundred-and-eighty-day period shall preclude its consideration in a subsequent determination of the validity of each affected claim. Except as specifically provided for in this section, nothing shall alter the criteria applied under the general mining laws of the United States to adjudicate the validity of unperfected mining claims.

(e) **ACCESS TO CLAIMS.**--Pursuant to the provisions of this section and [§1110](#) of this Act, reasonable access shall be granted to an unperfected mining claim for purposes of making a valid discovery of mineral until September 30, 1982.

(f) **PREFERENCE RIGHTS.**--The holder of any unperfected mining claim which was, prior to November 16, 1978, located, recorded, and maintained in accordance with applicable Federal and State laws on lands located within the boundaries of the Steese National Conservation Area, or the White Mountains National Recreation Area established by this title, shall be entitled during a two-year period after the date that the Secretary exercises his authority under §402 or [§1312](#) to open an area containing such claim to mining, (1) to a preference right to rerecord his claim under applicable law and to develop such claim under §402 or (2) to obtain a lease to remove nonleasable minerals from the claim under §1312.