

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3063

To amend the Mineral Leasing Act to increase the maximum acreage of Federal leases for sodium that may be held by an entity in any one State, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 13, 1999

Mrs. CUBIN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Resources

A BILL

To amend the Mineral Leasing Act to increase the maximum acreage of Federal leases for sodium that may be held by an entity in any one State, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 The Congress finds and declares that—

5 (1) The Federal lands contain commercial de-
6 posits of trona, with the world's largest body of this
7 mineral located on such lands in southwestern Wyo-
8 ming.

1 (2) Trona is mined on Federal lands through
2 Federal sodium leases issued under the Mineral
3 Leasing Act of 1920.

4 (3) The primary product of trona mining is
5 soda ash (sodium carbonate), a basic industrial
6 chemical that is used for glass making and a variety
7 of consumer products, including baking soda, deter-
8 gents, and pharmaceuticals.

9 (4) The Mineral Leasing Act sets for each
10 leasable mineral limitations on the amount of acre-
11 age of Federal leases any one producer may hold in
12 any one state or nationally.

13 (5) The present acreage limitation for Federal
14 sodium (trona) leases has been in place for over five
15 decades, since 1948, and is the oldest acreage limita-
16 tion in the Mineral Leasing Act. Over this time
17 frame Congress and/or the BLM has revised acreage
18 limits for other minerals to meet the needs of the re-
19 spective industries. Currently, the sodium lease acre-
20 age limitation of 15,360 acres per state is approxi-
21 mately one-third of the per state Federal lease acre-
22 age cap for coal (46,080 acres) and potassium
23 (51,200 acres) and one-sixteenth that of oil and gas
24 (246,080 acres).

1 (6) Three of the four trona producers in Wyo-
2 ming are operating mines on Federal leaseholds that
3 contain total acreage close to the sodium lease acre-
4 age ceiling.

5 (7) The same reasons that Congress cited in en-
6 acting increases in other minerals' per state lease
7 acreage caps apply to trona: the advent of modern
8 mine technology, changes in industry economics,
9 greater global competition, and need to conserve the
10 Federal resource.

11 (8) Existing trona mines require additional
12 lease acreage to avoid premature closure, and are
13 unable to relinquish mined-out areas to lease new
14 acreage because those areas continue to be used for
15 mine access, ventilation, and tailings disposal and
16 may provide future opportunities for secondary re-
17 covery by solution mining.

18 (9) Existing trona producers are having to
19 make long term business decisions affecting the type
20 and amount of additional infrastructure investments
21 based on the certainty that sufficient acreage of
22 leaseable trona will be available for mining in the fu-
23 ture.

24 (10) To maintain the vitality of the domestic
25 trona industry and ensure the continued flow of val-

1 uable revenues to the Federal and state governments
2 and products to the American public from trona pro-
3 duction on Federal lands, the Mineral Leasing Act
4 should be amended to increase the acreage limitation
5 for Federal sodium leases.

6 **SEC. 2. AMENDMENT OF MINERAL LEASING ACT.**

7 Paragraph (2) of subsection (b) of section 27 of the
8 Mineral Leasing Act (41 Stat. 448; 30 U.S.C. 184(b)(2))
9 is amended by striking “fifteen thousand three hundred
10 and sixty acres” and inserting “30,720 acres”.

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