

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515

Dear Mr. Bishop:

Your letter of April 30 describes the proactive steps taken by the Committee Majority to serve the American people and craft solutions related to the ongoing pandemic. We have conducted three online public roundtable discussions with expert witnesses about the impacts of coronavirus in tribal communities, under-resourced communities and communities of color, and the U.S. Insular Areas. This ongoing public health crisis demands leadership and innovation, which Democrats in Congress continue to provide the American public.

We are planning several more Democratic roundtables, including discussions of anti-environmental actions taken by the Trump administration during this crisis and the need for legislation to reduce the risk of future viral infections being transmitted from wildlife to people. We are also planning two bipartisan roundtables, one documenting the impacts of the pandemic on the fishing industry and a follow-up discussion of coronavirus impacts in Indian Country. We are hopeful that Committee Republicans, as well as representatives from the Trump administration, will participate.

To the extent Committee Republicans have concerns about the harm coronavirus is having on the American people, I urge you to arrange roundtable discussions of your own, which are authorized under current House and Committee rules.

We solicited potential discussion topics from the minority. Your staff responded in writing to suggest two topics for events, which I am reproducing verbatim below:

1) **Supply Chain Vulnerability and Minerals**

<https://www.nationaljournal.com/s/706005/coronavirus-crisis-spurs-calls-for-more-us-mining?&unlock=LPIZN2LXZLE9E25A>

- “The coronavirus outbreak is laying bare a strained U.S. supply chain for pharmaceuticals and medical devices... “Supporters of the critical-minerals legislation are going to highlight any sort of issue in the supply chain that they can use to advance their position,” a Senate Democratic staffer, who also requested anonymity because of the fluid talks on rescue packages, said. “Obviously this [coronavirus outbreak] does show some real gaps.”
- “The U.S. imports 100 percent of more than 30 minerals, including a family called rare-earth elements, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. Many of the minerals are necessary inputs for the clean-energy products, such as wind turbines and electric vehicles. But the minerals are also used in a host of medical devices.”

2) **NEPA**

<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/BPC-Comment-Letter-on-CEQs-NPRM.pdf>

“Absent meaningful improvements to the NEPA and permitting process, it is hard to imagine the United States dramatically revamping its energy and transportation in time to avoid the worst effects of climate change or strengthening our resilience against the climate-driven risks that are already unavoidable.”

The years-long, highly partisan debates about industry’s desires to expand mining on public lands and limit application of the National Environmental Policy Act predate the COVID-19 pandemic and have nothing to do with the current crisis. To the extent you wish to explore them, I encourage you to convene Republican roundtables on these topics immediately. In the meantime, I hope you too will “take a step back and identify a better approach” to identifying bipartisan solutions to the current crisis.

There is nothing inappropriate or even unusual about the events we have held and will continue holding. Roundtable discussions, virtual or not, provide a critical platform for highlighting important issues. As always, some of these will be bipartisan and some will not. Should the House adopt rules governing the conduct of official business remotely, the Committee will of course be bound by such rules.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources