

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3063

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 17, 1999

Received

NOVEMBER 19, 1999

Read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

AN ACT

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,*

1 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

2 The Congress finds and declares that—

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

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

10 (3) The primary product of trona mining is
11 soda ash (sodium carbonate), a basic industrial
12 chemical that is used for glass making and a variety
13 of consumer products, including baking soda, deter-
14 gents, and pharmaceuticals.

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

19 (5) The present acreage limitation for Federal
20 sodium (trona) leases has been in place for over five
21 decades, since 1948, and is the oldest acreage limita-
22 tion in the Mineral Leasing Act. Over this time
23 frame Congress and/or the BLM has revised acreage
24 limits for other minerals to meet the needs of the re-
25 spective industries. Currently, the sodium lease acre-
26 age limitation of 15,360 acres per state is approxi-

1 mately one-third of the per state Federal lease acre-
2 age cap for coal (46,080 acres) and potassium
3 (51,200 acres) and one-sixteenth that of oil and gas
4 (246,080 acres).

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

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

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

22 (9) Existing trona producers are having to
23 make long term business decisions affecting the type
24 and amount of additional infrastructure investments
25 based on the certainty that sufficient acreage of

1 leaseable trona will be available for mining in the fu-
2 ture.

3 (10) To maintain the vitality of the domestic
4 trona industry and ensure the continued flow of val-
5 uable revenues to the Federal and state governments
6 and products to the American public from trona pro-
7 duction on Federal lands, the Mineral Leasing Act
8 should be amended to increase the acreage limitation
9 for Federal sodium leases.

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

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

Passed the House of Representatives November 16,
1999.

Attest:

JEFF TRANDAHL,

Clerk.