



NATIONAL STONE, SAND
& GRAVEL ASSOCIATION

January 4, 2021

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1511 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
202 Canon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman:

On behalf of the over 400-members of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (NSSGA), I am writing to express our opposition to H.R. 5805, the “Buffalo Tract Protection Act,” as it would permanently ban future aggregate production in areas of central New Mexico, severely limiting critical resources needed in the construction of infrastructure and public works projects for this growing region.

NSSGA represents aggregates producers and those who manufacture equipment and services that support the construction industry. Our members are essential to the work of this country, and we represent more than 90 percent of the crushed stone and 70 percent of the sand and gravel produced annually in the United States. Our members employ more than 100,000 hard-working men and women, who are responsible for the essential raw materials found in every home, building, road, bridge and public works project.

H.R. 5805 would set bad policy by permanently banning aggregate production on tracts of federal land in central New Mexico. These areas contain some of the only available aggregates supply located near the Albuquerque market. Enacting this ban sets bad precedent and would severely diminish the ability for communities to access key resources that are necessary for building roads, bridges, renewable energy projects, schools, hospitals, homes, and businesses. Allowing this ban to proceed would have a significant impact on the cost of public works projects due to the need to import necessary stone, sand and gravel required to develop and repair infrastructure and buildings. According to conservative estimates, aggregate prices for the Albuquerque metro market would increase 30-to-40 percent, and some projections estimate a 90 percent increase in cost. Advancing H.R. 5805 will stagnate and diminish the movement of goods and commerce in central New Mexico.

Obviously, with the increased cost to supply aggregates, budgets of local communities and federal entities that are seeking to make infrastructure investments in central New Mexico would be severely diminished – slowing project delivery and harming the economy. In fact, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers, New Mexico is already facing grave infrastructure deficiencies. Of New



Mexico's bridges, 4,014 are rated structurally deficient; 32 percent of roads are in poor conditions; drinking water needs in New Mexico are an estimated \$1.4 billion; and wastewater needs total \$320 million. One hundred sixty-seven dams statewide are considered to be high-hazard potential, and the state's schools have an estimated capital expenditure gap of \$407 million. Eliminating access to a construction material that is essential to addressing these infrastructure challenges would severely impede New Mexico's ability to compete in an increasingly global marketplace.

While this legislation will clearly create a competitive disadvantage that has negative economic impacts for the people of New Mexico, it will also have significant environmental impacts. Delaying improvements to New Mexico's congested roads or eliminating access to a material that is needed to develop new water projects and cleaner energy sources will have real environmental impacts on establishing cleaner air and water and access to public lands. Further, if enacted, requiring aggregates to be trucked from further distances will increase transportation emissions.

I greatly appreciate your consideration of our views and your important work on the Committee to improve our nation's infrastructure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Johnson', is enclosed in a white rectangular box.

Michael W. Johnson
President and CEO
National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association

