

The story was not posted on the KUNC website as they only post feature-length articles. The transcript below is a brief of that interview by do, however, keep on hand at the station all of the briefs we do. Here is the transcript of the story from Jessica Walter of KUNC.

Legislation that would reform a 135-year-old hard rock mining law is picking up steam in Congress. The measure would increase royalty payments to the federal government and toughen environmental standards for mining. As KUNC's Kirk Siegler reports, the measure is being closely watched closely in mineral-rich Colorado...

The 1872 law was aimed at encouraging mining and other development across the West. But conservationists note that western land values have increased dramatically since then, even as the federal government continues to lease them to the industry for meager amounts. Mark Squillace of the University of Colorado Natural Resources Law Center took part in a rally Wednesday in support of the legislation at the state capitol.

“The mining industry is making huge profits off these commodities. The public - which owns the minerals - is getting nothing in return. It seems like a good time to ask the industry to pony up its share.”

The mining industry has historically opposed such efforts, but there are signs that the current bill may be headed for a compromise. The measure that has passed the US House will be heard Thursday in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee. SOQ
Legislation that would reform a 135 year old hard rock mining law will be heard today in the US Senate. The measure that would tighten regulations on the mining operations has already passed the US House. KUNC's Kirk Siegler reports the measure is being closely tracked in Colorado...

President Ulysses S. Grant originally signed the 1872 bill to encourage mining and other development across the West. But western land prices have increased dramatically since then, even as the federal government continues to lease them to the industry for meager amounts. Mark Squillace of the University of Colorado Natural Resources Law Center, says the land today is also valued for tourism and recreation...

“ It seems like a good time to set national environmental standards to assure that there are minimum standards that apply to all mining activities that occur. To protect our wildlife, to protect our water resources, and more generally to just protect our public lands from the adverse impacts of mining.”

The move to reform the law comes as the number of hard rock mining claims in Colorado has jumped dramatically, and with a uranium boom looming in the northern part of the state. Several counties – including Summit County - have passed resolutions in support of the measure.