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November 8, 2011

Dr. Marcia McNutt
Director
United States Geological Survey
Washington D.C.

RE: A Vision for USGS Mineral Resource Data

Dear Director McNutt:

I am writing to express the unanimous support of the Northwest Mining Association's Board of Trustees for the Vision for USGS Mineral Resource Data prepared by Greg Fernette, attached.

I have known Mr. Fernette for 15 years, and I am well acquainted with his skill and reputation as a geologist and researcher. Greg and I were in Washington, D.C. during the week of September 12, where he presented and discussed his Vision for USGS Mineral Resource Data. Greg advised me that he and Dr. Peter Schweitzer would be in charge of the new minerals database project and that they were in the process of preparing a work plan and budget. Following that discussion, I presented the Vision document to our Board of Trustees for discussion at our October 21 Board of Trustees meeting.

Many of our Board members commented about how a database as described in the Vision document has been a long time coming and is absolutely necessary if the United States is going to compete for exploration dollars in a competitive global mining industry. As you know, the United States has become increasingly reliant on foreign nations to meet our critical and strategic minerals requirements. Such reliance is obviously unhealthy and unsustainable. We believe the development of a new USGS mineral resource database will significantly contribute to the United States becoming more self reliant for meeting its critical and strategic mineral requirements. Such a database also will be of value for other applications such as environmental assessment, reclamation planning and abandoned mine programs. Many of our Board members also offered to contribute historical and current geologic data to the project.

Our Board whole-heartedly endorses the Vision for USGS Mineral Resource Data and encourages the USGS to fund the project. We also understand the U.S. Bureau of Land Management may be able to provide additional funding over and above the funding provided by the USGS to help this project become a reality.

NWMA is a 116 year old, 2,000 member, non-profit, non-partisan trade association based in Spokane, Washington. NWMA members reside in 42 states and are actively involved in exploration and mining operations on public and private lands, especially in the West. Our diverse membership includes every facet of the mining industry including geology, exploration, mining, engineering, equipment manufacturing, technical services, and sales of equipment and supplies. NWMA's broad membership represents a true cross-section of the American mining

community from small miners and exploration geologists to both junior and large mining companies. A substantial percentage of our membership is involved in the discovery and development of new mineral deposits. We are the national voice for mineral exploration and development in the United States. More than 90% of our members are small businesses or work for small businesses. Most of our members are individual citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and please let us know if there are other ways we can be supportive of this project and help to ensure that it becomes a reality.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Skaer".

Laura Skaer
Executive Director