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Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell, announced a plan to block mining development outside of Yellowstone National Park. Under this plan, 30,000 acres of public land north of Yellowstone is subject to a two-year restriction on mining claims while a permanent ban is considered.

Secretary Jewell has voiced her support for the rule as an effort to analyze the environmental impacts of mining to the area's natural resources and ecosystems. The plan aims to limit the negative impacts that mineral resource extraction and development may have on local watershed, wildlife, and tourism economies. Secretary Jewell stated that although mining is important in many areas, "the doorstep of Yellowstone National Park [should] not be one of them."

The mining industry has greeted the plan with criticism. A spokesman from Canadian mining firm, Lucky Minerals, states that these regulations can lead to investors reconsidering local mineral exploration opportunities, which will in turn negatively affect local economies.

The protection will not limit current or future mining efforts based on pre-existing contracts. Any contracts approved before the plan's implementation will continue to mine local gold and other minerals. The decision is subject to a 90-day public comment period that ends on February 21, 2017.

Sources: Chicago Tribune, Office of the Interior Secretary
