

Uranium Mining Near Grand Canyon National Park!



**“Our view: Antiquated 1872 law puts our state treasure and other parks at risk. There is no place more sacred to Arizonans than the Grand Canyon. However, it is at risk.”
– *Arizona Daily Star*
(02/21/08)**

Conservation groups are working with as well as local, state and federal policy makers to ensure that the Grand Canyon, its watershed, and the health of area residents is protected from the harmful impacts of uranium mining. We are supporting a proposal to protect one million acres near the Grand Canyon from new future mining activities, including uranium mining, and also have challenged a proposal to allow uranium mining exploration within only a couple of miles of the Park boundary.

Background

- In December 2007, the Kaibab National Forest approved a proposal by VANE Minerals, a British Company, to explore for uranium in the Tusayan Ranger District. This will allow up to 39 new uranium-exploration drilling sites in the area. Two of these drill sites are just two miles from the border of Grand Canyon National Park, south of Tusayan Ruins, and four miles from the rim of the Canyon itself. The water in the area of the drilling site all drains toward Grand Canyon.
- The Kaibab National Forest reported in January 2008 that they had more than 2,000 claims filed in the Tusayan Ranger district alone. Thousands more have been staked on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public lands adjacent to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon in the Kanab Creek drainage and House Rock Valley.
- The owners of the Canyon Mine, which went through an Environmental Impact Statement in the 1980s during the last uranium rush, are proposing to reopen the mine as a full mining operation. The Canyon Mine is

located close to Red Butte, a site sacred to the Havasupai tribe and only 13 miles south of Grand Canyon. Conservationists and the Havasupai tribe have previously objected to this mine.

- “Horn Creek enters the Colorado River just below the Orphan mine on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon and is contaminated by radioactive materials. As documented in a 2000-2001 survey radioactive levels were found that reached the maximum allowable for human consumption. The contamination was significantly higher than any other stream tested in the Grand Canyon. The National Park Service warns that water in Horn Creek should not be consumed.” (Testimony of Rob Elliott, Arizona Raft Adventures)
- In conjunction with mining activities on nearby private land and proposals for exploratory drilling on adjacent state and federal lands, this drilling would result in significant negative impacts in the area including to the ground and surface water.
- The uranium and heavy metals that could wash into the Colorado River in this area would pollute Lake Mead and other reservoirs down river – potentially posing water quality issues for downstream Colorado River water users including Phoenix, Tucson, Las Vegas, Los Angeles and San Diego, all of which get drinking water from the Colorado River.
- The negative impacts of large scale mining development, with the attendant noise pollution, air pollution, and traffic generated by mining activities, could seriously degrade the visitor experiences at Grand Canyon National Park. The Grand Canyon National Park generates more than \$687 million dollars for the northern Arizona economy each year. Adverse impacts to the Grand Canyon could hurt the area’s tourism and recreation business.
- Much of the area around the Grand Canyon is already protected from mineral development. President Theodore Roosevelt protected the North Kaibab Ranger District from mining when he created the Kaibab Game Preserve in 1906. The tribal lands bordering the Park are all off limits to uranium development, and President Bill Clinton protected Grand Canyon-Parashant and Vermilion Cliffs National Monuments when he established them. This only leaves the Tusayan Ranger District and the BLM public lands in the Kanab Creek Drainage and House Rock Valley as areas where uranium mining can occur on the borders of the Park or along important watersheds of the Park.
- In March 2008, Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) introduced the Grand Canyon Watersheds Protection Act of 2008, HR 5583, legislation which would ban new mining claims on 1 million acres of national forests and public lands bordering Grand Canyon National Park.
- A legislative withdrawal will ban the establishment of *new* mining claims. Previously established, or “proven” claims, will still be allowed to operate under the 1872 Mining Law. Therefore, it is critical that this legislative withdrawal also act as a big step towards much needed reform of this arcane law. (See Fact Sheet on 1872 Mining Law for more information).

What you can do

To help protect Grand Canyon and its watershed from uranium mining, please write a comment in support of the H.R. 5583, the Grand Canyon Watersheds Protection Act of 2008, which will withdraw approximately one million acres near the Grand Canyon from mineral exploration under the 1872 Mining Act. We also need your support for reform of the 1872 mining law.