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Sportsmen to Salazar: Protect Wildlife Habitat from Uranium Mining

Arizona Sportsmen Urge Extension of Moratorium on New Mining Near Grand Canyon

Phoenix, Ariz. (February 17, 2011) – The Bureau of Land Management is tomorrow releasing a draft environmental impact statement about the potential effects of – and proposed actions for addressing – new uranium mining near Grand Canyon National Park. Sportsmen are urging U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to extend the temporary, two-year moratorium on new uranium mining on one million acres of public lands surrounding the national park.

“Uranium mining could pollute our water and affect Arizona’s world-class trout fishing. It could limit our freedom to enjoy unspoiled public lands, including our greatest treasure – the Grand Canyon,” said James M. Stipe, chairman of the Arizona Council of Trout Unlimited. “Is that a risk we want to take?”

More than 1,000 uranium mining claims have been staked on public lands within five miles of Grand Canyon National Park. Road building and noisy, dusty truck traffic associated with uranium mining disrupts wildlife habitat. Operations can also cause air and water pollution.

“The latest rounds of unchecked uranium claims adjacent to the Grand Canyon, including over a thousand new claims in the past several years, once again reinforces the need for calling a halt to the irreplaceable damage to our lands and life giving waters throughout the region,” said Tom Mackin, president of the Arizona Wildlife Federation. “As recent articles in the *Arizona Daily Sun* have brought to light, even current mining practices are not adequate to protect these resources from further damage.”

According to the most recent U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service survey (2006), 1.5 million people participate in hunting, fishing, and wildlife-watching in Arizona each year, contributing \$2.1 billion to the state economy.

“The public lands near the Canyon have been valued for generations by hunters and other visitors. These are lands, and particularly Units 9 and 10 near the Canyon, where hunters have invested millions of dollars to improve animal habitats. To allow uranium mining operations there, with resulting pollution, noisy truck traffic and other significant threats to habitats, would be criminal,” said John Koleszar, president of the Arizona Deer Association, and member of the Board of Directors of Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife, Arizona Wildlife Federation, and Big Game Super Raffle.

“While nuclear energy is important to the both the environment and the economy of the United States, is this region the best place to mine this resource? Are the environmental impacts too great to justify mining the area?” asked Steve Clark, president of the Arizona Elk Society. “The membership of the Arizona Elk Society (AES) is concerned that mining in this ecologically unique area is not justified. The increase in roads and mining locations, coupled with the sheer number of workers in the area are certain to disrupt crucial migration and birthing area for elk and mule deer. Further, there is the risk to contaminating water resources of the area. In considering this project, it is essential to weigh what the AES membership views as unacceptable impacts to both wildlife and the habitat that they depend on. Another consideration is the fragile environment of the south rim of the Grand Canyon, a true national treasure. For these reasons, we at the Arizona Elk Society stand firmly in opposition to any advancement in mining in this region.”

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