

**Arizona Faith Network • Arizona Trail Association • Arizona Wildlife Federation • Center for Biological Diversity • Chispa Arizona • EarthJustice • Earthworks • Environment America • Grand Canyon Trust • Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors • League of Conservation Voters • Living Rivers & Colorado Riverkeeper • National Parks Conservation Association • National Trust for Historic Preservation • Northern Minnesotans for Wilderness • Sierra Club - Grand Canyon Chapter • The Rewilding Institute • The Wilderness Society • Trout Unlimited • Uranium Watch • Western Native Voice • Wild Arizona**

February 16, 2021

Chairman Raúl M. Grijalva  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva:

The following groups support the Grand Canyon Protection Act (HR 1052, which is included in HR 803) and its timely passage: Arizona Faith Network, Arizona Trail Association, Arizona Wildlife Federation, Center for Biological Diversity, Chispa Arizona, EarthJustice, Earthworks, Environment America, Grand Canyon Trust, Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors, League of Conservation Voters, Living Rivers & Colorado Riverkeeper, National Parks Conservation Association, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Northern Minnesotans for Wilderness, Sierra Club - Grand Canyon Chapter, The Rewilding Institute, The Wilderness Society, Trout Unlimited, Uranium Watch, Western Native Voice, and Wild Arizona.

Our groups are proud to stand with Tribal members and leaders who have long-opposed uranium mining and its significant harm to their communities—including from the Havasupai, Hualapai, and Hopi Tribes, and the Navajo Nation. Together with a broad coalition of business owners, faith groups, local government leaders, military veterans, hunting and fishing groups, and others,<sup>1</sup> we oppose dangerous uranium mining near the Grand Canyon. This legislation to permanently ban uranium mining in the Grand Canyon region is critical to stop the threats that mining inherently poses to water quality and quantity, and to sacred places, and to stop the growth of a legacy of deadly pollution that already disproportionately afflicts Tribal communities in the Southwest.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Colorado College's State of the Rockies Project, 2020 Conservation in the West Poll, 77% of respondents in Arizona "oppose allowing new uranium mining claims on existing public lands next to Grand Canyon National Park." Across all states polled (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, and WY), opposition was 71%.

[https://www.coloradocollege.edu/other/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewest/2020/2020-conservation-in-the-west-poll-data/2020%20Western%20States%20-%20Interview%20Schedule\\_COMBINED.pdf](https://www.coloradocollege.edu/other/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewest/2020/2020-conservation-in-the-west-poll-data/2020%20Western%20States%20-%20Interview%20Schedule_COMBINED.pdf) page 16.

In 2012, after an extensive public process, the Department of the Interior announced a 20-year mining ban (the maximum allowed administratively) on about one million acres of land adjacent to, and hydrologically and ecologically connected to the Grand Canyon. The Grand Canyon Protection Act proposes to make that temporary ban permanent. Scientific research done to-date has only underscored the heightened level of risk associated with allowing mining within the highly fractured geology of the lands adjacent to Grand Canyon National Park. The complex geologic nature of the region means that a mine, whether on the rim or miles away, can still have negative implications for the Grand Canyon itself and its life-sustaining waters.

As we ask for the passage of a permanent mining ban to protect the Grand Canyon, elsewhere the region is still impacted by seven decades of legacy pollution from hundreds of still-unremediated mines and other uranium facilities, including one mine within Grand Canyon National Park. And those most affected by this pollution and suffering the health impacts from it are primarily, and disproportionately Indigenous.

In 2019, in reference to a bill identical to HR 1052, the National Congress of American Indians passed Resolution #REN-19-001 “Opposing Mining On Public Lands and Around Grand Canyon without Tribal Nations’ Free Prior and Informed Consent.”<sup>2</sup> The resolution states, “the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) supports the passage of the Grand Canyon Protection Act to ban mining activities on federal lands that impact tribal natural and cultural resources unless tribal nations have given their free prior and informed consent;”

Mining uranium near the Grand Canyon also does not make sense from a national security or economic perspective. In all cases, any potential reward is outweighed by the risk that uranium mining poses to the Grand Canyon and surrounding region and the people and economies that depend upon these lands and waters. The facts are these:

- Just 0.2% of identified US uranium resources are located in the proposed ban area.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>National Congress of American Indians passed Resolution #REN-19-001 “Opposing Mining On Public Lands and Around Grand Canyon without Tribal Nations’ Free Prior and Informed Consent.” 2019.

[https://www.ncai.org/attachments/Resolution\\_INNtURqMEiytKjvxeOmdtHNMIaPWyaEvGWBmCyxSOuWMuiFLXvQ\\_REN-19-001%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.ncai.org/attachments/Resolution_INNtURqMEiytKjvxeOmdtHNMIaPWyaEvGWBmCyxSOuWMuiFLXvQ_REN-19-001%20FINAL.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Grand Canyon Trust spatial analysis (<https://www.grandcanyontrust.org/identified-uranium-resources-united-states>) using data from: [https://www.usgs.gov/centers/cersc/science/integrated-uranium-resource-and-environmental-assessment?qt-science\\_center\\_objects=0#qt-science\\_center\\_objects](https://www.usgs.gov/centers/cersc/science/integrated-uranium-resource-and-environmental-assessment?qt-science_center_objects=0#qt-science_center_objects)

- Mining uranium from breccia pipes via underground mining is a relatively expensive form of recovery, especially compared to in-situ recovery methods employed elsewhere in the country.<sup>4</sup>
- When operating, breccia pipe uranium mines are short-lived and therefore, can offer only short-lived employment for relatively few people.<sup>5</sup>
- Mining contamination and/or groundwater depletion would risk the thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars that the Grand Canyon currently brings to gateway communities.<sup>6</sup>

Congress has the opportunity to take the long view and permanently protect the Grand Canyon region and those who depend upon it rather than allow it to be jeopardized for the sake of mines that ultimately would benefit no more than the short-term profits of a few.

Sincerely,

/s/

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/s/

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/s/

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<sup>4</sup> “In [the] USA, ISL is seen as the most cost effective . . . method of mining, and other experience supports this.” <https://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/nuclear-fuel-cycle/mining-of-uranium/in-situ-leach-mining-of-uranium.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> For example, Canyon Mine, recently renamed Pinyon Plain Mine, is expected to operate for 10 years or less. See page 10 of the mine’s plan of operations [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fseprd475369.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd475369.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> In 2019, “Grand Canyon National Park attracted nearly 6 million visitors who spent more than \$890 million, supporting 11,806 jobs and generating a \$1.1 billion total economic output.” <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/national-park-visitor-spending-generates-economic-impact-more-41-billion#:~:text=Last%20year%2C%20Grand%20Canyon%20National,who%20spent%20an%20estimated%20%246%2C208%2C000>

/s/

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