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Sportsmen Praise Decision to Protect Grand Canyon, Wildlife Habitat from New Mining

Phoenix, Ariz. (January 9, 2012) – Arizona sportsmen today praised Interior Secretary Ken Salazar’s Record of Decision to protect one million acres of public lands and wildlife habitat surrounding the Grand Canyon from new uranium mining.

“Visitation to the Grand Canyon area generates almost \$680 million each year and provides thousands of employment opportunities. Spending by Arizona hunters and anglers directly supports 21,000 jobs and generates \$124-million in state and local taxes. This especially benefits rural communities like those surrounding the Grand Canyon. The potential benefits to Arizona from uranium mining in this area could never come close to those numbers. Why put any of this at risk when it not necessary nor widely supported?” asked Tom Mackin, president of the Arizona Wildlife Federation and long-time resident of northern Arizona.

In July, nine local and national sportsmen’s organizations [sent a letter](#) to the Interior Secretary voicing their support for the moratorium. The Arizona Council of Trout Unlimited, Arizona Antelope Foundation, Arizona Deer Association, Arizona Wildlife Federation, Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club, Arizona Elk Society, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Anglers United Inc., and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership signed the letter.

“People that hunt, fish and drink the water here are concerned about the risks of mining here,” said Arizona Wildlife Federation board member Ben Alteneder. “Uranium has a toxic legacy. Why wouldn’t we want Secretary Salazar take precautions to protect our families and local wildlife?”

Citing concerns for wildlife habitat, the bipartisan Arizona Game and Fish Commission also [endorsed the Interior proposal](#) to withdraw one million acres surrounding the Grand Canyon from new uranium mining for the next 20 years.

“The rush to provide economic development will be short-lived compared to the hundreds of years, or for eternity, when watersheds are polluted for everyone and no remediation is possible,” said Jim Walker of the Arizona Council of Trout Unlimited. “Not only will the water pollution impact wildlife, it will have a negative effect on the economic stability of the region and any future economic development will be non-existent. Businesses and tourism are not attracted to areas with poor water quality.”

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.

“It isn’t just good economic sense to protect the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River, it is common sense. This is our shared heritage,” said Steve Clark, president of the Arizona Elk Society. “Some things are simply priceless, including preserving the hunting and fishing traditions that Americans have enjoyed here for generations.”

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