

Grijalva Statement on Grand Canyon Mining Lawsuit

Monday September 29, 2008

Washington, D.C.--- Today, environmental groups the Center for Biological Diversity, Grand Canyon Trust, and Sierra Club sued the Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne for failing to honor a congressional mandate to temporarily withdraw certain lands surrounding Grand Canyon National Park from mining. Uranium mining on adjoining federal lands threatens the Park's visitors, wildlife, and the Colorado River which supplies water to millions of downstream users, as well as tribal communities who live in and around the Grand Canyon. Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva issued the following statement on the filing of the federal lawsuit against Secretary Kempthorne:

“Once again, we see the Bush Administration acting as though it is above the law, ignoring the will of Congress and moving forward with mining activities within a few miles of our premiere National Park, the Grand Canyon.

“The Secretary of the Interior has defied federal law and the order issued by the Committee on Natural Resources in the House of Representatives which has the power to command the Secretary to temporarily withdraw lands from mining when the situation warrants it.

“Instead of withdrawing the lands as directed, the Secretary has allowed exploratory drilling for radioactive uranium to continue on Bureau of Land Management lands close to the North Rim, threatening human health and the environment.

“I applaud the groups who are taking the initiative to stop these illegal actions by a lame duck Administration which is still bent on allowing private companies to exploit our natural resources for every last dollar they can before Bush is out of office.

“One of the world’s greatest natural wonders, the Grand Canyon, deserves better. Our generation must protect this beautiful place for our children and grandchildren to enjoy as we do today. This will be impossible if mining is allowed to proceed so close to this natural treasure.

“Given the many tribal people who are still living with or dying from the legacy of uranium mining in the vicinity of the Grand Canyon, we owe it to our own health and the health of future generations to use caution when approving new uranium mines. I would have hoped the Administration would have honored this temporary withdrawal so some of these issues could be properly explored, but no such luck.

“In June, I voted with my colleagues to notify the Secretary to withdraw certain lands around the Grand Canyon immediately because of the threat to these lands from uranium

mining. This authority is granted to the Committee under section 204(e) of the Federal Land Management and Policy Act. We in the House Committee play a unique role in the management of our natural resources with jurisdiction over 600 million acres of federal land. The Secretary, simply put, must honor our directive and immediately withdraw the lands. To do otherwise is a blatant violation of law and they must be taken to task for this illegal behavior.”

<http://grijalva.house.gov/?sectionid=13§iontree=5,13&itemid=257>