

# Uranium Mining near the Grand Canyon

How does the Grand Canyon national monument impact mining?

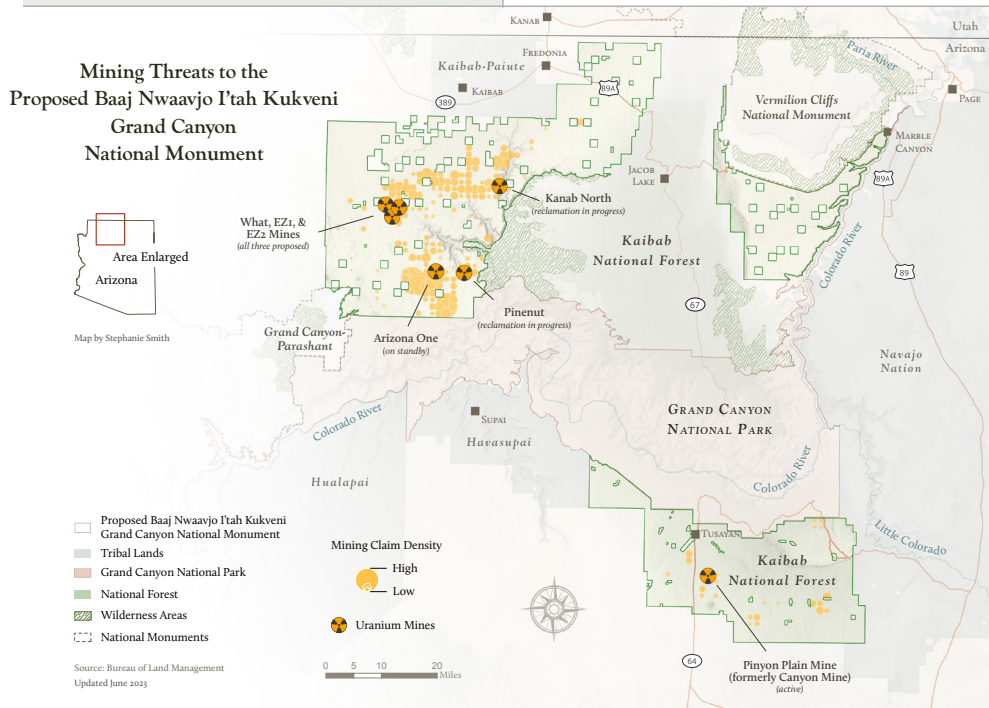
Recommended locations: Nautiloid Camp (where collapsed breccia pipes can be seen) RM 35, Bridge of Sighs RM 35.7, Hance's Mine (asbestos) RM 78.5, Cremation to Pipe Creek (area is directly north of Pinyon Plain Mine) RM 87-89.5, Havasu Creek RM 157.

## OVERVIEW

- Share how past and current uranium mining threaten the Grand Canyon.
- Discuss how uranium mining disproportionately impacts Native communities across the Colorado Plateau.
- Understand how the designation of Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni – Ancestral Footprints of Grand Canyon National Monument impacts uranium mining in the region.

## Uranium Mining in the Grand Canyon

- Uranium deposits occur naturally around the Grand Canyon in vertical pipes called “breccia pipes” that can run up to 3,000 feet deep.
- Uranium mining in the region began in the 1950s. Today, there are more than 500 abandoned uranium mines across the Navajo Nation that continue to contaminate land and water and endanger wildlife and people.
- It could take days to decades to thousands of years for contamination from old mines to show up in springs and creeks in and around the Grand Canyon. Experts have said cleanup of groundwater systems in this complex environment would be impossible.
- The Havasupai Tribe and other Native peoples of the Grand Canyon region have long opposed uranium mining in the area.



## Dive Deeper

Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni – Ancestral Footprints of Grand Canyon National Monument honors tribes' request to protect ancestral homelands.

- The national monument was created in 2023 at the request of the Havasupai Tribe, Hopi Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians, Las Vegas Tribe of Paiutes, Moapa Band of Paiute Indians, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, Shivwits Band of Paiutes, Navajo Nation, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, Yavapai-Apache Nation, Zuni Tribe, and the Colorado River Indian Tribes.
- The national monument spans nearly 1 million acres of tribes' homelands, cultural and archaeological sites, springs, hunting grounds, trading and migration routes, and ceremonial lands.
- The national monument designation prevents new mines and mining claims, but two existing mining operations are exempt. Canyon Mine (renamed Pinyon Plain Mine) is one of the exemptions. The second one is likely the already-mined-out Arizona One uranium mine on the North Rim.
- Canyon Mine sits less than 10 miles from the south rim of the Grand Canyon. It began extracting ore in December 2023 and is the only uranium mine currently operating near the Grand Canyon. Its low ore grade and the methodology required to mine breccia pipes make it more expensive to mine than many deposits elsewhere.



GRAND CANYON TRUST

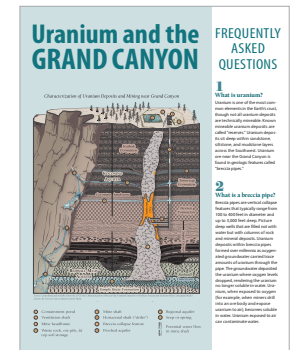
## Practice

- Baaj Nwaavjo means “where tribes roam” in Havasupai and I'tah Kukveni means “our ancestral footprints” in Hopi.
- It's pronounced Baahj-Nuh-Waahv-Joh Ee-Tah-Kook-Venny

## DISCUSS

1. What impacts from uranium mining occur beyond the actual mine site? (e.g. transport, milling, waste storage)
2. Who should bear the responsibility of cleaning up historic mining sites in the region?
3. How should we balance meeting mineral demands to shift away from fossil fuels while not perpetuating environmental and social harm?
4. How should decisions about uranium mining on traditional Native lands be made?

## Resources



[www.grandcanyontrust.org/lesson-uranium](http://www.grandcanyontrust.org/lesson-uranium)