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DISTRICT 2

Arizona House of Representatives Phoenix, Arizona 85007

March 17, 2011

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

RE: Comments on the Northern Arizona Proposed Withdrawal Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to request that you approve the proposed 20-year ban on new uranium mining claims on more than one-million acres of public land watersheds that drain into Grand Canyon National Park. Your decision to halt new claims would be consistent with permanent bans by Hualapai, Havasupai, and Navajo nations on their lands that surround the Park. It would also recognize that uranium mining produces limited economic benefits for a few years but imposes long-term health risks to local communities and, in many cases, leaves cleanup costs to be borne by taxpayers.

During nearly four decades of living in northern Arizona, including Flagstaff and the Navajo community of Tuba City, I have seen first-hand the uranium industry's devastating legacy on the land, water, and people of this region. Tuba City's drinking water continues to be threatened by a deadly plume of toxins from a nearby uranium mill that is costing federal taxpayers tens of millions of dollars to remediate. And uranium mining's cancerous fallout continues to poison water wells used for livestock and drinking water along the Little Colorado River.

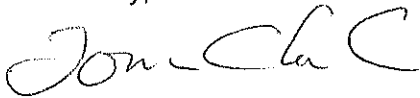
I am also concerned about failures to enforce much-needed safeguards to prevent pollution from mining. In 2009, a Canadian mining company reopened a uranium mine located on the Arizona Strip District of the Bureau of Land Management. The company is routinely found to be operating in violation of state and federal regulations. While Arizona's Department of Environmental Quality has some regulatory authority it is unable to monitor the mine's operations to protect air and water quality. In the case of a serious accident, we risk permanently polluted aquifers that supply springs in the Grand Canyon and harm to our local health and economy. And it potentially threatens water quality for 25 million people who depend on the lower Colorado River in Nevada, southern California, Arizona, and Mexico. Its potential liabilities to taxpayers and residents far exceed any economic benefits that uranium mining might ever produce.

Mining companies pay no royalties for removing millions of dollars worth of uranium ore from public lands. They pay little in state taxes and offer few fiscal benefits to county and local governments. Unlike tourism at the Grand Canyon, which produces more than \$650 million in annual revenues, mining is a miniscule part of northern Arizona's economy. In 2008, \$372 million in revenues were generated in Coconino County from tourism related spending. The only long-term economic benefit derived from the last uranium boom is jobs resulting from cleaning up the toxic mess. And taxpayers will be paying these costs for decades to come.

The long-term prosperity of our region depends upon protecting and preserving the Grand Canyon for future generations. The history of uranium mining in Arizona has been a short boom followed by long bust. We simply cannot afford the risk.

Your initial action of withdrawing more than one-million acres of federal lands from new uranium claims adjacent to the Grand Canyon is the correct direction that needs to be continued. I support Alternative B and strongly encourage you to make a final decision prior to July 20, 2011, when the current segregation order expires. Thank you for considering my comments when making your final decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tom Chabin".

Representative Tom Chabin