



March 14, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On behalf of the Sedona Chamber of Commerce and our nearly 1000 members, I am writing to express our strong support of your proposal for a 20-year ban on new uranium mining claims on more than one million acres of public lands surrounding Grand Canyon National Park.

The Grand Canyon is a World Heritage site and Arizona's preeminent attraction for both international and domestic visitors. Tourism is our economic mainstay and we are concerned that dozens of new mines and the associated power lines, truck traffic, road building, dust, and other industrialization of the Grand Canyon will diminish the natural experience that most of the four million visitors seek each year.

Visitation to the Grand Canyon generates more than \$687 million annually in direct, indirect, and induced revenues, and provides 12,000 full-time tourism-related jobs in northern Arizona. Sixty-two percent of visitors to Sedona also visit the Grand Canyon. Tourism in northern Arizona is directly tied to tourism at the Grand Canyon.

Mining has historically contributed to periodic economic booms but, unlike tourism, it has not sustained our state's or regional economy. In this particular case, most potential profits from mining would benefit foreign companies and the State of Utah, while saddling Arizona with all the risk. In addition, federal taxpayers continue to pay for the cleanup of deadly mining wastes left behind from the last boom. The National Park Service recently spent \$15 million to remove mining equipment and contaminated soil from an abandoned uranium mine located on the Grand Canyon's South Rim. The agency has yet to address the subsurface groundwater pollution that prevents hikers from using the springs below it. These long-term physical and health risks also work against tourism.

We understand that your two-year temporary ban will expire on July 20, 2011, and that exploratory drilling on thousands of new claims would immediately resume. We urge you to complete the environmental review process and issue a decision well before that deadline. We support Alternative B, the full 20-year withdrawal of more than one million acres from new mining claims.

There is an obvious conflict between regional industrialization for uranium mining and tourism, and public perception is paramount. Tourism businesses in Gulf Coast states suffered devastating losses due to an accidental oil spill, even those that had no oil on their beaches. In addition, we cannot afford the long-term consequences if aquifers and surface waters that drain directly into the Grand Canyon are contaminated.

As business owners and tourism professionals, we see an obvious conflict if uranium mining continues on public lands surrounding the Grand Canyon. The long-term prosperity of our region depends on protecting and preserving the Grand Canyon for future generations and uranium mining is not worth the risk. Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

*Jennifer Wesselhoff*  
President/CEO