

The Grand Canyon in Peril

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Contrary to what Tom Kenworthy said in his Oct 18 op-ed, "Saving the Desert Southwest," we cannot "take protection of Grand Canyon National Park for granted." The Bush administration is aiding speculators' ability to file uranium claims by challenging congressional authority to put a three-year moratorium on mineral exploration around our nation's most-treasured national park. More than 8,000 claims have been filed during the past five years.

On June 25, the House Natural Resources Committee declared "that an emergency situation exists regarding uranium mining near Grand Canyon National Park, and extraordinary measures must be taken to preserve values that would otherwise be lost." It voted to stop exploratory drilling within the Grand Canyon's last unprotected watersheds.

Not only has the interior secretary ignored the moratorium, but the Bureau of Land Management is also rescinding regulations requiring the agency to comply with the law and is allowing the public only until Monday to comment on the last-minute rule change.

In 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt withdrew the Grand Canyon's core from further exploitation under the permissive 1872 mining law, but mining on peripheral public lands continues to threaten the waters of the canyon. Speculators should not override our national interest in protecting the Grand Canyon for future generations.

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