

TESTIMONY OF MATTHEW PUTESOY

VICE CHAIRMAN, HAVASUPAI TRIBAL COUNCIL

**Before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
of the House Natural Resources Committee**

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[Brief greeting in the Havasupai language.]

Hello. My name is Matthew Putesoy. I am the elected Vice Chairman of the Havasupai Tribe. I live in the Grand Canyon.

H.R. 644 will protect the Grand Canyon. It will also protect my Tribe's aboriginal home inside the Grand Canyon. The Havasupai People have lived in and around the Grand Canyon since before there was a United States of America. We have lived in the Canyon at least 500 years before Christopher Columbus was born!

I have listened to a lot of people talking about the Grand Canyon. Well, you are looking at it. I am the Grand Canyon.

The Havasupai are known as the "Guardians of the Grand Canyon" and *Havasu Baa'ja* – the People of the Blue-Green Water. The water in Havasu Creek forms beautiful waterfalls in our Village. This water springs out of the Canyon floor above our Village. The source of our water is called the Redwall-Muav aquifer. The area of this aquifer is very large. It extends underneath about 5,000 square miles of the Coconino Plateau on the South Rim. About 98% of the water in this aquifer comes out at Havasu Springs. The rest discharges at the springs at Indian Gardens, Hermit Springs, and other springs in the Grand Canyon.

Hundreds of existing mining claims on the land identified in H.R. 644 are directly on top of this aquifer. If uranium or mining poisons our water, our thousand-year life in the Grand Canyon will end. As a tribe, we will die. We cannot relocate to Phoenix or someplace else and still survive as the Havasupai Tribe. We are the Grand Canyon.

Mining not only threatens our water and life, but many of the mining claims, including the Canyon Uranium Mine set to go into operation, are located right next to

traditional Havasupai religious areas in the Forest that my People have used for centuries. Would you want an operating uranium mine next to your church or synagogue?

In 1975, Congress, led by Senator Barry Goldwater, returned to us some—but not all—of our aboriginal Canyon lands. In the statute that did this, Congress said that our land and all of the Grand Canyon was “a natural feature of national and international significance.” In returning our land to us, Congress said it recognized the need for “further protection . . . of the Grand Canyon in accordance with its true significance.” My Tribe listened to these words and took action to further protect our Canyon home. My People adopted a provision in our Constitution that bars uranium mining on our Reservation.

Well, the Grand Canyon has not changed much in the 34 years since Congress expressly recognized a need to further protect it. But something has changed. Over 10,000 new mining claims have been filed on the land identified in H.R. 644.

H.R. 644 would prohibit the filing of any more mining claims on the lands identified in the bill. Section 2(b) would protect valid existing rights.

My Tribe opposes the existing 10,000 mining claims. We do not need more. The mining industry does not need more. The Grand Canyon cannot survive more.

I urge you to do the right thing. Protect the Grand Canyon and the Havasupai People – for those living now, and those yet to be born.

Please adopt the Grand Canyon Watersheds Protection Act of 2009

Thank you. Council Member Diana Sue Uqualla, behind me, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.