



## Opinion: Grand Canyon no place for uranium mining

---

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

---

The fight to preserve public lands adjacent to the Grand Canyon from uranium mining continues despite the Bush administration's refusal to cooperate.

It's a good and necessary fight, and we're grateful to Rep. Raúl Grijalva, D-Ariz., who has led the battle in Congress, and to the Center for Biological Diversity, the Grand Canyon Trust and the Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter, who are leading the fight in the courts.

The Canyon and its adjoining public lands are a precious resource for the nation, and especially for Arizona. We must not allow mining on nearby public lands to ravage their natural beauty or to spoil the waters of the Colorado River and its tributaries.

On Monday, the Grand Canyon Trust, the Center for Biological Diversity and the Sierra Club filed suit against Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, the Department of Interior and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. The groups said Kempthorne has continued to authorize uranium exploration on

1 million acres near the Canyon in defiance of a three-year moratorium imposed by the House Committee on Natural Resources in June.

On another front, the three groups reached a settlement Thursday in their lawsuit against the U.S. Forest Service, which agreed to do full environmental studies on a uranium-exploration project near the Canyon.

The Forest Service had been allowing British mining company VANE Minerals Group to drill at seven sites south of the Canyon in the Kaibab National Forest with only minimal review, the groups said.

Because of surging global metal prices, especially for uranium, mining claims within five miles of Grand Canyon National Park jumped from 815 in July 2007 to 1,130 in January, according to the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit organization that tracks claims in the West.

The Grand Canyon Trust reported that the Los Angeles Water District, the Southern Nevada Water Authority, the Arizona Game and Fish Department and five tribes are among those expressing concerns

about surface and groundwater contamination of the Grand Canyon National Park caused by mining.

The General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes mining for economic minerals on federal public lands. The House moratorium is aimed at keeping public lands safe until Congress rewrites the 136-year-old law. A new law is not optional. The pollution threat from mining is grave and it must not be allowed on public lands.