



## Enviros ask appeals court to halt uranium project

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Environmentalists and Native American tribes asked the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals yesterday to help stop uranium mining near the Grand Canyon National Park.

At issue is whether the Bureau of Land Management allowed Denison Mines Corp.'s Arizona 1 project to illegally resume operations in 2009. Earlier this year, Arizona U.S. District Court Judge David Campbell rejected mine foes' argument that regulators should have required fresh mining plans and environmental reviews.

"Allowing this decision to stand would shield mines from any further federal or public review once they have initial approval," Taylor McKinnon, the Center for Biological Diversity's public lands campaign director, said in a statement. "That might be wonderful for the uranium industry but it'd be terrible policy for our public lands."

The appeal comes as the Obama administration readies a record of decision banning new mining claims on about

1 million acres around the Grand Canyon. The decision would not affect existing mines or valid claims.

Denison CEO Ron Hochstein was surprised mining opponents decided to appeal Campbell's ruling. "We have already successfully argued the original case," Hochstein said in an interview.

"The mine, based on current plans, will likely be depleted by the end of 2012," he said, noting that the end of production could render the litigation moot.

But groups opposing the mines -- including the Sierra Club, the Grand Canyon Trust and the Center for Biological Diversity -- want the case to set a precedent with regards to other mines.

"It is irresponsible to continue to allow these mines to go forward under both outdated plans and an antiquated mining law putting at risk some of our most iconic public lands, including Grand Canyon," Sandy Bahr, director of the Grand Canyon Sierra Club chapter, said in a statement.

Hochstein said development is under way at the Pinenut near Arizona 1. He said he expects the first uranium ore delivery from the operation sometime next year.