

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Witnesses Testify on Importance of American Uranium Production *Bill Prevents Obama Administration From Blocking Access to American Energy*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands held a [legislative hearing](#) on four bills including [H.R. 3155](#), the “*Northern Arizona Mining Continuity Act of 2011*.” Introduced by Congressman Trent Franks (AZ-02), H.R. 3155 would prohibit the Secretary of the Interior from banning uranium mining on 1 million acres outside the borders of the Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona.

“The 1984 Arizona Wilderness Act is the product of stakeholder collaboration and illustrates that preservation and multiple use of our public lands do not have to be mutually exclusive. H.R. 3155 reinforces the important and legal tenets of this historic bipartisan agreement. Secretary Salazar’s decision to ignore tenets of the Arizona Wilderness Act in order to unilaterally withdraw 1.1 million acres of mineral estate is evidence that the Administration’s policies are based purely on political pressure and not sound science. In fact, it has been proven that allowing development of our domestic resources in this remote area would pose no threat to the park or water quality in the region. Furthermore, Secretary Salazar’s decision completely contradicts the Administration’s own energy efforts. Energy Secretary Chu has indicated that nuclear energy must be a part of our diverse energy portfolio, but you can’t have nuclear energy without uranium. As it stands, the U.S. already imports 90% of all uranium consumed. If Secretary Salazar succeeds in decimating uranium production under the guise of protecting the Grand Canyon, the U.S. will be forced to increase our already overwhelming reliance on foreign resources. We already know that neither the Grand Canyon nor tourism in the region will suffer as a result of uranium development. Opponents to mining would like you to believe otherwise. Increasing importation not only poses a national security risk but costs our country thousands of jobs. H.R. 3155 helps ensure that we not only protect our natural resources but also our ability to access our abundant uranium supplies in a clean, safe and environmentally safe manner,” **said Subcommittee Chairman Rob Bishop (UT-01).**

“The Obama Administration’s effort to make 1 million acres of uranium-rich land in Arizona off-limits for future uranium mining is a step in precisely the wrong direction for the American economy, making the U.S. even more dependent on foreign powers and potentially creating a serious national security threat going forward. Of America’s existing 104 operating nuclear reactors, 90% now import the uranium they use from foreign countries, as opposed to the 1970’s, when America was 100% self-sufficient. Despite the fact that uranium mining efforts have for decades operated without impacting the environment or our the beauty of our national parks, President Obama is nonetheless seeking to make 326-375 million pounds of the best quality uranium in the entire country off-limits, thus putting the desires of a handful of rabid

environmentalists above America's long-term energy independence and national security,"
Congressman Trent Franks (AZ-02).

"The Salazar withdrawal will unravel decades of responsible resource development on the Arizona Strip to 'save' the Grand Canyon from the same form of uranium mining that environmental groups once agreed to support. If the loss of American mining jobs in this fanciful trade-off doesn't concern this Administration, they should consider how future wilderness proposals will be viewed by Congress once it becomes clear that negotiated agreements like those embodied by the Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984 are neither genuine nor enduring," **said Senator John McCain (R-AZ).**

"I appreciate Chairman Bishop holding this hearing today to examine the effects of the Administration's misguided decision to restrict energy exploration and job creation. We have the nation's second largest domestic source of uranium ore that's now off limits to exploration, and that has a ripple effect through our entire economy. I look forward to working with the committee to enact policies that allow us to responsibly develop the abundance of energy in Utah and the West," **said Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT).**

"Banning new uranium mining claims in northern Arizona will overturn respected public lands management agreements and will hamper job growth in Arizona. The Northern Arizona Mining Continuity Act will allow jobs to be created while protecting the natural beauty of the Grand Canyon," **Congressman Jeff Flake (AZ-06).**

Used to generate nuclear power, the demand for and value of uranium has risen in recent years. Currently, the United States imports 90% of the uranium used to operate America's 104 nuclear reactors. Thirty years ago, these reactors used U.S. mined uranium for 100% of electricity production. According to estimates by the U.S. Geological Survey, the estimate of undiscovered uranium within the 1 million acres outside the border of the Grand Canyon National Park is equivalent to 42 percent of the total uranium resources in the United States.

Background:

In July 2009, the Obama Administration [blocked new uranium mining](#) for two years on a million acres of land in Arizona.

In April 2011, the Arizona Geological Survey [wrote a letter](#) to Arizona Governor Jan Brewer with a [report](#) to reassure her that uranium mining near the Grand Canyon would be safe.

Below are excerpts from the letter:

- "We conclude that even the most implausible accident would increase the amount of uranium in the Colorado River by an amount that is undetectable over amounts of uranium that are normally carried by the river from erosion of geologic deposits."
- "Even if the entire annual uranium production from an operating mine were somehow implausibly dumped into the river, the resulting increase in uranium concentration in river water would increase from 4.0 to 12.8 parts per billion (ppb) for one year, which is still far below the 30 ppb EPA Maximum Contaminant Level."

- “We believe the fears of uranium contamination of the Colorado River from mining accidents are minor and transitory compared to the amounts of uranium that are naturally and continually eroded into the river.”

In October 2011, the Obama Administration released the Final Environmental Impact Statement as directed by the Secretary. The final decision on the Obama Administration’s proposed 20-year extension of a moratorium on new mining claims will likely be announced in November.

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