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American Clean Energy Resources Trust

News Release

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Pollution Threat to Grand Canyon Highly Exaggerated According to New USGS Study of Northern Arizona Uranium Mining

Kanab, UT -- In a series of studies released by the USGS on Friday, February 19, the agency confirmed the size and significance of the uranium endowment in northern Arizona to national nuclear fuel requirements. It also reasserted that any threat to the Grand Canyon or its watershed from uranium mining activities which have occurred since the passage of NEPA in 1969 is virtually nonexistent.

The report was prepared as part of the Department of the Interior's evaluation of whether to withdraw (i.e. ban exploration and mining activities) nearly 1 million acres of federal lands near the Grand Canyon from new uranium claims.

"The USGS report validates what industry has said all along -- that mining uranium outside the Grand Canyon National Park is not only compatible with protecting the Grand Canyon but is crucial to providing a stable domestic supply of nuclear fuel for our resurgent nuclear power industry," said Pam Hill of American Clean Energy Resources Trust. "The continually improving mining and reclamation practices have proven to be very effective at protecting the environment."

Conclusions to be drawn from the USGS studies include:

SUPPLY

- 1) The area proposed for withdrawal by Secretary Salazar contains 326 million pounds of uranium oxide (U3O8), enough uranium to power 16 standard-sized nuclear generators for 40 years, and has the total energy equivalent of 11.6 billion barrels of oil - comparable to the total oil reserve from Prudhoe Bay, the largest oil field in North America.
- 2) The vast majority of uranium in northern Arizona is either already locked up within wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, tribal lands and the Grand Canyon National Park, or is simply economically unrecoverable. The USGS assertion that only 12% of the total undiscovered uranium available for mining may leave the impression that this Northern Arizona Uranium District is insignificant. In fact, the estimated 326 million pounds of high grade uranium oxide within the segregated area represents one of the largest uranium districts in the continental United States. This Uranium District includes lands which were specifically released by Congress to allow mining in the 1984 Arizona Wilderness Act.
- 3) The United States remains grossly dependent on foreign sources of uranium (about 90%) consuming 55 million pounds of uranium oxide each year in our 104 operating reactors. Canada, Australia, Kazakhstan, Russia and others provide nearly all of those imports. Competition for this fuel is growing rapidly as foreign countries continue to order and build new nuclear plants.
- 4) The exceptionally high quality uranium deposits found in Arizona breccia pipe formations within the proposed withdrawal area could substantially reduce America's dependency, not only for operational needs of the existing 104 nuclear reactors, but for the 30 reactors now waiting approval by the NRC for operation in the United States.

ENVIRONMENT

- 1) USGS analyzed more than 1000 samples for uranium concentrations in the northern Arizona mining region. Dissolved uranium concentrations in areas without mining were found to be generally similar to those areas with active or reclaimed mines. In other words, uranium is naturally occurring throughout the region. As the industry has always claimed, there is no correlation between uranium mining and pollution of the watershed.
- 2) 66% of the USGS sample findings showed low dissolved uranium levels of less than 5 parts per billion, and fully 95% showed levels under the EPA safe drinking water standard of 30 parts per billion.
- 3) USGS found that fewer than 5% of the water samples tested contained elevated levels of trace minerals. There was little difference in sample results between mined and unmined land in the northern Arizona area.

Uranium producers remain committed to abide by the strict environmental requirements under both federal and state laws. "Uranium producers have an excellent track record in northern Arizona," said Pam Hill. "The USGS findings

reaffirm that exploration uranium mining and a healthy, viable environment are compatible.” The Northern Arizona Uranium District will make a significant contribution to our national energy objectives by providing the fuel necessary to meet President Obama’s stated objectives of building new nuclear plants in the United States. Moreover, this District is the key source of nuclear fuel that will eliminate foreign uranium dependency.

Two weeks ago Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, applauded President Obama’s support of nuclear power as part of the energy mix, and endorsed uranium mining in northern Arizona:

“Of course, we also need to make sure America is producing the raw materials used to generate nuclear energy. Here, again, the Administration took a step backward last year by withdrawing roughly 1 million acres of uranium-rich lands in Arizona. As a result, our nation has lost access to some of its highest-grade uranium reserves. We should know by now that following the same path for nuclear energy that we’ve been following for oil won’t work, and it won’t improve our energy security. It risks trading our dependence on foreign oil for a similarly devastating dependence on foreign uranium.”

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