

News Release

FOR RELEASE: 3:00 p.m. (EST), January 9, 2012

Contact: Pam Hill, ACERT, 303-335-6426 or phill2647@msn.com

## **Obama Administration's Withdrawal of One Million Acres of Prime Energy Resources in Northern Arizona Strikes Devastating Blow to Local Economy and Nation's Energy Security**

Kanab, UT - In a long-expected announcement, today Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar withdrew 1.1 million acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service lands in northern Arizona from further uranium exploration and development for 20 years. Salazar cited the potential threat to the Grand Canyon National Park and the possible pollution of the Colorado River watershed in spite of over two years of studies completed by the BLM that failed to reveal any scientific justification for the withdrawal.

By law, an extreme action of this type should be based on a bona fide emergency threat to a resource, in this case, the Grand Canyon National Park and the Colorado River drainage. Yet, the government's own Environmental Impact Statement debunks the premise that an emergency threat exists to the Grand Canyon or the Colorado River. "Today's action is political sophistry," said Pam Hill, Executive Director of American Clean Energy Trust, a coalition of exploration and mining companies active in the area. "Since the early 80s, the BLM Resource Management Plans governing these lands (with a Congressional stamp of approval—the 1984 Arizona Wilderness Act) has allowed uranium mining to occur in accordance with federal and state environmental laws," said Hill. In fact, at a large public gathering in St. George, Utah, in March 2011, a BLM district official declared the local office of BLM did not request this withdrawal and saw no need for it. The Secretary himself directed this action from the Washington, D.C. office.

Typically, withdrawals to protect resources are initiated at the field level because of a perceived emergency. In this case, in early 2009, Congressman Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) asked the Secretary to withdraw these lands after having failed to compel the Bush Administration to withdraw the lands in 2008. "Thus," Hill concluded, "raw politics, not science drove today's decision by the Administration."

Northern Arizona is host to small, unique deposits of the nation's highest grade uranium which, according to the United States Geological Survey, could supply more than 40 percent of the country's fuel for nuclear energy. The United States currently imports more than 90 percent of its nuclear fuel from foreign sources, including some unstable regimes. Several deposits were mined in the northern Arizona area during the 1980s and early 1990s without environmental degradation or harm to the public.

The withdrawal brings more bad economic news to rural northern Arizona and adjacent southern Utah communities which are located in one of the most remote areas of the country. "It's ironic that this announcement comes at time when the Administration is celebrating the recent slight drop in the nation's unemployment rate, but it fails to realize that this part of the country has been decimated by a much higher unemployment rate of 17 percent and average wages of only \$25,000 per year," Hill said. "Moreover," Hill pointed out, "last year more than 300 hundred Navajos signed petitions in opposition to this withdrawal because they are suffering from an intolerably high unemployment rate of 52 percent in their Nation." The mines in question would provide safe, high-paying jobs of about \$70,000 per year and help staunch the flow of local families leaving to find employment in larger communities.

"Our industry has always been fully committed to protecting the Grand Canyon and the area outside of it where we operate. The government has just completed an environmental impact statement, and the industry has spent the past three decades proving that we are good environmental stewards and have not harmed the Grand Canyon or its watershed. In fact, we are just as committed to providing safe and good-paying jobs to members of our communities as well as the fuel to provide a clean, reasonably priced, domestic source of

electricity for our country and the world," said Ron Hochstein, President of Denison Mines, the area's only active mining company.

"The industry, the states of Arizona and Utah and the impacted local communities are absolutely committed to righting this wrong. We are grateful to our Congressional supporters for their willingness to pursue every legislative option available in 2012 to revoke this political withdrawal. They recognize the threat today's action poses to the nation as the Administration continues to lock up crucial energy resources in northern Arizona and across the entire western U.S.," stated Hill.

###

*Following please find more background information on northern Arizona uranium mining.*

**ACERT**

**American Clean Energy Resources Trust**

460 East 300 South, Suite 3, Kanab, Utah 84741 ■ P. O. Box 806, Fredonia, Arizona 86022-0806  
Tel: 435.644.5801 ■ Mobile: 303.335.6426 ■ Fax: 435.644.5803