

# PUBLIC LANDS STEERING COMMITTEE

## RESOLUTION

### URGING CONGRESS TO PRESERVE ACCESS TO THE URANIUM RESERVES OF NORTHERN ARIZONA, IN ORDER TO MEET AMERICA'S DEMAND FOR CLEAN NON-CARBON EMITTING ENERGY AND ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

**Issue:** The need to utilize northern Arizona's rich uranium reserves to meet America's pressing demand for clean, domestic non-carbon emitting energy.

**Adopted policy:** NACo urges Congress to allow ongoing uranium and other mineral development on the Arizona Strip. Congress should reject H.R. 644 (111<sup>th</sup> Cong.) and any other attempt to withdraw the Arizona Strip from mineral location, entry and patent.

#### **Background:**

1. America's Demand for Non Carbon-Emitting Energy and Energy Independence.

America's demand for domestic non-carbon emitting energy sources like uranium far outpaces current domestic supply, and that demand is growing. The US is 68% dependent on foreign countries for oil. For uranium, the U.S. currently imports 90% (much of it from Russia) to operate America's 120 operating nuclear power plants. As the nations of the world turn increasingly to nuclear power in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, this huge domestic resource stands to play a pivotal role in supplying domestic uranium to utilities here and reducing our foreign dependence. Uranium energy provides a non carbon-emitting reliable proven source of electricity generation, which is so vital to our nation's energy independence, economic stability and prosperity.

2. The Arizona Strip's Prolific Uranium Deposits.

The Arizona Strip region, located in the Utah-Arizona border region, is known to contain 375 million pounds of uranium oxide (United States Geological Survey) making it the second most prolific uranium reserve in the United States. The energy potential of that much uranium rivals the energy equivalence of the total recoverable oil discovered at Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, the largest oil field in North America.

4. The Environmental Soundness of Mining Activities on the Arizona Strip.

No footprint. Past uranium exploration activities in the Arizona Strip are shown to have been fully backfilled and reclaimed, producing a relatively small foot print over a relatively short mine life (3 – 5 years), which is barely detectible after reclamation.

No watershed impacts. The allegations of a threat to the watershed are scientifically unsubstantiated. Uranium is naturally occurring in breccias pipe formations inside the Grand Canyon. EPA water quality studies validate that Colorado River water contains trace elements of uranium at levels far below that which is considered any sort of health threat to human beings. According to USGS data, uranium traces in the Colorado River drainage is 4.6 ppb, far below the 30 ppb Safe Drink Water Standard set by EPA. The deepest mine ever drilled on the Strip was fully 1000 feet above the nearest aquifer. No new mines will use water-laden in-situ leaching as a mining technique, because little water is available and better non-water use mining techniques are available. Companies holding valid claims inside the area are subject to the most stringent environmental and reclamation requirements ever imposed.

**Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact:** Thanks to Congressional bi-partisan foresight in the early 1980's, the Arizona Strip has remained open for uranium mining, providing jobs, tax base, economic growth and stability for communities in the region in and around Mohave and Coconino Counties, Arizona, and Kane and Washington Counties, Utah. Continued uranium exploration and mining activities in the Arizona Strip will continue to stimulate and revitalize the economy of this region.

**Sponsors:** Utah Association of Counties and Mohave County AZ.