

Keeping the Canyon Grand in 2018

Roger Clark, Grand Canyon Trust

Early last year, a determined coalition of tribal leaders, recreationists, conservation groups, and business and community leaders knew that we would need to defend the 2012 decision to protect Grand Canyon from contamination by new uranium mines. While the National Mining Association sued to overturn the Obama administration's Grand Canyon mineral withdrawal, lobbyists pressed to prop up the price of uranium through trade restrictions and to ease permitting requirements. The Trump administration has responded with executive orders to ramp-up domestic energy production, while congressional leaders from Utah and Arizona have convened hearings about the national security threat posed by America's reliance on imported uranium. Meanwhile, uranium companies have formally petitioned to protect their businesses by requiring U.S. utilities to buy fuel pellets produced from domestically mined uranium and to curb imports from Russia and other foreign producers.

During last year's summer solstice, Havasupai families gathered at the base of Red Butte to oppose the re-opening of Canyon uranium mine in the heart of their homeland. Hundreds of supporters from neighboring tribes and communities joined them for a week of prayer, protest, and presentations about the risks of uranium mining. The Flagstaff City Council and Havasupai Tribal Council have since united in passing resolutions to oppose uranium mining in our region and in lobbying this administration to sustain the mineral withdrawal. More recently, after losing in lower courts, the mining industry has petitioned the Supreme Court to hear its appeal of the Obama administration's ban on new uranium claims.

In November, Grand Canyon Trust released the short film, "Too Precious to Mine." It begins with the voice of former Interior secretary Ken Salazar as he signed a 20-year ban on new uranium claims on more than a million acres of public lands that surround Grand Canyon National Park. Since Congress enacted the 1872 Mining Law, these lands, now managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, have been free for private companies to extract valuable minerals while ignoring the risks to groundwater, wildlife, recreation, and the many other benefits provided by public lands. Filmmaker and Flagstaff native Justin Clifton narrates the story that features strong statements by hydrology professor and river runner Dave Kreamer, Havasupai council women Carletta Tilousi and Coleen Kaska, and Coconino County supervisor Art Babbott. You can view the film at <https://vimeo.com/241576331>. Please share it far and wide.

Lastly, we want to thank the entire river community for supporting the Save the Confluence families in their six-year fight to defeat the proposed Escalade development before the Navajo Nation Council and at the Bodaway/Gap Chapter house. Most importantly, we want to thank those families for their perseverance.