

**Statement of
Michael D. Nedd
Deputy Director for Operations
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, & Public Lands
H.R. 1373, Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act
June 5, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 1373, the Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act. H.R. 1373 would permanently withdraw over 1 million acres of Federal lands in the State of Arizona from the public land, mining, mineral, and geothermal leasing laws.

Under President Trump and Secretary Bernhardt's leadership, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has made it a top priority to develop the vast domestic energy resources on public lands in an environmentally responsible manner to create jobs, lower costs for working Americans, and build a strong economy. The Secretary recognizes, however, that there are some places that may benefit from protections. Striking the appropriate balance for public lands use – whether it be energy development, recreation, grazing, or conservation – can be a challenge, but it is a mission the Department of the Interior (Department) takes seriously.

The United States has an extraordinary abundance of mineral resources, both onshore and offshore, and is a major mineral producer, but relies on other countries for more than 50 percent of dozens of minerals that are vital to our economy and security. To address this vulnerability, in 2017 the President issued Executive Order 13817, *A Federal Strategy to Ensure Secure and Reliable Supplies of Critical Minerals*, calling upon agencies across the Federal government to develop a report that lays out a strategy to reduce the Nation's susceptibility to critical mineral supply disruptions. The Department is currently assessing critical mineral resources, including mapping on Federal public lands and offshore lands. Uranium, like oil and gas, solar, wind, geothermal, and other energy sources, remains a vital component of a responsible and comprehensive energy strategy. Additionally, uranium has been identified by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) as a critical mineral necessary to the economic and national security of the United States. The Department continues to study the impacts of mining in the area proposed for permanent withdrawal to provide future policymakers with the scientific data necessary to make informed decisions.

The Department has concerns about the size and scope of the withdrawal contained in the legislation; at over 1 million acres, the withdrawal covers an area that is 80 percent of the size of the state of Delaware.

Under Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2 of the Constitution, Congress has the “power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States,” and we respect Congress’s role in this regard.

If Congress chooses to move forward with a permanent withdrawal, the Department recommends several modifications to the bill, including boundary adjustments to ensure local availability of mineral materials for nearby communities and to enable environmentally responsible development of uranium and other mineral resources, if determined to be appropriate through site specific analysis. The sponsors may also wish to consider language permitting lands within the proposed withdrawal to be conveyed or leased under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act for public purposes or exchanged to facilitate economic development for local communities.