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From: Finch, Kimberly
Sent: 2017-12-11T16:31:19-05:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: Fwd: From Greenwire -- NATIONAL MONUMENTS: Former Bears Ears land could be open for uranium mining
Received: 2017-12-11T16:32:09-05:00

FYI - the linked map is interesting. Can't recall if that is something we've seen before.
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AN E&E NEWS PUBLICATION

NATIONAL MONUMENTS

Former Bears Ears land could be open for uranium mining

Jennifer Yachnin, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, December 11, 2017

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A view from Bears Ears National Monument just southwest of the namesake twin buttes. Ellen M. Gilmer/E&E News

Federal lands removed from Bears Ears National Monument last week hold "promise for future uranium production," according to a report from Utah's Department of Natural Resources.

President Trump last week signed a presidential proclamation reducing the southeastern Utah monument to 202,000 acres, a small fraction of its original 1.35-million-acre footprint.

Among the acreage that will now be open to new mining claims and potential extraction are large swaths of land north of Bluff, Utah, and east of Blanding, Utah.

"BENM has been productive for uranium deposits in the past, and some of the mining districts within the monument continue to hold some promise for future uranium production," said a statement issued by Utah's DNR along with a Utah Geological Survey map showing potential energy production.

According to documents first obtained by *The Washington Post* on Friday, it appears likely that the operator of the nation's sole uranium processing mill could pursue new claims in the region.

Energy Fuels Inc., which operates the White Mesa mill that sits along the former Bears Ears monument border, lobbied members of Congress and the Trump administration to shrink the monument.

In a May letter to the Interior Department, Energy Fuels Chief Operating Officer Mark Chalmers said he was concerned the monument could curtail activity at the company's Daneros mine because of its overlap with the sole road used to access the site.

He also pointed to the loss of future uranium deposits if the Bears Ears boundaries remain unchanged.

"There are also many other known uranium and vanadium deposits located within the newly created BENM that could provide valuable energy and mineral resources in the future," Chalmers wrote.

Records first reported by the *Post* show the firm spent \$40,000 on related lobbying efforts.

Utah's DNR noted five districts that could see future uranium extraction: White Canyon, Elk Ridge, Deer Flat, Indian Creek and Fry Canyon.

In a May letter to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, the Utah Legislature's Commission for the Stewardship of Public Lands also endorsed reductions to Bears Ears out of concerns for the future of the White Mesa mill.

"Energy Fuels has estimated that it could take ten years and over \$250,000,000 to replace the White Mesa mill. The continued operation of White Mesa mill is critical to the operation of our nuclear naval fleet and our nuclear triad, and therefore vital to our national security," wrote Utah state Sen. David Hinkins (R) and state Rep. Keven Stratton (R). "The Monument threatens its existence."

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift dismissed questions over the influence of Energy Fuels' lobbying campaign.

"There was a robust comment period in which the Department heard many points of view to

modify the boundaries of Bears Ears, including from the local residents, elected officials, and the Utah Navajo who have lived on and worked the land for generations," she said.

House Natural Resources Committee spokeswoman Katie Schoettler criticized suggestions that new uranium production could take place within the monument as "another smokescreen."

"This has never been about development for the chairman," Schoettler said, referring to Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah). "It's about including local consultation before designations, guaranteeing public access, tribal co-management and protecting actual antiquities."

She also pointed to legislation introduced by Bishop and co-sponsored by fellow Utah GOP Rep. John Curtis that would add a "layer of clarity."

"The chairman is co-sponsoring legislation ... that maintains the existing 1.35-million-acre mineral withdrawal under the original designation by the Obama administration. This should put this false narrative to rest once and for all," she said.

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