



Proposed Mineral Withdrawal Environmental Impact Statement



Background

On July 21, 2009, the Secretary of the Interior proposed to withdraw, subject to valid existing rights, approximately 633,547 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed public lands on the Arizona Strip District and 360,002 acres of National Forest System Lands on the Kaibab National Forest for up to 20 years from mineral location and entry under the Mining Law of 1872. The notice of proposed withdrawal, which was published in the *Federal Register*, segregated the lands from location and entry for up to 2 years to allow time for various studies and analyses to support a final decision on whether or not to proceed with a withdrawal.

A Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the *Federal Register* on August 26, 2009, to initiate scoping and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed withdrawal.

EIS Process

The BLM will be the lead agency, working in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Park Service, and other state, local and tribal agencies to prepare an EIS used to support a final decision on the withdrawal. The EIS will disclose the potential impacts the proposed action would have on the human environment and natural and cultural resources, as well as determine what measures would be necessary to mitigate or reduce those impacts.

In addition to analyzing the potential impacts, the EIS will also identify and analyze alternatives to the proposed action. The EIS will analyze at least two alternatives, the "Proposed Action" to withdraw lands from the location of new mining claims and the "No Action" alternative, which would continue to allow location of new mining claims. Other alternatives may be analyzed as appropriate, including withdrawal of a smaller area.

EIS Project Schedule

- Public Scoping Period (comments due within 15 days of the last scoping meeting): September - October, 2009
- Fredonia Public Meeting: September 30, 2009
- Flagstaff Public Meeting: October 15, 2009
- Resource Studies and Collection of Baseline Data: January 2010
- Prepare Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS): January -August 2010
- DEIS Released for Public Review: August 2010
- Minimum 45-Day Public Comment Period: August – September 2010
- Prepare Final EIS: September 2010 – January 2011
- FEIS Released: January, 2011
- Record of Decision Signed: March 2011
- Public Land Order to Secretary of Interior: May 2011

Preliminary Issues

Air Quality

- Grand Canyon National Park is a Class I air quality park, and is famous for its viewsheds and vistas. Increased mining activity (including increased truck traffic on dirt roads) could increase levels of fugitive dust and degrade air quality in the park and designated/proposed wilderness.

Cultural Resources

- Mining activity could impact Traditional Cultural Properties.
- Increased mining activity in remote/undisturbed areas could impede access to traditional resources for tribal practitioners.
- The Grand Canyon is considered sacred by many tribes. These tribes would likely consider extractive enterprises in the region to be inconsistent with a sacred location.
- Increased mining activity could affect seeps and springs, locations that are often sacred to tribal members and considered important by traditional practitioners.
- Increased mining activity and development of access roads could lead to vandalism of archeological sites.

Soil and Water Resources

- Subsurface water flow may supply water directly to Grand Canyon springs. Faulting and fracturing can create conduits to transport contaminated water quickly from a mining site to the park's springs.
- Is the elevated dissolved uranium found on sites in the vicinity of historic mines naturally occurring or related to past mining activities? If it is related to past mining activities, how would future uranium mining affect water quality?
- The mining of uranium ore in breccia pipes on lands adjacent to Grand Canyon National Park could cause contamination of ground-water and surface-water resources.
- Surface-water or stream sediment contamination could occur by erosion of waste rock during flash floods.

Special Designations (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Wilderness)

- Designated or proposed wilderness adjacent to each of the three parcels could be impacted by degraded air quality, industrial noise impacts to natural sounds, impacts to viewsheds and vistas from installation of infrastructure, and clearing and grading for roads.
- Increased roads may increase the potential for illegal access and trespass by motorized vehicles and other unauthorized uses into designated and proposed wilderness.
- Mining activities could impact the relevant and important values (i.e., cultural resources, special status species, riparian, and scenic) that Areas of Critical Environmental Concern were designated to protect.

Recreation

- Increased truck traffic on the Toroweap Road and other visitor access roads could create conflicts with recreationists in the area.
- Increased mining activity in remote/undisturbed areas could impact opportunities for primitive types of recreation.

Visual Resources and Soundscapes

- Mining infrastructure may be visible from within Grand Canyon National Park, adjacent designated wilderness, and areas managed to maintain wilderness characteristics.

- Mine development may not meet the Visual Resource Management class or Scenery Management System objectives.
- Increased dirt roads could result in increased dust and impacts to visibility.
- There is the potential for increased noise from mining activities and various types of motor vehicles servicing the mines in two quiet zones (i.e. over-flight free) within Grand Canyon National Park.
- There is the potential for increased over-flights associated with mining exploration and operations could impact Grand Canyon airspace and as a result increase the frequency and duration of aircraft noise in areas popular for backpacking and river rafting.

Wildlife

- Mining exploration may lead to increased roads that fragment habitat and prey populations. This has the potential to affect wildlife species.
- Increases in wildlife poaching within and near the park boundary have been associated with increased mining exploration activities in previous years.
- Noise events and activity associated with mining operations have the potential to affect wildlife movement and foraging patterns.
- Seeps and springs within Grand Canyon drainages are critical to wildlife. Contamination of these water sources from mining activities could affect the health of wildlife.

Special Status Species

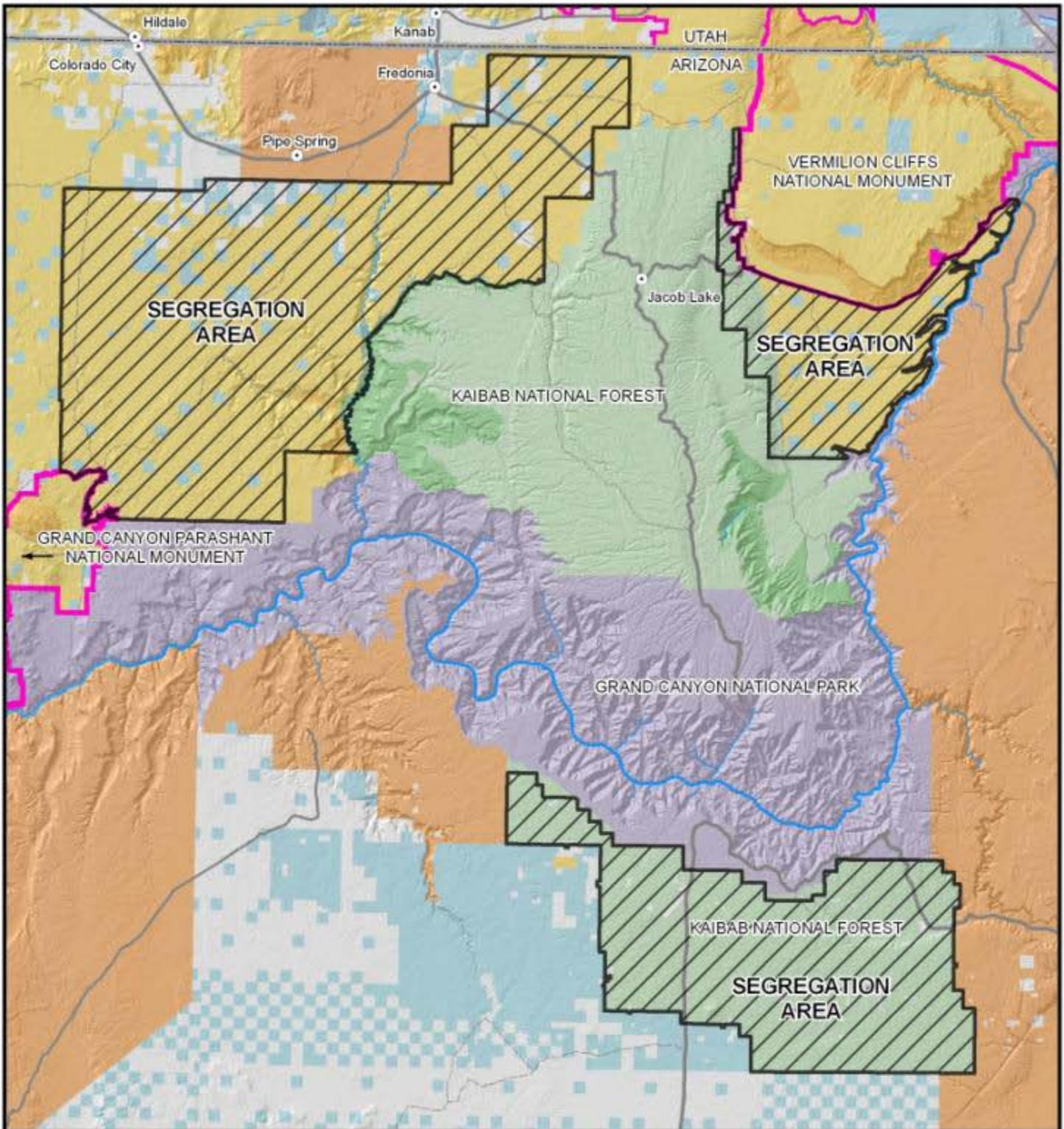
- Mining exploration may lead to increased roads that fragment habitat and prey populations. This has the potential to affect special status species.
- California condors (an experimental non-essential population in the proposed withdrawal area) are known to be attracted to construction activities and other disturbance activities and could be attracted to mining activities, putting these animals at risk.
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- Seeps and springs within Grand Canyon drainages are critical to wildlife. Contamination of these water sources from mining activities could affect the health of wildlife.

Public Health and Safety

- Radon and gamma radiation occurs in active and abandoned mine workings and is emitted from mine waste piles. These mine and surface waste rocks are commonly used as backfill in the mine, which could affect public health and safety.
- Transporting uranium ore from a mine site to the mill near Blanding, Utah could result in public health and safety concerns if an ore spill occurs.
- Long-term mining activities (and associated radon and gamma radiation) could affect the health of the Kaibab Paiute Tribe which is immediately adjacent to the North Parcel. Hauling of ore from mines in this parcel would likely occur on the Toroweap Road, which passes through a portion of this reservation.

Socioeconomic Environment

- An estimated 200 to 400 breccia pipes occur in the three proposed withdrawal parcels. On the basis of historical uranium mining in the Grand Canyon area, the average grade for these deposits is in the range of 0.40-0.70% U₃O₈. This is significantly higher than almost all of the other uranium reserves in the United States, which have an average grade of about 0.18%. It is thought that most of the high-grade undiscovered uranium resources in the United States are contained in these breccia pipes. Thus, withdrawing the area from uranium mining would have economic impacts on the local communities and may have social and economic effects that are regional or national.



PROPOSED MINERAL WITHDRAWAL (SEGREGATION AREAS)

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Two Year Segregation Areas | BLM |
| National Monuments | NPS |
| State Boundary | Indian Lands |
| USFS Wilderness | Private |
| BLM Wilderness | State |
| | USFS |

Other Maps Available At:
www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/mining/timeout.html

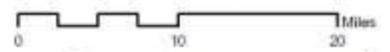


Scale = 1:700,000
 Date = 9/30/09



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 ARIZONA STRIP DISTRICT

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management for the use of the data for purposes not intended by BLM.



Map Location

Open House Public Meeting Format

An open house format will be used to provide an opportunity to learn about the EIS process and for the public to submit written comments and discuss ideas with agency officials.

Providing Comments

The purpose of public scoping is to determine if there are specific issues that should be considered in the environmental analysis or to inform alternative development. Please use the form on the back of this page to provide comments. You can also email comments to azasminerals@blm.gov or mail your comments to: Bureau of Land Management, Mineral Withdrawal EIS, 345 E. Riverside Drive, St. George, UT 84790. Comments must be submitted within 15 days of the last scoping meeting.

Public comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Arizona Strip Field Office, 345 E. Riverside Drive, St. George, UT 84790, during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All comments by organizations or businesses will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

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**Bureau of Land Management
Mineral Withdrawal EIS
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