

**STATEMENT OF STEPHEN P. MARTIN, SUPERINTENDENT, GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS, OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING THE IMPACTS OF PROPOSED URANIUM MINING NEAR GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK.**

**MARCH 28, 2008**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior's views on the impacts of proposed uranium mining near Grand Canyon National Park (Park).

Mineral exploration and development is allowed on public land in keeping with the Mining Act of 1872 and the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) multiple use mandate. Specifically, the Act was enacted to promote the development of the mining resources of the United States.

Much of the area around the Grand Canyon has been afforded protection from mineral development. In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt withdrew mineral entry from the North Rim Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest when he first created the Kaibab Game Preserve. Tribal lands bordering the Park are also off limits to uranium development, and mineral entry was withdrawn when the Grand Canyon Parashant and Vermillion Cliffs National Monuments were created in January of 2000. This leaves the Tusayan Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands on the Arizona Strip in the Kanab Creek Drainage and House Rock Valley as areas where uranium mining can occur on the borders and watersheds of the Park.

On January 8, 2008, the Kaibab National Forest approved a proposal by Vane Minerals to conduct mineral exploration in the Tusayan Ranger District which borders the southern portion of Grand Canyon National Park for approximately 40 miles.

The rise in prices of uranium ore from \$7 per pound in 2005 to a current price of \$90 per pound has triggered a new boom in uranium exploration and development throughout the Colorado Plateau. The Kaibab National Forest reported on January 18, 2008, that they had more than 2,100 claims filed in the Tusayan Ranger District. Thousands more claims have been staked on BLM lands on the Arizona Strip between the Grand Canyon and the Utah Border – many of them in the Kanab Creek watershed, a major tributary to the Grand Canyon.

We understand that the proposed uranium mining projects near the Park are initial, small-scale exploration operations to determine the quantity of uranium ore deposits and the potential of commercial development. Further, we understand that the USFS has reviewed and approved the Vane exploration plan and that no actual mining operations were proposed.

On March 12, 2008 the Center for Biological Diversity, the Grand Canyon Trust and the Sierra Club filed a lawsuit challenging the Forest Service's authorization of Vane Minerals exploratory drilling. Accordingly, as a matter of pending litigation, I am not at liberty to discuss the specifics of this case.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or the subcommittee may have.