Beginning in 2006, the price for uranium began to rise. As a result, thousands of new claims were filed within watersheds that drain directly into Grand Canyon National Park and the Colorado River (see map). A Canadian-owned company reopened the White Mesa Mill in Blanding, Utah, and began processing uranium for powering nuclear reactors in South Korea and France. The U.S. Forest Service began permitting exploratory drilling for uranium without requiring an environmental assessment. The Bureau of Land Management moved to allow uranium mines that were abandoned by previous owners during the 1980s without requiring any revisions to outdated environmental assessments.

The following summarizes some of the actions, events, and articles that are shaping the future of uranium mining on public land surrounding Grand Canyon National Park.

2007

Grand Canyon Trust begins to develop strategic plan in response to increased uranium mining activities in Grand Canyon watersheds.
August 1. Environmental Working Group releases study on uranium mining threats to national parks.

Dec. 20. Kaibab National Forest approves Vane Minerals "plans of operations" for exploratory drilling on uranium targets on the Tusayan Ranger District.

2008

Feb. 5. Coconino County Board of Supervisors passes resolution opposing uranium development on Grand Canyon National Park watersheds that lie within Coconino County, AZ. Arizona Daily Sun article.


February 11. Citing widespread public opposition and a flawed environmental review, the Center for Biological Diversity, Grand Canyon Trust, and Sierra Club send letter requesting that the Kaibab National Forest withdraw approval of up to 39 new uranium-exploration drilling sites immediately south of Grand Canyon National Park.


March 17, Arizona Congressman Raul Grijalva introduces the Grand Canyon Watersheds Protection Act (H.R. 5583). Arizona Game & Fish Commission letter to Senator John McCain expressing concern about uranium mining around the Grand Canyon.

March 24. Grand Canyon Trust, Center for Biological Diversity, and Sierra Club file for temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction against Kaibab National Forest approval of plans of operations for exploratory uranium drilling.

March 25. Metropolitan Water District of Southern California sends letter to Secretary Kempthorne expressing concerns about uranium mining in the Grand Canyon vicinity.


March 30. "We know the drill;" Arizona Republic editorial.


April 10. United States District Judge Mary Murguia grants plaintiff's motion for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction to halt uranium drilling on Kaibab National Forest.


June 16. Southern Nevada Water Authority sends letter to Secretary Kempthorne expressing concerns about uranium mining in the Grand
Canyon vicinity.

June 25. U.S. House of Representative’s Committee on Natural Resources votes 20-2 in favor of a resolution that requires the Secretary to withdraw public lands surrounding Grand Canyon from new uranium claims and exploration. “Mining Halted near Grand Canyon; ” Associated Press story.


June 27. “Resolution saves canyon from mining — for a while;” AZ Daily Star editorial.

July 16. Letter from Nick Rahall, Chairman Committee on Natural Resources to Interior Secretary Kempthorne regarding the Committee on Natural Resources’ emergency withdrawal resolution.


Aug. 20. “Uranium Claims Inundate Canyon;” Fall Advocate article.

Sept. 26. Plaintiff’s reach a settlement agreement with the United States Forest Service and VANE Minerals, requiring the agency to prepare an environmental impact statement before exploratory drilling on the Kaibab National Forest can continue.

Sept. 29. Grand Canyon Trust, Center for Biological Diversity, and Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter file lawsuit against Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne for authorizing uranium exploration near Grand Canyon National Park in defiance of a congressional resolution prohibiting such activities across 1 million acres of public lands in watersheds surrounding the Park.


Oct. 21. New Mexico Senator Jeff Bingaman sends letter to Secretary Kempthorne in strong opposition to a proposed rule to remove regulations allowing emergency withdrawals of public lands from mineral development.


Dec. 4. In defiance of the June 25th emergency resolution by Congress, Secretary of the Interior Kempthorne announces plans to finalize a new rule that eliminates a regulatory provision requiring the Bureau of Land Management to withdraw lands from mining when Congress determines that there is an emergency situation requiring immediate action. However, it is not implemented before the Obama administration takes office.

2009


June 27. “Company seeks uranium mine permit near Grand Canyon;” AP story.


July 21. House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands legislative hearing on H.R. 644; testimony by Grand Canyon Trust Executive Director Bill Hedden, Havasupai Vice Chairman Matthew Putesoy, and UNLV professor Dave Kreamer.


July 23-25. Protest at Red Butte. “Nearly 300 people, including approximately 150 Havasupai people who traveled from their homes in Supai Village, gathered at Red Butte to participate in ceremonies and strategy sessions to stop uranium mining near Grand Canyon. Other supporters from Hualapai, Hopi, Kaibab Paiute, Paiute, and Navajo communities attended as well.” Please see Associated Press story; Censored News blogspot.


July 25. “Reform mining law to deal with uranium mines;” AZ Daily Sun editorial, and “Canyon’s ‘guardians’ press for protections;” Matthew

Aug. 26. BLM issues notice to prepare Environmental Impact Statement on proposed mining withdrawal, sets comment period, and issues invitation to attend public meetings.

September 3. Hualapai Tribal Council resolution passes in support of Secretary Salazar’s proposed mineral withdrawal.

Sept. 9. GCT and partners file notice of intent to sue BLM over ESA violations connected to uranium mining.

Oct. 15. Flagstaff Scoping Meeting. “Instead of providing written comments, Havasupai elders decided to voice their support for the protective action by praying, drumming, and singing in the middle of the meeting room.” From “Uprising at Red Butte;” Grand Canyon Trust Advocate article.

Nov. 16. Center for Biological Diversity, Grand Canyon Trust, and Sierra Club file suit in an Arizona federal court challenging the Bureau of Land Management’s approval of the restart of Arizona 1, a defunct uranium mine just north of Grand Canyon National Park.

2010


April 20. Video released by EcoFlight provides a bird’s eye view of uranium mining sites situated around the Grand Canyon and its watersheds, featuring Grand Canyon Trust program director.

May 3. The Environmental Protection Agency notifies Denison Mines Corporation that its Arizona 1 mine, located 35 miles from Fredonia, Arizona, has been issued a violation for emissions that violate the Clean Air Act.

May 10. Grand Canyon Trust organizes trip with the Havasupai Chairwoman and three council members to Washington, DC to meet with key sponsors of the Grand Canyon Watersheds Protection Act in the House, potential Senate sponsors, and agency officials in EPA and DOI.

May 18. National Park Service releases internal report on potential impacts of uranium mining on wildlife in Grand Canyon.

July 8. Videos of Miners and Spinmeisters. BBC reporter Leana Hosea visits the Grand Canyon Trust while researching stories about the...
resurgence of uranium mining in the Grand Canyon region. Video interviews: Uranium miners and Denison Executive Vice President Harold Roberts: Part 1; Part 2; Part 3; Part 4.

July 12. Conservation groups and Native American tribes appeal a federal court decision that denied a request to halt uranium mining just six miles north of Grand Canyon National Park. The appeal filed with the Ninth District Court of Appeals challenged a lower court’s June 17 decision on the groups’ request for a preliminary injunction at the Arizona 1 uranium mine.


Nov. 5. As a British mining company is pushing ahead with plans to re-start uranium mining in the Grand Canyon area, Ecologist investigation reveals communities in the Navajo reservation are still suffering the effects of uranium mining today.

Dec. 1. Arizona Department of Environmental Quality hosts several public meetings to permit three uranium mines within Grand Canyon watersheds. Please see news video featuring Trust interview on upcoming meetings.


Dec. 7. Responding to requests from the Grand Canyon Trust, Flagstaff City Council passes a resolution supporting Secretary of Interior Salazar’s proposed 20-year ban on new mining claims on one million acres of federal lands surrounding Grand Canyon National Park.

Dec. 25. Flagstaff Mayor Sara Presler’s letter-to-the-editor, in support of the moratorium is printed in the Arizona Republic.

2011

Jan. 6. Arizona Department of Environmental Quality hosts information meeting in Flagstaff. “Diné environmentalists on Jan. 6 joined a chorus of about 60 area citizens who spoke against issuing air and water quality permits for new uranium mines near the rim of the Grand Canyon, with one calling the hearing an ‘insult.’” Navajo Times article.

Jan. 16. “Mining on the honor system;” AZ Daily Sun story and “Contamination hard to trace;” article.

Jan. 18. Grand Canyon Trust and allies submit comments on uranium permits to Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ).


Jan. 31. Northern Arizona legislators send letter expressing their concern over proposed uranium mining near Grand Canyon National Park in a letter to the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) after the agency was unable to quell public concerns at a recent ADEQ presentation in Flagstaff.

Feb. 17. The Department of the Interior releases Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and is “seeking public comment on a proposal to withdraw lands in the Grand Canyon watershed that would affect uranium and other hardrock mineral development in that area.” Grand Canyon Trust and allies’ press release.

News and editorials:

“Demand for uranium threatens Grand Canyon biodiversity;” Guardian story.

“Proposed uranium mining ban set for meetings;” Associated Press story.

“U-mining along Grand Canyon? Just say never;” Santa Fe New Mexican editorial.

“Grand Canyon Mining Ban in the Works;” Public News Service story.

“Uranium plan released by Department of Interior;” Grand Canyon News story.

“Public now can weigh in on Grand Canyon mining;” Arizona Republic editorial.

“Chabin: Uranium mining would hurt Grand Canyon area;” editorial.


March 10. Grand Canyon Trust offers in-depth background information to assist public in commenting on the Draft EIS for the proposed mineral withdrawal.

March 11. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster is triggered by a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami. Uranium prices drop by about 35
percent, but not enough to make uranium mining around the Grand Canyon unprofitable.

March 23. Report by Elliot D. Pollack & Company raises substantive questions about the accuracy of economic information contained in the draft EIS regarding the economic impact of uranium mining in northern Arizona near Grand Canyon.

March 26. Benefit concert in Flagstaff to stop Grand Canyon uranium mining.


April 4. The Arizona Game and Fish Commission endorses "a U.S. Department of the Interior proposal to withdraw more than 1 million acres surrounding the Grand Canyon from mining for the next 20 years," Cronkite News story.

April 4. Arizona Tourism Alliance supports in letter to the Secretary of the Interior.

April 6. "As owners of two Flagstaff-based Grand Canyon river rafting outfitters, we strongly support Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's ban on new uranium claims on 1 million acres around Grand Canyon National Park," Arizona Daily Sun letter to the editor.

April 6. Native American leaders meet with officials in Washington, DC to support ban on new hardrock mining claims near the Grand Canyon. Please see EE News story & photos.


April 14. Support for uranium mining ban swells as Interior Department extends DEIS comment period.

April 14. "Arizona Trout Unlimited State Council supports Alternative B — withdrawal of 1,010,776 acres of federal locatable mineral estate be withdrawn for 20 years from operation of the Mining Law, subject to valid existing rights."


April 25. Tusayan Town Council unanimously opposes Grand Canyon uranium mining. Please see letter.

April 26. New video is released urging protection of Grand Canyon with narration by Craig Childs and interviews with Professor Dave Kraemer.

April 27. Ecological Society of America opposes Grand Canyon uranium mining. Please see letter.


May 4. Grand Canyon Trust, Center for Biological Diversity, Grand Canyon Wildlands Council and Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter submit Grand Canyon uranium mining DEIS comments on Draft EIS for proposed withdrawal.

May 4. Arizona Game and Fish Department submits comments Grand Canyon uranium mining.


June 6. "As decision on Grand Canyon mining nears, sides line up;" McClatchy Newspapers story.

June 7. Nevada, California, Arizona water providers express concerns about Grand Canyon area uranium mining.

June 8. Former Interior Secretary Babbitt takes Obama Administration to task on conservation issues in speech at the National Press Club, Washington, DC.
June 21. Interior Secretary Salazar announces mining segregation extension at Grand Canyon and preferred alternative of a 20-year ban on 1.1 million acres. See video.

News and editorials:


"20-year ban planned on new Grand Canyon uranium mining;" Los Angeles Times story.
"Government extends Grand Canyon mining-claims ban for six months;" Cronkite News story.

"Uranium-mining ban is extended;" Arizona Republic story.
"Secretary Salazar suggests mining ban near Grand Canyon;" Salt Lake Tribune story.

"Canyon decision is the right one;" Arizona Republic editorial.
"White House right to back mining ban near Grand Canyon;" AZ Daily Star editorial.

"In Arizona, uranium resources are worth a careful look;" Washington Post editorial.

"Mining ban;" Salt Lake Tribune editorial.

"Timeout called for Grand Canyon;" Santa Fe New Mexican editorial.

"Mining and the Canyon;" New York Times editorial.

More news and editorials.

June 30. Congressman Grijalva says conservation wins a big one at Grand Canyon.

July 5. "We will attempt to strike language that allows new uranium mining near Grand Canyon National Park." House Appropriations Committee Ranking Democratic Member Rep. Norm Dicks says current bill the worst Interior & Environment Appropriations bill in 35 years of service on the Subcommittee.

July 8. Arizona Corporation Commissioner Paul Newman and Arizona Representative Daniel Patterson speak out in favor of Grand Canyon mining ban.

July 12. Tourism businesses and sportsmen see economic threat in congressional effort to overturn protections for national park.

July 12. "Keep the ban on uranium mines;" Arizona Republic editorial.

July 13. Sparks fly over Grand Canyon rider at House approps markup.

July 18. As bid to overturn Grand Canyon uranium ban moves ahead, opponents step up.

July 20. "Bill at odds with nation’s values;" AZ Republic editorial.

July 22. "Republicans should quit trying to roll back uranium mining moratorium;" Las Vegas Sun editorial.


July 27. Congressman Grijalva says GOP lawmakers have Canyon under siege.


Sept. 20. Congressman Ed Markey (D-MA) speaks out against Grand Canyon uranium mining at DC hearing. Watch video.

Sept. 22. More than 200 local business leaders send postcards to Interior Secretary citing economic benefits from protecting Grand Canyon.

Oct. 12. "A group of Republican lawmakers is introducing legislation to stop the Obama administration from blocking new mining claims around the Grand Canyon;" E&E News story.

Oct. 12. Congressman Grijalva challenges authors of Grand Canyon mining bill: “The only people who support this are mining industry lobbyists...”

Oct. 12. GOP "job killer plan" assaults Grand Canyon tourism industry.

Oct. 14. "The mining proposal here won't create enough jobs to impact American or Arizonan unemployment.... The mining companies are the only winners in this;" Prescott Courier editorial.


Oct. 27. Arizona Congressman Raul M. Grijalva praises BLM recommendation to protect Grand Canyon area from mining claims.


Nov. 1. Congressman Grijalva says "Do not believe GOP Grand Canyon uranium mining claims."

Nov. 3. Hearing by Subcommittee on National Parks, Forest and Public Lands on H.R. 3155 “Northern Arizona Mining Continuity Act to preserve the multiple use land management policy in the State of Arizona, and for other purposes.” Opposing witness testimony by Mark Trautwein and Stephen Verkamp. See Cronkite News story.

Nov. 18. "The heart of why we believe Preferred Alternative should be implemented is simple — this is THE Grand Canyon...” Letter to Secretary Salazar by Grand Canyon River Guides Association.

Nov. 29. Grand Canyon Trust, Center for Biological Diversity file appeal of lower court decision supporting BLM’s permit to allow Arizona 1 uranium mine to re-open without updating its 1988 environmental assessment.

Dec. 12. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar’s Record of Decision is imminent, finalizing a hard-won, 20-year ban on new uranium mining claims on more than one million acres of public-land watersheds surrounding Grand Canyon.

2012

Jan. 9. Success! Today, Secretary of the Interior Salazar ordered a 20-year moratorium on thousands of new mining claims that threaten to industrialize watersheds, which drain directly into Grand Canyon and the Colorado River. The decision culminates a successful, four-year campaign that the Trust initiated in response to a surge in new mining activity as uranium prices began to soar in 2006.


Jan. 18. Earthjustice editorial.


Jan. 22. “Keeping poison out of our water;” Clark County Commissioner Larry Brown, Las Vegas Sun op-ed.

Jan. 23. “Uranium-mining ban was a grand decision;” Grand Canyon Trust program director Roger Clark, Arizona Republic op-ed.

Jan. 26. U.S. Geological Survey refutes uranium industry misinformation, says uranium in Grand Canyon withdrawal is 1.5% of US total, not 40% as claimed by AZ/UT politicians.