

National Congress of American Indians · Arizona Trail Association · Center for Biological Diversity · Chispa Arizona · Earthjustice · Grand Canyon Trust · League of Conservation Voters · National Parks Conservation Association · Natural Resources Defense Council · Sierra Club · The Wilderness Society · Wild Arizona

February 24, 2020

The Honorable Martha McSally
404 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McSally,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we write in support of protecting the Grand Canyon from new uranium mining and urge you to cosponsor S. 3127 the Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act.

Our groups are proud to stand with Tribal nations – including the Havasupai, Hualapai, and Hopi Tribes, and the Navajo Nation – and a broad coalition of business owners, local government leaders, wildlife conservation organizations, health professionals, and others in opposition to uranium mining in the Grand Canyon watershed. The threats to sacred places, to wildlife, to water – particularly given the history of deadly pollution that continues to afflict many Tribal communities – warrants legislation that will permanently protect this world-renowned natural wonder.

In 2012, after an extensive public process that underscored the possible risks of uranium mining to the Grand Canyon region and the water resources it feeds, the Department of the Interior established a 20-year mining ban on approximately one million acres of federal public land adjacent to, and hydrologically and ecologically connected to, the Grand Canyon. S. 3127 would make the existing temporary ban permanent; acknowledging the reality that there's no scenario in which it would be worth risking a Wonder of the World, the source of water for millions, and the literal and spiritual home for sovereign, Indigenous Nations.

Mining contamination presents a direct threat to federally reserved water rights of tribal nations in and around the Grand Canyon, including such rights associated with groundwater that feeds into the seeps and streams within tribal homelands. In 2019, the National Congress of American Indians passed standing resolution #REN-19-001 "Opposing Mining on Public Lands and Around the Grand Canyon Without Tribal Nations' Free Prior and Informed Consent." The Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act is consistent with that standing resolution.

Research by the Grand Canyon Trust finds that from both economic and national security perspectives, the reward of protecting the Grand Canyon from new uranium mining outweighs the risks that mining poses to the Grand Canyon and the people and economies that depend upon its health. Those findings include:

- The U.S. has access to enough already-mined uranium to meet its defense needs, supply its electrical grid, and insulate itself from disruptions in the supply chain.

- The Grand Canyon holds less than one percent of known, unmined uranium reserves in the country.
- When operating, breccia pipe uranium mines are short lived and offer only temporary employment.
- Mining contamination would risk the thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars that the Grand Canyon brings to gateway communities.

We urge you to stand with the people and communities that depend on the Grand Canyon for generations to come. Please protect the Grand Canyon watershed and cosponsor S. 3127.

Sincerely,

National Congress of American Indians
Arizona Trail Association
Center for Biological Diversity
Chispa Arizona
Earthjustice
Grand Canyon Trust
League of Conservation Voters
National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
Sierra Club
The Wilderness Society
Wild Arizona