

Ban on Uranium Mining: Conservation Groups Applaud Senate Launch of Grand Canyon Protection Bill

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Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) yesterday introduced the Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act. The bill will make permanent a ban on new uranium mining on about 1 million acres of public land adjacent to Grand Canyon National Park.

A companion bill has already passed the House with bipartisan support, following an effort led by tribal members and leaders, particularly the Havasupai Tribe with the support of the Hualapai, Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, National Congress of American Indians and Intertribal Council of Arizona. A broad coalition of business owners, local government leaders, conservation groups and others who oppose uranium mining in the Grand Canyon region also endorsed the House bill.

Conservation groups issued the following statements in response to Sinema's bill:

"Thank you to Senator Sinema for the introduction of legislation to protect one of the country's greatest treasures, the Grand Canyon," said Laura Dent, executive director of Chispa Arizona. "This legislation ensures that our nation will protect and respect the sacred lands and watersheds surrounding the Canyon, the preservation of our state's rich cultural heritage, and the wellbeing of our communities. We thank the indigenous leaders that have protected and fought for the preservation of this region for generations, and we look forward to the Senate bill moving forward so that the protection of the Grand Canyon can become law."

"Sen. Sinema understands that toxic uranium mining and the Trump administration pose tremendous threats to the Grand Canyon region," said Randi Spivak, public lands director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Sinema's important bill respects the magnificence and fragility of this remarkable place. This bill will permanently protect the region, its wildlife and the indigenous communities and others who rely on its life-giving waters. Overwhelming bipartisan support should be a slam dunk."

"Senator Sinema's dedication to a priceless Arizona treasure — one that's inspired generations upon generations of people from across the globe — deserves our praise. Her legislation would help to protect the Grand Canyon area's air, water and soil and preserve biodiversity," said Blaine Miller-McFeeley, senior legislative representative for policy and legislation at Earthjustice. "It would strengthen protections for ancestral lands long occupied and held sacred by the first people to inhabit them. It would ensure that the next hundred years of Grand Canyon National Park are filled with the same

recreational opportunities as the first hundred. We are proud to support her efforts.”

“There is no reality in which it is worthwhile to endanger the Grand Canyon, the lives and cultures of Indigenous communities, and millions of people and the economies that support them,” said Amber Reimondo, energy program director for the Grand Canyon Trust. “For those reasons, the Grand Canyon region is, and forever will be, too precious to mine and today we are grateful to Senator Sinema for her leadership in advancing a permanent mining ban around the Grand Canyon.”

“We applaud Senator Sinema for her leadership to protect the Grand Canyon, one of our country’s greatest national treasures and the ancestral home to indigenous communities who have cherished and protected these sacred lands for generations and continue to rely on them for sustenance and safe drinking water,” said Laura Forero, legislative representative for the League of Conservation Voters. “This bill is necessary to protect the communities, lands, waters, and ecosystems that have been impacted by harmful extractive pollution. We urge Senator McSally to protect tribal nations and their sacred places, and stop the further desecration of our public lands by supporting this bill.”

“The National Parks Conservation Association applauds Senator Sinema for her leadership and support for advancing the call to permanently protect the Grand Canyon from uranium mining,” said Kevin Dahl, senior Arizona program manager for the National Parks Conservation Association. “The iconic and enduring Grand Canyon is also home to vibrant and vital resources that we must support, for ours and future generations. Uranium mining threatens the entire water supply of the Havasupai people, whose homeland is in the Grand Canyon, and the limited underground sources that feeds the Canyon’s important springs, seeps, and side creeks. Nearly identical legislation passed the House in a bipartisan vote that demonstrated overwhelming support, proving that Americans share a common goal in defending and preserving the Grand Canyon’s fragile and limited water supply. The Senate now has the unique opportunity to create a lasting conservation legacy for this beloved national treasure and World Heritage Site by passing the Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act.”

“This is a bold and important move by Senator Sinema,” said Kabir Green, director of federal affairs for the Natural Resources Defense Council. “We cannot afford to leave the Grand Canyon — America’s greatest monument — vulnerable to mining. This would protect a vast swath of lands—and all the biodiversity they foster and recreational opportunities they afford—from encroachment. In addition to preserving our lands, this safeguards our water and air, and does so in a way that respects tribal interests.”

“The Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act is key to preventing more toxic pollution that has already harmed public, Navajo, Havasupai, and Hopi lands — there are more than 500 abandoned uranium mines on the Navajo Nation alone, contaminating water and harming the health of Diné people,” said Sandy Bahr, chapter director for Sierra Club’s Grand Canyon Chapter. “Introduction and passage of this important legislation is important to protecting the waters, wildlife and people who live and work in the Grand Canyon region.”

“We are thrilled that Senator Sinema has stepped up to lead on behalf of Arizonans and all who love the Grand Canyon, by introducing legislation to permanently protect this place from the dangers of uranium mining,” said Mike Quigley, Arizona state director at The Wilderness Society. “There is enormous support in Arizona and across the country to conserve this treasured landscape. We urge Senator McSally and the rest of the Senate to support this

bill.”

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