



THE URANIUM RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP ACT – Protecting communities, western waters and public lands

THE PROBLEM: the 1872 Mining Law

All public lands not explicitly reserved for another purpose are open to uranium mining under the antiquated 1872 Mining Law.

Signed by President Ulysses S. Grant, the Mining Law allows industry to mine public lands without paying royalties to the owners – the taxpayers. It also allows the the mining industry and federal land managers to disregard other potential uses of our public lands in favor of mining operations.

Even if it means the destruction of a popular recreation area, a crucial drinking water source, wildlife habitat or sacred site, the Mining Law requires federal land managers to regard mining as the “highest and best use” of public lands. This is true for uranium mining, even though it has polluted ground and surface waters across the West. Mines from the last uranium boom (decades ago) are still left abandoned and un-reclaimed.

With increased interest in nuclear power as an energy source, the price of uranium has increased significantly over the past 10 years. This price increase, has led to an increase in claim staking, mining permit applications, and exploration.

Uranium mining has also increased, including mine proposals near Grand Canyon National Park and Mount Taylor, a sacred site in New Mexico.

A WAY FORWARD: HR 1452 (URSA)

Congressmen Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and Ben Ray

Luján (D-NM) have introduced a bill to shift the regulation of uranium mining from the antiquated 1872 Mining Law to the Mineral Leasing Act.



Uranium mine at the lip of the Grand Canyon. Photo: Grand Canyon Trust

This change would allow uranium mining on federal lands to be managed through a competitive leasing program, as opposed to an industry-initiated claim and patent system.

This legislation, the Uranium Resources Stewardship Act (HR 1452), is the first step towards comprehensive federal regulation and oversight of uranium mining to protect both uranium-impacted communities and the environment.

Extraction of all other fuel minerals -- coal, oil and gas -- are governed by leasing systems, which allows public land managers to develop energy sources in a manner consistent with protecting air, land and water for future generations, and better balance the public’s economic interests.

The Uranium Resources Stewardship Act (URSA) would impose a 12.5% royalty on the uranium mining industry, compensating the taxpayer for the uranium that is being taken from public lands.

Perhaps most importantly, URSA would also end the presumed “right to mine” afforded by the 1872 Mining Law. It would allow public land managers more discretion to decide where uranium mining is and is not appropriate.

Your help is needed to protect taxpayers, water, public health and communities that live near uranium-rich areas. Please co-sponsor HR 1452, the Uranium Resources Stewardship Act.



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