



STATE OF ARIZONA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

KATIE HOBBS  
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

September 20, 2024

The Honorable Randy Moore  
Chief  
United States Forest Service  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003

Dear Chief Moore,

I write to you regarding the Pinyon Plain uranium mine, located in the Kaibab National Forest (KNF), which very recently resumed operations after years of dormancy. Nearly 40 years have passed since the U.S. Forest Service prepared the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision for the Pinyon Plain Mine (then named the Canyon Mine) in 1986, and at least two major changes in circumstances have occurred. As Governor of Arizona, I am requesting the U.S. Forest Service conduct a supplemental review of the 1986 Environmental Impact Statement and Plan of Operations, pursuant to 24 CFR § 58.47.

As you are aware, the Pinyon Plain uranium mine is located upon the ancestral lands of numerous Tribes including the Navajo Nation, the Hopi Tribe, and the Havasupai Tribe. Members of these communities continue to endure significant, heart-breaking harm from uranium mining in our recent past. Navajo Nation alone has over 500 abandoned uranium mines. I recently called on the federal government to invest in the cleanup of these sites.

As Governor of Arizona, I take seriously the concerns of Indigenous community members who feel the safety of their communities and the integrity of their sacred sites are threatened by this mine. I recently met with the Havasupai Tribe, and Chairwoman Jones informed me that many of her Tribal members no longer visit the area surrounding the mine out of fear of contamination from mining activities at the site. Red Butte Mountain, situated only four miles from the mine, is a site sacred to many Indigenous people including the Havasupai, and is a federally recognized Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

While the Kaibab National Forest's 2012 Canyon Uranium Mine Review acknowledged Red Butte's NRHP designation as a TCP, the KNF has never sufficiently examined and considered the impacts of the mine on the TCP. Now that the mine is operating, examining its impacts on the integrity of this religious and culturally significant site with the Havasupai Tribe is appropriate and necessary.

Tribal leadership brought to my attention additional concerns regarding the previous EIS and potential for contamination of an area that has been occupied by the Havasupai since time immemorial. Notably, the 1986 EIS and 2012 Review underestimated the potential for encountering a perched zone of the C-aquifer as well as the amount of water that would be found under these circumstances. The 2012 Review stated that the “C-aquifer is generally not saturated this far to the west, and would not be affected.” However, in 2016 the mine breached a perched zone of the C-aquifer, and has since experienced daily flows ranging approximately from 15,000 to 40,000 gallons per day, well above the estimated reasonable expectation for flow projected in the 1986 EIS.

It is within this context that I call on the U.S. Forest Service to conduct a supplemental review of the 1986 EIS and Plan of Operations for the Pinyon Plain mine.

I am committed to being a partner with Tribal nations and to ensuring that their concerns are respected and heard, and I hope and trust that the U.S. Forest Service shares that same commitment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'KH' followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Katie Hobbs  
Governor  
State of Arizona

cc: Supervisor Nicole Branton, Kaibab National Forest  
Regional Forester Michiko Martin, United States Forest Service  
Chairwoman Bernadine Jones, Havasupai Tribe