

HOME (/)  
ABOUT  
JOURNAL (/ABOUT)  
MASTHEAD (/NEW-PAGE)  
PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS (/PROSPECTIVE-MEMBERS)  
SUBSCRIBE (/SUBSCRIBE)  
STAFF RESOURCES (/STAFF-RESOURCES)  
PUBLICATIONS  
PUBLICATION ARCHIVE (/PUBLICATION-ARCHIVE)  
VOLUME 1 (2009) (/VOLUME-1-2008-2009)  
VOLUME 2 (2010) (/VOLUME-2-2009-2010)  
VOLUME 3 (2011) (/VOLUME-3-2010-2011)  
VOLUME 4 (2012) (/VOLUME-4-2011-2012)  
VOLUME 5 (2013) (/VOLUME-5-2012-2013)  
VOLUME 6 (2014) (/VOLUME-6-2013-2014)  
VOLUME 7 (2015) (/VOLUME-7-2014-2015)  
VOLUME 8 (2016) (/VOLUME-8-2015-2016)  
VOLUME 9 (2017) (/VOLUME-9-2016-2017)  
VOLUME 10 (2018) (/VOLUME-10-2018)  
SYMPOSIUM  
INFORMATION (/SYMPOSIUM)  
BLOG  
FULL BLOG (/FULL-BLOG)  
BLOG ARCHIVE (/BLOG-ARCHIVE-1)  
  
SUBMISSIONS (/SUBMISSIONS)

January 30, 2012 (/full-blog/2012/01/grand-canyon-mining-ban.html)

## Grand Canyon Mining Ban: Environmentalism v. Industrialism (/full-blog/2012/01/grand-canyon- mining-ban.html)



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By: Bradley Harn, Senior Staff Member

In January 2012 the Obama administration announced it had enacted a 20 year ban on new mining permits for approximately a one million acre area around the Grand Canyon.[1] This reversed the Bush administration's policy of opening up the area to new mining, and primarily affects the sizable uranium deposits in the area.[2]

Many have praised this policy since it protects the local tourism industry. "A 2005 study by the University of Northern Arizona shows that Grand Canyon tourism generates \$687 million in annual revenue and creates more than 12,000 full-time jobs." [3] Environmentalists have also

pointed out that the ban would help protect drinking water for 25 million people.[4] Sandy Bahr, director of the Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club stated, "Uranium mines are here today, gone tomorrow, but the pollution they leave behind is here for a very long time." [5]

However, others have been critical of the ban. Arizona's Republican Governor Janice Brewer remarked that the ban "comes at the expense of hundreds of high-paying jobs and approximately \$10 billion worth of activity for the Arizona economy." [6] The Institute for Energy Research issued a release stating, "This latest power-grab by federal regulators is another example of the Obama administration's willingness to use ideologically driven energy policies as a means to control the U.S. economy." [7] At the same time, however, the currently "approved mining operations could continue and new operations could be approved on valid existing mining claims. In addition, other Federal lands in Arizona and other parts of the country would remain open to hardrock mining claims. [8] In other words, this ban does not altogether eliminate mining in the area.

Do you feel the President Obama has achieved the correct balance between protecting the environment and creating jobs? What alternative regime would you propose?

[1] Matthew Daly, USA Today, *New 20-year Ban on Mining near Grand Canyon is Final*, <http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/environment/story/2012-01-09/grand-canyon-mining-ban/52466224/1>.

[2] *Id.*

[3] <http://www.policymic.com/articles/3281/obama-rightly-sets-20-year-moratorium-on-uranium-mining-near-grand-canyon>.

[4] Katarzyna Klimasinska and Amanda J. Crawford, *Ban at U.S. Grand Canyon Pits Tourism Against Mining*, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-01-10/uranium-ban-at-u-s-grand-canyon-pits-tourism-against-mining.html>.

[5] Daly, *supra* note 1.

[6] Klimasinska and Crawford, *supra* note 4.

[7] Deborah Zabarenko, *Obama Ban Uranium Mining Around Grand Canyon*, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/09/us-usa-grandcanyon-uranium-idUSTRE8081NA20120109>.

[8] U.S. Department of the Interior, <http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/mining/timeout.html>.

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