



Arizona's Greater Grand Canyon Watershed makes list of 15 wild areas at high risk of development for mining, oil, gas and other extractive resources

New report shines spotlight on important wild lands that must be protected

Contacts:

Jennifer Dickson, Senior Communications Manager, The Wilderness Society, (303) 650-9379, jennifer_dickson@tw.s.org
Mike Quigley, Arizona State Director, The Wilderness Society, (520) 334-8741, mike_quigley@tw.s.org

Tucson, AZ - (September 19, 2017) -- A [new report](#) released today by The Wilderness Society highlights the risks to lands near the Grand Canyon—the Greater Grand Canyon Watershed—and other wild lands across the U.S. threatened by extractive industries eager to exploit the resources on or underneath them, including uranium, oil, gas and coal.

'[Too Wild To Drill](#)' identifies 15 unique places found on public lands that are at high risk of drilling, mining and other development—and the damage and destruction that will inevitably follow. Despite America's love for the Grand Canyon and the incredible resources found within the Greater Grand Canyon Watershed, there have been repeated efforts to open the area to increased uranium mining. The efforts could roll back a 20-year moratorium on new mining leases put in place by former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar in 2012. A handful of Congressmen have also pursued legislation in recent years that could strip current protections.

"The moratorium was a strong, life-affirming decision the Department of Interior made after an extensive review process and substantial public participation," said Kevin Dahl of the National Parks Conservation Association. "It protects one of the world's most enduring landscapes and the sustained health of indigenous communities that live within the watershed of the Grand Canyon."

Uranium mining in this sensitive and stunningly beautiful area would destroy crucial wildlife habitat, devastate the tourism-based economy and put drinking water for the 25 million people who depend on the Colorado River at risk.

"The lands surrounding the Canyon are tightly integrated with the Canyon itself," said Mike Quigley, Arizona state director for The Wilderness Society. "If we open the lands and waters around the Grand Canyon to new mining and drilling operations we put the Canyon, water and air quality, wildlife and our tourism economy at risk. The Greater Grand Canyon Watershed deserves the same respect as the Grand Canyon and must be protected."

There have been ongoing efforts to designate the Greater Grand Canyon Watershed as a national monument. Protection of other areas within the broader Arizona strip has significantly increased economic benefits to local communities. For example, in 2015 travel and tourism represented about 35 percent of total private wage and salary employment in Coconino County, home to the nearby Vermilion Cliffs National Monument. Though these values clearly speak to the importance of protecting the area, the lands around the Grand Canyon continues to be targeted for development rather than protection.

"We shouldn't allow more uranium mining around the Grand Canyon. It will threaten local communities, the critically important tourism industry, and the future of the Canyon itself," said Flagstaff City Councilmember Celia Barotz. "It's absolutely wrong to continue mining here—the area deserves permanent protection."

The release of 'To Wild Too Drill' falls during [numerous reviews](#) of public lands policies, ordered by President Donald Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, that are taking place behind closed doors with little or no public oversight or accountability. In fact, earlier this week news broke of the Trump administration's secret efforts to roll back protections

for several wild places featured in 'Too Wild To Drill,' including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante national monuments, presumably to make them available for energy development.

This month also marks the end of the 180-day review period established by President Trump's "Energy Independence and Economic Growth" [Executive Order](#). The directive requires federal agencies to review any regulations that could "potentially burden" fossil fuel development.

The Wilderness Society issues a new version of 'Too Wild To Drill' every few years to call attention to vulnerable places on public lands. In this edition, other places highlighted include the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, one of the most remote and wild places left in the world, as well as:

- Mojave Trails National Monument, California
- North Fork of the Gunnison, Colorado
- Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Minnesota
- Badger-Two Medicine, Montana
- Paradise Valley, Montana
- Chihuahuan Desert Rivers, New Mexico
- Owyhee Desert Sagebrush, Nevada
- Wayne National Forest, Ohio
- Bears Ears National Monument, Utah
- Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Utah
- Appalachian Trail, Virginia
- Green River Valley, Washington
- Northern Red Desert, Wyoming

"When President Theodore Roosevelt first protected the inner Grand Canyon in 1908, he noted that 'the public interests would be promoted by reserving it as a National Monument, with such other land as is necessary for its proper protection'," says Quigley. "We now know that 'with such other land as is necessary for its proper protection' means that larger watershed, cultural heritage, and habitat areas on the north and south rims need similar protection."

###

The Wilderness Society is the leading conservation organization working to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places. Founded in 1935, and now with more than one million members and supporters, The Wilderness Society has led the effort to permanently protect 109 million acres of wilderness and to ensure sound management of our shared national lands.