

March 25, 2008

Raul M. Grijalva, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forest and Public Lands
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Ref.: Testimony presented at a field hearing held in Flagstaff, Arizona on March 28, 2008 on
Community Impacts of Proposed Uranium Mining Near Grand Canyon National Park

Dear Chairman Grijalva and esteemed members of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests,
and Public Lands:

My name is Rob Elliott and I am the President of Arizona Raft Adventures, Inc., also know as
AzRA, and we are one of the largest river outfitters providing river trips on the Colorado River
through the Grand Canyon. [Please find additional required information following signature on
page 3 and page 4.]

I am testifying in support of the permanent withdrawal from mining, mineral exploration, and
mineral entry on all Federal Lands in the Tusayan Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest
and certain lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in House Rock Valley
and the Kanab Creek watershed on the Arizona “strip.”

Thank you for coming to Flagstaff, Arizona and providing me and other interested stakeholders
the opportunity to testify on behalf of this issue of vital interest to our community’s immediate
and long term public health and economic wellbeing.

BACKGROUND

I am testifying on behalf of Arizona Raft Adventures (AzRA), our approximate 100 employees,
and the approximate 1,500 public visitors we serve each year on Colorado River rafting trips
through the Grand Canyon. AzRA is one of 16 rafting outfitters in the Grand Canyon. I have
personally guided visitors to Grand Canyon National Park since 1965 and AzRA has outfitted
river trips through the Grand Canyon since 1974. AzRA, its parent ARTA River Trips, and its
subsidiary Grand Canyon Discovery have served over 50,000 visitors on river trips through the
Grand Canyon since we began operations in 1965. We employ a dozen people year ‘round and
another 90 people seasonally out of Flagstaff, Arizona and generate annual revenues of 3 ½
million dollars. Besides the cost of their river trip, our customers spend an estimated half million
dollars in lodging, car rentals, restaurants, and provisions for their river trips in northern Arizona

each year. We just renewed our ten year concession contracts this year and expect to serve an additional 15,000 park visitors through our contract term which ends in 2017.

Our one and two week river trips begin at Lees Ferry, Arizona. We travel three and four days through Marble Canyon where numerous, pristine side streams flow into the river from the west. These side streams are little bits of paradise where bio-diversity thrives in the middle of otherwise harsh desert and these side streams provide our favorite places to hike and camp—streams such as Vasey's Paradise, Saddle Canyon, and Rider Canyon which drains House Rock Valley, and other areas on the Marble Platform which are among the subject lands for withdrawal from future mining activity.

On day three or four we pass the Little Colorado River which enters the Colorado River from the east, draining large areas of the Navajo Reservation. The LCR has elevated levels of radioactive contamination that are probably attributable to uranium activities in the LCR and its tributaries such as the Rio Puerco.

We travel another two or three days through upper Granite Gorge where streams such as Pipe Creek, Horn Creek, Hermit Creek, Elves Chasm and others enter the Grand Canyon from the lands to the south in the Tusayan Ranger district which are also among the subject lands for withdrawal from future mining activity. As I believe you already know, Horn Creek enters the Colorado River just below the Orphan mine on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon and is contaminated by radioactive materials. As documented in a 2000-2001 survey radioactive levels were found that reached the maximum allowable for human consumption. The contamination was significantly higher than any other stream tested in the Grand Canyon. The National Park Service warns that water in Horn Creek should not be consumed.

As our river trips progress westward and near our take out point we pass a drainage called Kanab Creek where John Wesley Powell ended his second expedition in 1872 and hiked three days and 60 miles out to Kanab, Utah. Kanab Creek drains a huge landscape from the north where uranium mining activity has occurred in a Kanab Creek tributary called Hack Canyon. There was a flood in Hack Canyon in 1984 that washed about four tons of high grade uranium ore downstream. I don't know whether there was any cleanup or follow up monitoring to this spill. Lands managed by the BLM in the Kanab watershed are also among the subject lands for withdrawal from future mining activity.

PRIMARY CONCERNS

I am concerned first and foremost for the health and safety of my employees and my customers. Were uranium contamination in any of the subject lands and drainages flowing in the Colorado River in Grand Canyon to occur on a scale that could risk the health and safety of my employees and customers and I had not spoken up at this hearing, I would feel I had fallen short of rising to my civic responsibility to help preempt a health risk that together we might be able to avert.

Secondly, I am concerned about any potential for perceived or real radioactive contamination of side streams flowing into the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park in the Marble Canyon area, upper Granite Gorge, and the Kanab Creek watershed caused by potential uranium mining in the subject lands the Subcommittee is proposing for withdrawal from mining activity.

Even a tiny amount of contamination of side streams flowing into the Grand Canyon would be big news across the nation. The Grand Canyon just seems to do that. What I mean is that the Grand Canyon is a lightning rod for environmental, national park, and public lands news of any kind, simply because it's the Grand Canyon and the Grand Canyon provides a ready-made headline. Just look at how much interest was generated in the beach habitat building flows released earlier this month from Glen Canyon Dam as a prime and recent example.

Uranium contamination in any amount in the Grand Canyon would be devastating to our business. Virtually all our customers might cancel their river trip before taking on any degree of public health risk associated with even a remote chance of exposure to radioactive contamination. I believe it to be a very real threat that they would defer their Grand Canyon river trip to some other year *or some other decade*, after the contamination had been cleaned up and the public lands and the Colorado River was declared safe. Uranium contamination is just that scary to people, thanks to Homer Simpson and the popular press. The potential damage to our business and future lost sales could go on for years and we could go easily out of business in the meantime.

Lastly, I am concerned about mining and mining construction activity in the immediate Tusayan area just south of the main entrance to Grand Canyon National Park. Grand Canyon National Park is a crown jewel of our national park system. The Tusayan area is a gateway to Grand Canyon National Park and could be blemished by the site of mining activity and mining trucks at the entrance to the park.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for hearing my testimony in support of withdrawing public lands in the Tysayan Ranger District, on the Marble Platform, and the Kanab Creek drainage from future mining activity. I am concerned for the health and safety of my employees and customers and for the survival of my business were significant or even modest radioactive contamination to occur that might carry into the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park due to mining activity on these public lands. I urge you to take whatever legislative action might be prudent and effective in withdrawing these lands from future mining activity. Thank you for your interest and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rob Elliott
President
Arizona Raft Adventures, Inc.
Grand Canyon Discovery, Inc.

REQUIRED INFORMATION, continued on page 4

REQUIRED INFORMATION

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Name: | Rob Elliott |
| 2. Business Address: | 4050 E. Huntington Drive |
| 3. Business Phone Number: | (928) 526-8200 |
| 4. Organization(s) I am representing: | Arizona Raft Adventures /Grand Canyon Discovery |
| 5. Educational certificates, diplomas, etc.: | none applicable |
| 6. Licenses, certifications, affiliations: | Concessioner, Grand Canyon National Park
Trustee, Grand Canyon Trust
Trustee, Grand Canyon Outfitters Association
(<i>not</i> representing GCROA in subject testimony) |
| 7. Employment, occupation, etc.: | Set forth in testimony |
| 8. Offices, elected positions, etc.: | none applicable |