

House Prepares to Strip Protections from Grand Canyon, Slash and Burn Interior Budget
WASHINGTON (July 11, 2011) - As the House Interior Appropriations Committee prepares for its July 12 hearing on massive cuts to the country's natural resources, The Wilderness Society is shining the spotlight on three of the most egregious attacks. The proposed House spending bill would destroy protection for a million acres of Grand Canyon National Park, wipe out funding for critical conservation programs and stop the EPA from protecting Americans from the dangers of pollution.

The House leadership plan for Fiscal Year 2012 spending, already passed on a party-line vote by the appropriations subcommittee, would:

- **Toxic Mining in Grand Canyon National Park:** Though the Grand Canyon is one of America's most iconic places to experience the great outdoors, the House proposes to strip this national treasure of a critical protection - opening 1,000 acres of the Canyon and surrounding areas to uranium mining. Toxic uranium mining in this region could contaminate three major watersheds that drain directly into the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River, which provides drinking water to millions of people throughout the southwest. The Greater Grand Canyon region is still suffering the effects of past uranium mining accidents in the area and the health and safety impacts of radioactive waste polluting the water.
- **Dirty Water, Dirty Air:** This bill would eliminate the EPA's ability to protect air and water from the dangers of pollution. The EPA is the watchdog for the health of the American people, including vulnerable populations like seniors and children. This bill would imperil its ability to enforce Clean Water Act protections for thousands of American streams and wetlands. It would also prohibit the use of funds by the EPA to reduce carbon dioxide pollution that endangers public health and destabilizes the climate systems that nurture fish and wildlife.
- **Slash and Burn Budgeting:** The bill being considered tomorrow would impose deep, debilitating cuts to critical conservation programs including the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This program makes polluters pay for the damage they do to the environment and uses those revenues to acquire land that is protected forever. In the deep cuts to LWCF, the Interior Appropriations bill would strike a blow to local economies. A recent Interior department report noted that one program alone - the Land and Water Conservation Fund - spent \$214 million on acquiring land in 2010 - generating \$442 million of economic activity including 3,000 jobs. As the House cuts back LWCF by historic levels in the upcoming budget battle, this economic activity and job growth are in peril.

"House leadership has made a big show of enacting draconian cuts to agencies and programs that fund conservation and environmental protection, and even going after the Grand Canyon - essentially declaring an open season on our open spaces," said The Wilderness Society's president, William H. Meadows. "By focusing its ire on the 'federal' government, though, House leaders either missed or purposefully chose to ignore the impact their short-sighted thinking would have on jobs and economies in their own states."

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The Wilderness Society is the leading public-lands conservation organization working to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places. Founded in 1935, and now with more than 500,000 members and supporters, TWS has led the effort to permanently protect 110 million acres of wilderness and to ensure sound management of our shared national lands. www.wilderness.org