



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

FEB - 9 2018

Dr. Mechtild Rössler
Director
World Heritage Centre
7, place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07 SP, France

Dear Dr. Rössler:

Please find attached a State of Conservation report for the World Heritage property, Grand Canyon National Park, as requested by the World Heritage Committee at its 40th Session in 2016 (40 COM 78.104). The United States remains committed to the protection of the outstanding universal value of the park.

Sincerely,

P. Daniel Smith
Deputy Director
Exercising the Authority of the Director
for the National Park Service

Report on State of Conservation at Grand Canyon National Park, USA, in response to 40 COM 7B.104

In response to Paragraph 4 in 40 COM 7B.104, there are no plans for any major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) within Grand Canyon National Park or its immediate vicinity likely to affect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property. All of the potential uranium mines are outside the boundaries of Grand Canyon National Park, with the closest of these to the major facilities on the park's South Rim being 24 kilometers (15 miles) away. Although the 20-year withdrawal of 400,000 hectares (1,006,545 acres) around the park from mineral exploration does allow for the potential of up to 11 previously permitted uranium deposits to be exploited, only one mine is currently being readied for mining and three additional mines located northwest of the park have currently approved plans. In all cases, mining activities are highly regulated by state and federal environmental laws, including watershed protection provisions.

In response to Paragraph 5, neighboring land management agencies, which are the permitting agencies for any potential mining, are aware of Grand Canyon National Park's designation as a World Heritage Site. In recent communication between the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture (which oversees the U.S. Forest Service) the Department of the Interior emphasized that protection of World Heritage sites is a U.S. government-wide responsibility.

The intent of the Department of the Interior is clear and unwavering. In all subsequent environmental reviews conducted for operations outside the boundaries of Grand Canyon National Park, evaluation of potential affects to the OUV of Grand Canyon will be considered before a decision on the proposed activity is made.

Paragraph 6 requests that the State Party ensure environmental impact assessments be completed prior to resuming operations for the Canyon Mine. According to staff at the Kaibab National Forest, in 2012 the U.S. Forest Service reviewed the Canyon Mine Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to determine if there were any changes from the time of the original environmental review. They determined there were no changes; the Plan of Operation was the same, and there was no new information that would require a new EIS. There were some mitigation measures put into place (for example, mitigation measures for the threatened California condor), but that didn't change the project. There is no other exploration or development on the Kaibab National Forest at this time. Any new applications would require new environmental analysis and proof of a valid existing right to the mineral deposit. New mining proposals in the withdrawal area north of Grand Canyon National Park are managed through the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. A similar review process would be undertaken on those lands for any new proposed mines that do not have valid existing rights.

Paragraph 7 requests an update on the proposed Grand Canyon Escalade project. At the present time, the project does not have the support of the Navajo Nation president and has been defeated by Navajo Nation environmental and traditional leaders in all committee reviews (four internal Navajo review committees). Public advocacy groups (such as Save the Confluence) continue to work to ensure permanent defeat of the proposal. The National Park Service is monitoring the situation and continues to engage with local tribal communities and environmental advocacy groups on defeating the proposal (<https://savetheconfluence.com>).