

Active claims increased more than 80% since January 2003

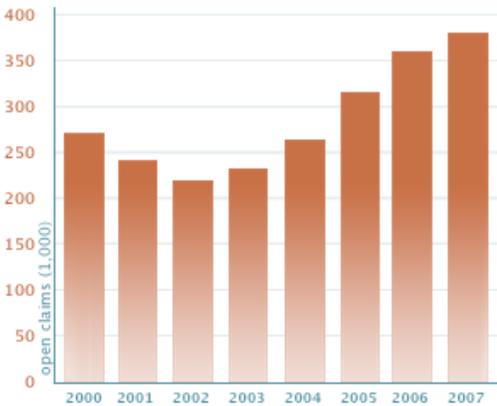


Fig 1. Active claims (1,000) from 2000 to 2007. Environmental Working Group analysis of Bureau of Land Management's LR2000 Database, July 2007 download.

Uranium mining claims skyrocket in CO, NM, UT and WY as uranium prices soar

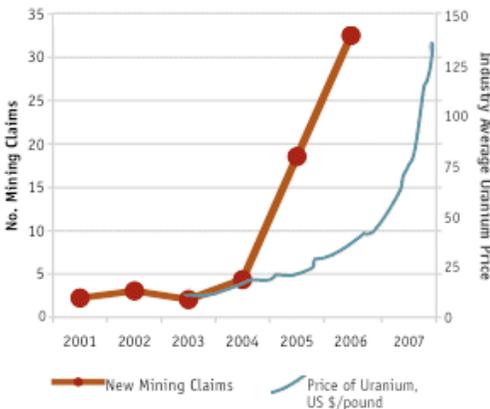


Fig 2. Mining claims in four Western states (1,000) from 2001 to 2006 overlaid with industry average uranium prices (US \$/lb). Source: Bureau of Land Management (BLM Uranium). 2007. Uranium Mining Claim Activity in CO, NM, UT, and WY. Cameco (Cameco). 2007. Industry Average Uranium Spot Price.

Mining claims have increased in every one of twelve Western states.

State	Claims active as of January 2003	Claims active as of July 2007	Percent Increase
Colorado	5,430	18,391	239%

Executive Summary

A modern day land rush is sweeping the West, with mining interests and speculators staking thousands of claims that are encroaching on American treasures including the Grand Canyon, Joshua Tree, Arches, and Yosemite National Parks. The United States' outdated mining law written in 1872 leaves these lands vulnerable to severe impacts.

A new Environmental Working Group analysis of government records shows that in 12 Western states, the total number of active mining claims has increased from 207,540 in January 2003 to 376,493 in July 2007—a rise of more than 80 percent. Between September 2006 and May 2007 alone, companies and individuals staked more than 50,000 claims (BLM 2007).

Many of these claims are for uranium, sparked by global demand for nuclear power. Government data from just four states (Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming) reveal an ongoing surge in uranium claims from an estimated 4,300 staked in fiscal year 2004 to more than 32,000 staked in fiscal year 2006 (BLM Uranium 2007). Mining interests have also staked tens of thousands of claims for gold, copper and other metals, reflecting a worldwide demand for minerals.

Thousands of the claims can be found at the doorstep of some of the West's most treasured places. For example, the explosion of mining activity threatens a crisis for [Grand Canyon National Park](#), where companies and individuals have staked 815 claims within five miles of the park's boundary—805 of them since January 2003 (BLM 2007). Most of these claims are for uranium.

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Park or Monument	Active Claims	Claims Staked Since Jan. 2003
Arches National Park, UT	869	864
Canyonlands National Park, UT	233	233
Capitol Reef National Park, UT	161	151
Death Valley National Park, CA and NV	1,693	503
Grand Canyon National Park, AZ	815	805
Great Basin National Park, NV	154	18
Joshua Tree National Park, CA	409	117
Mt. Saint Helens National Volcanic Monument, WA	204	105
Yellowstone National Park, ID, MT, WY	21	1
Yosemite National Park, CA	83	50
Zion National Park, UT	66	54

Overall, mining interests staked 4,708 mining claims within five miles of the 11 national parks and monuments analyzed, 2,901 of them staked since January 2003 (BLM 2007).

At least 18 uranium interests hold 1,053 mining claims within five miles of five different national parks: the Grand Canyon; Arches, Canyonlands and Capitol Reef in Utah; and Yellowstone. Ninety-eight percent of these claims have been staked since January 2003, showing just how vulnerable America's

Utah	8,723	28,968	232%
Wyoming	13,710	38,138	178%
South Dakota	1,030	2,340	127%
Arizona	22,711	40,670	79%
Nevada	100,972	179,773	78%
New Mexico	7,550	11,348	50%
Idaho	10,598	13,013	23%
Montana	10,554	12,779	21%
Oregon	5,088	6,087	20%
California	18,981	22,494	19%
Washington	2,193	2,492	14%
12 state total	207,540	376,493	81%

Fig 3. Active claims in each of twelve Western states as of January 2003 and July 2007. Environmental Working Group analysis of Bureau of Land Management's LR2000 Database, July 2007 download.

national parks and protected areas are to surging international metals prices (BLM 2007).

Mining's Special Status

Although mining is an appropriate activity in certain areas, there are other places that should not be mined due to mining's significant impacts such as lands near water supplies, national parks and other resources. Yet federal land managers often believe that they have little choice but to allow mining to proceed regardless of the costs (Lesly 1987, MPC v. Norton 2003).

Under federal law, a valid mining claim gives the claim holder the exclusive opportunity to mine federal land. The executive branch has interpreted this right as superceding other uses of public land including water quality, hunting, fishing, wildlife protection, and other forms of recreation.

This interpretation means that even if the claims are immediately adjacent to treasured places such as the Grand Canyon, it is extremely difficult to prevent mining operations unless the government buys back the mining claims or challenges their validity, typically at substantial taxpayer expense. The special treatment mining receives under federal law also means that speculative demand for nuclear fuel and other minerals in China and India has more influence over the fate of mining in the American West than the people who work and live there.

The Legacy of Uranium

Uranium mining presents special concerns because of its legacy of radioactive contamination, death and disease. Once active in parts of the arid Southwest, it is now costing taxpayers millions of dollars in cleanup costs.

The Department of Energy has begun a project to clean up 16 million tons of radioactive uranium mine waste near Moab, Utah, that have contaminated land near the Colorado River. The waste is a result of mining operations that date to the 1950s and remains a threat that could pollute drinking water for millions. Cleanup estimates range between \$412 million and \$697 million, and the project may not be completed until 2028 (Gehrke 2007, Denver Post 2005, Fahys 2006).

Colorado's Grand Junction Daily Sentinel recently reported that residents of Monticello, Utah, claim unusually high rates of cancer they believe were caused by a now-closed uranium mill (Harmon 2006). And the Los Angeles Times reported in a landmark series last year how uranium mining has left a legacy of cancer and a degenerative disease known as Navajo Neuropathy on the Navajo reservation that includes Arizona, Colorado, Utah and New Mexico (Pasternak 2006).

Given the well-established health risks of uranium operations, mining for radioactive materials on the immediate borders of national parks would be at best a reckless gamble—at worst, a tragedy that could turn treasured places into hazardous waste sites.

Mining: Our Leading Source of Toxic Pollution

But the dangers of uranium are hardly the only problems associated with mining.

Metals mining is the United States' leading source of toxic pollution according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) – a distinction the industry has held for eight consecutive years (1998–2005) ever since mining was added to the TRI list (EPA TRI 2007). This ranking does not include radioactive pollution and fallout from uranium operations.

The EPA has also reported that more than 40 percent of Western watersheds have mining contamination in their headwaters (EPA Headwaters 2000). The total cost of cleaning up metal mining sites throughout the West is an estimated \$32 billion or more (Duffus 1993, McClure and Schneider 2001).

Unearthing Pollution

Some of the pollution involved in mining stems from the use of dangerous chemicals. Mining companies commonly use cyanide to extract metal from tons of low-grade ore excavated in modern mining operations. In this process, known as heap leaching, companies excavate huge quantities of rock and earth filled with microscopic particles of precious metal. They deposit the earth on a plastic-lined heap leach pad and then spray or drip cyanide over it. As the cyanide trickles through the heap, it binds to the precious metal. The mining company then collects the metal from the cyanide solution in liquid-filled pits at the base of the rock pile. Cyanide and other chemicals can poison water, land and wildlife near mines (WRM 2004, USDO and USGS 1999).

Most mining pollution, however, results from digging vast open pit mines that can exceed one mile in diameter and 1,000 feet in depth. When mining companies dig for metals, they expose sulfur-laden rock to air and water, resulting in the formation of sulfuric acid. The acid often drains away from the mine site into ground or surface water where it makes the water so acidic that fish and other organisms cannot survive. This phenomenon is known as acid mine drainage (WRM 2004, Durkin and Herrmann 1994). At California's abandoned Iron Mountain mine, for instance, scientists discovered the world's most acidic water with a pH of -3.6-10,000 times more acidic than battery acid (WRM 2004, Chui 2000). When the acid comes in contact with rock, it dissolves toxic metals including arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury, and carries those metals into water sources (Durkin and Herrmann 1994).

Once it begins, such pollution is very difficult to stop. In Europe, Roman mines are still draining acid (WRM 2004). Closer to home, the EPA wrote that Newmont's Phoenix proposal in Nevada "will likely create a perpetual and significant acid mine drainage problem requiring mitigation for hundreds of years" (EPA Phoenix Letter 2002).

Reclaiming acid draining mines after mining ceases is a huge financial liability. For example, the state of New Mexico estimates that one acid-draining copper mine will cost more than a quarter of a billion dollars to clean up (Infomine 2005).

And mining pollution often spreads far beyond the site of the mine. In Summitville, Colorado, in 1992 a spill of cyanide and heavy metal-laden water killed some 20 miles of the Alamosa River (EPA Summitville 2007, Kuipers 2003). The area is now a Superfund site that has already cost taxpayers \$190 million to clean up (Smith 2007). The enormous Bingham Canyon mine in Utah has produced a 72-square-mile groundwater contamination plume (EPA Bingham Canyon 2007).

The Price of Protecting Lands at Risk

Without proper protections for public lands, the recent explosion of claims could be costly. One expensive option is to buy out claims located near parks or other treasured places. In 1996, for example, the federal government paid \$65 million to buy out patented claims just three miles from Yellowstone National Park that would have been the site of a major gold mine. The mine would have been located at the headwaters of three streams that flow into the park (Kohler 2005, Drinkard 1997).

Short of buying out claims, the federal government could challenge their validity, arguing that they lack a valuable mineral deposit. However, these challenges can also be costly and time consuming. A recent challenge in Oregon, for instance, has already taken several years and is still not finished.

Then there is allowing mining to proceed under the current inadequate system. Already, a Canadian company, Quaterra Resources, has proposed to drill exploratory holes for uranium just north of the Grand Canyon. The operation would include a helicopter pad to carry supplies in and out (BLM Quaterra 2006). The idea of uranium mining near America's greatest national treasure is troubling, and the thought of helicopter flights of radioactive material in an area already crisscrossed by dozens of tourist flyovers a day is even more disconcerting.

Recommendations

The threat from mining that we face today is more serious than in years past because of the frenzy of speculative claim staking. The Grand Canyon and many other treasured national parks and monuments are at risk. Taxpayers may already be facing the prospect of expensive buyouts or even significant pollution from the new claims. Unless Congress acts, the damage could grow worse.

We urge Congress to enact these mining reforms:

- **Protect special places:** Mining is an appropriate activity in certain areas, but there are some places that should not be mined such as land just outside the Grand Canyon and areas with scarce water supplies. Mining's impacts are so great that these treasured resources could be irreparably damaged.
- **Royalty payments:** Mining companies should pay taxpayers a royalty on the value of the metal they extract. Every other extractive industry operating on federal land pays a royalty.
- **Balanced Treatment:** Federal land managers should balance mining with protection of other resources, such as water. Currently, the government holds that the right to mine supercedes other values.
- **Abandoned mine cleanup fund:** Cleaning up abandoned mines is estimated to cost \$32 billion or more. Congress should create a fund to accomplish this important task.
- **Tougher standards for mine cleanup:** Mining companies should be

required to prevent perpetual water contamination and put up enough money—before mining begins—to cover the full costs of cleanup should the company go bankrupt or abandon the site.

- An end to mining's tax break: In addition to being able to mine royalty-free, mining companies can claim a tax break on up to 22 percent of the income that they make off hardrock minerals mined on federal public lands. Congress should end this sweetheart deal.
- No more land giveaways: For years, mining interests have been able to buy claimed land from the federal government for \$2.50 or \$5 an acre. Since 1994, Congress has placed a moratorium on these giveaways that must be renewed annually. Congress should enact a permanent ban.

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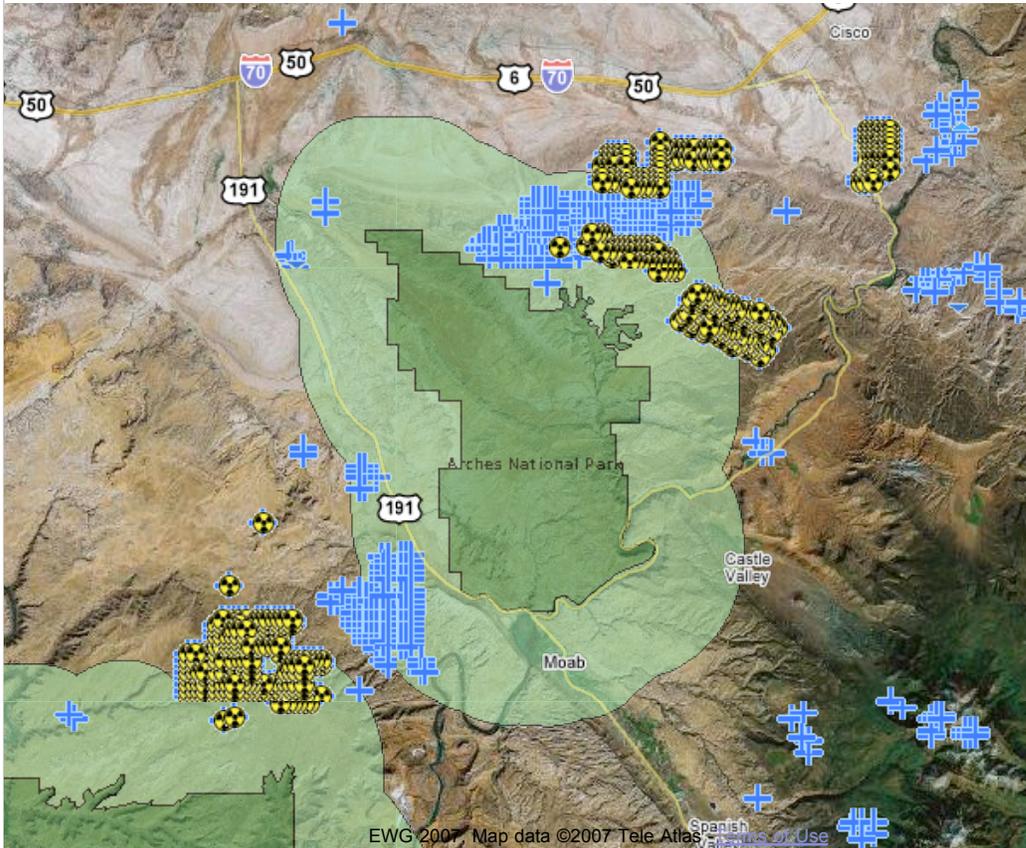
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zoom to treasure

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869 Mining Claims within 5 Miles of Arches National Park



Arches National Park, UT

Within 5 miles, there are

- 869 claims within 5 miles
- 864 Claims within 5 miles Staked Since Jan. 2003

Top 10 claimants within 5 miles

Company/Individual	Claims
Energy Fuels Resources Corp	396
Kee Nez Resources Llc ☠	196
Utah Energy Corp	179
Anchor Minerals Inc	30
North Exploration LLC	17
Gerald B Powell	8
Utah Rock Inc	8
Steven T Powell	6
Robert G Young ☠	6
Robert P Kirgan ☠	6

☠ Company/individual with uranium interests

Click on an X to identify the mine, its owner, and zoom to that mine.

Click on a + to identify the ownership of claims, plans, and notices.

A mining claim gives a company or individual the right to mine metals on public land. Claims may become large, destructive mines. Companies can stake claims for as little as \$1 per acre.

LEGEND

- ✕ mines
- + claims
- ▲ plans
- ▼ notices
- park boundary
- 5 mile outside boundary
- ☠ claim with uranium interest

Source: Uranium claims and companies/individuals with uranium interests were identified through BLM records and other public documents.

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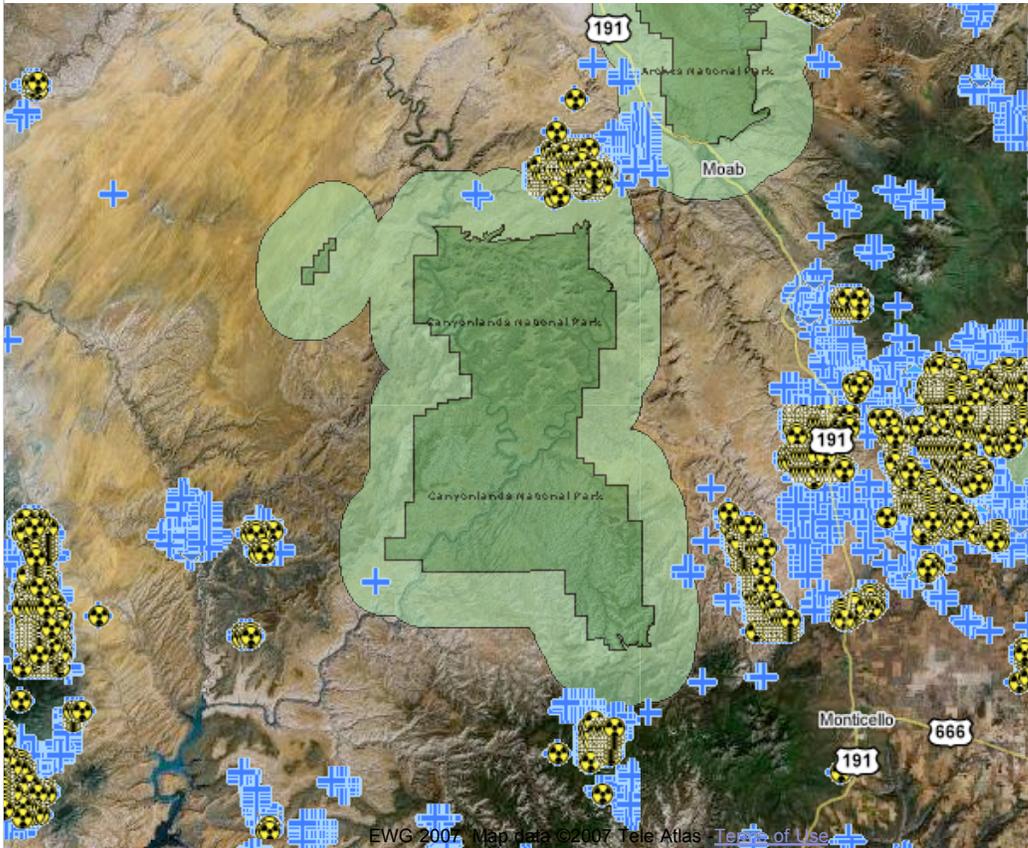
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zoom to treasure

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233 Mining Claims within 5 Miles of Canyonlands National Park



Canyonlands National Park, UT

Within 5 miles, there are

- 233 claims within 5 miles
- 233 Claims within 5 miles Staked Since Jan. 2003

Top 10 claimants within 5 miles

	Claims
Kee Nez Resources Llc	218
Steve Lacy	4
David Lacy	3
Geoplora Corp	3
Chance Shumway	2
D Glade Young	2
Mike Lacy	1

Company/individual with uranium interests

Click on an X to identify the mine, its owner, and zoom to that mine.

Click on a + to identify the ownership of claims, plans, and notices.

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LEGEND

- mines
- claims
- plans
- notices
- park boundary
- 5 mile outside boundary
- claim with uranium interest

Source: Uranium claims and companies/individuals with uranium interests were identified through BLM records and other public documents.

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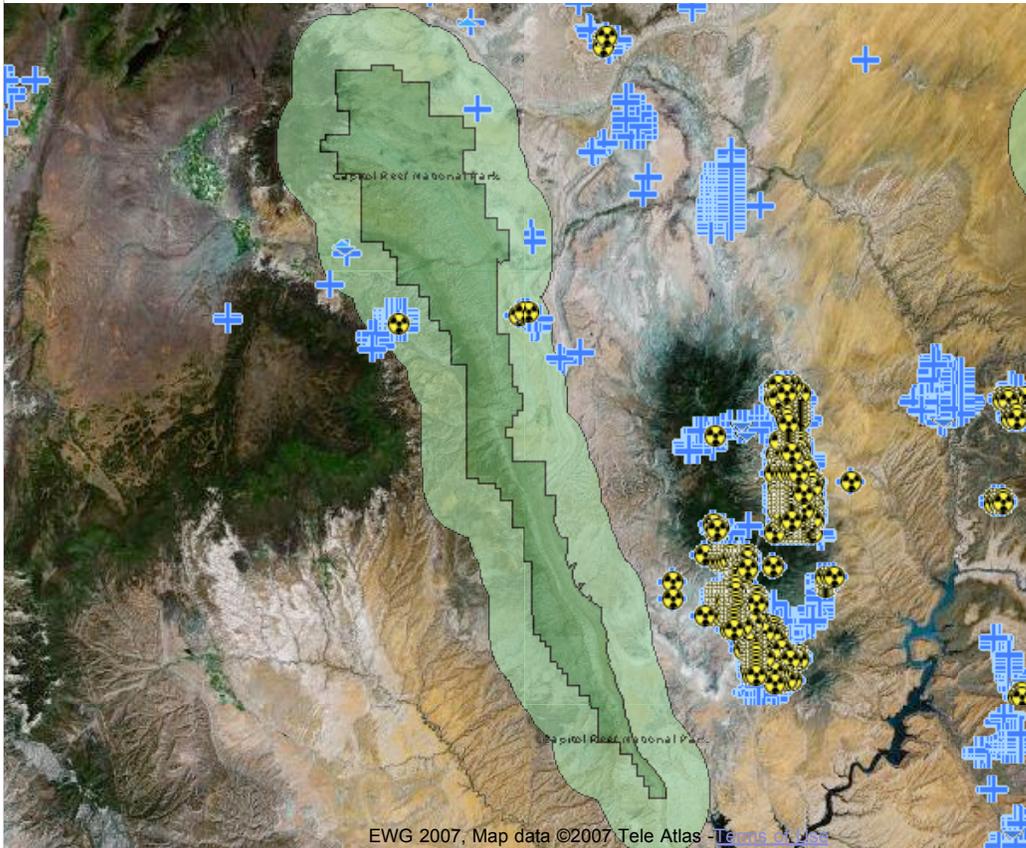
zoom to state

zoom to treasure

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161 Mining Claims within 5 Miles of Capitol Reef National Park



Capitol Reef National Park, UT

Within 5 miles, there are

- 161 claims within 5 miles
- 151 Claims within 5 miles Staked Since Jan. 2003

Top 10 claimants within 5 miles

	Claims
Hanson Industries Inc	122
Garfield Resources I Llc	9
Jack Day	8
Bob Shupe	8
Allene O Haws	7
Ore	6
Burla S Chappell	5
Wendell H Chappell	5
American Stone Inc	2
Lewis J Mitcham	1

Company/individual with uranium interests

Click on an X to identify the mine, its owner, and zoom to that mine.

Click on a + to identify the ownership of claims, plans, and notices.

A mining claim gives a company or individual the right to mine metals on public land. Claims may become large, destructive mines. Companies can stake claims for as little as \$1 per acre.

LEGEND

- mines
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- plans
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- park boundary
- 5 mile outside boundary
- claim with uranium interest

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Mining Law Threatens Grand Canyon, other Natural Treasures

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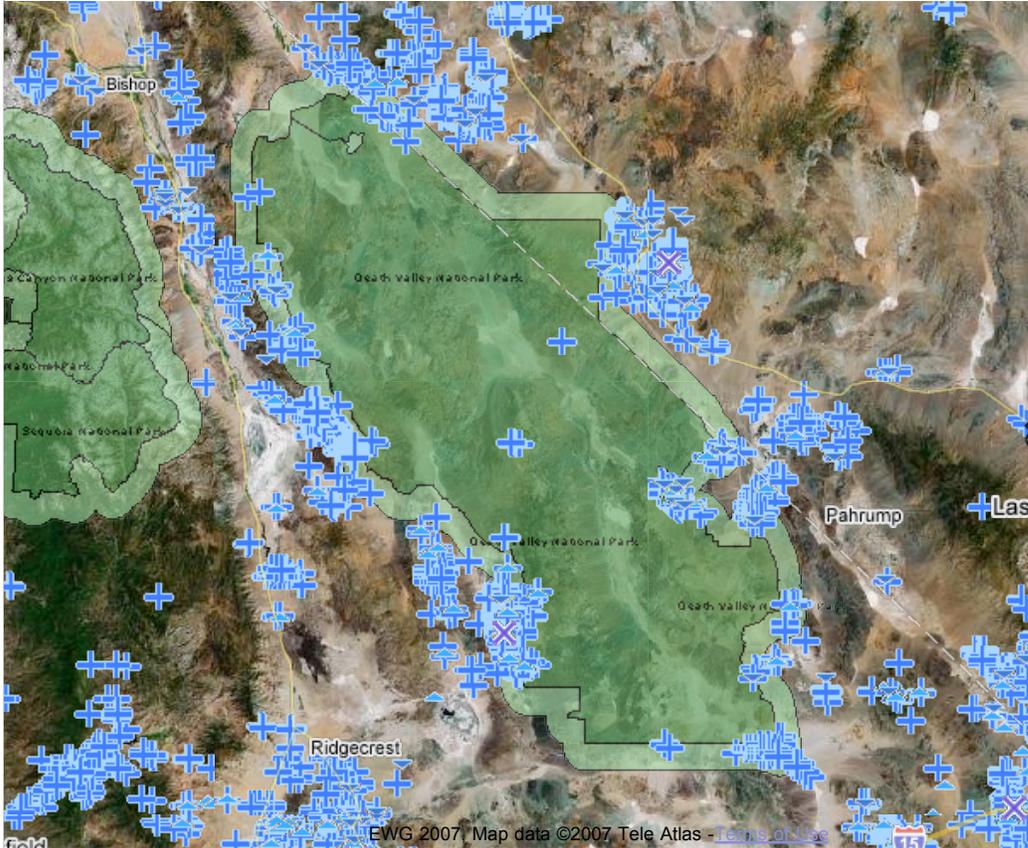
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1,693 Mining Claims within 5 Miles of Death Valley National Park



Death Valley National Park, CA and NV

Within 5 miles, there are

- 1,693 claims within 5 miles
- 503 Claims within 5 miles Staked Since Jan. 2003

Top 10 claimants within 5 miles

	Claims
Rio Tinto Limited	237
Canyon Resources Co	231
Barrick Gold Corporation	137
Bronco Resources	134
Ert Steven J Van	93
WB & Ratcliff	66
Charles Mott	66
Art Glover	63
John Swallow	63
Keystone Mining Co	56

Company/individual with uranium interests

Click on an X to identify the mine, its owner, and zoom to that mine.

Click on a + to identify the ownership of claims, plans, and notices.

A mining claim gives a company or individual the right to mine metals on public land. Claims may become large, destructive mines. Companies can stake claims for as little as \$1 per acre.

LEGEND

- mines
- claims
- plans
- notices
- park boundary
- 5 mile outside boundary
- claim with uranium interest

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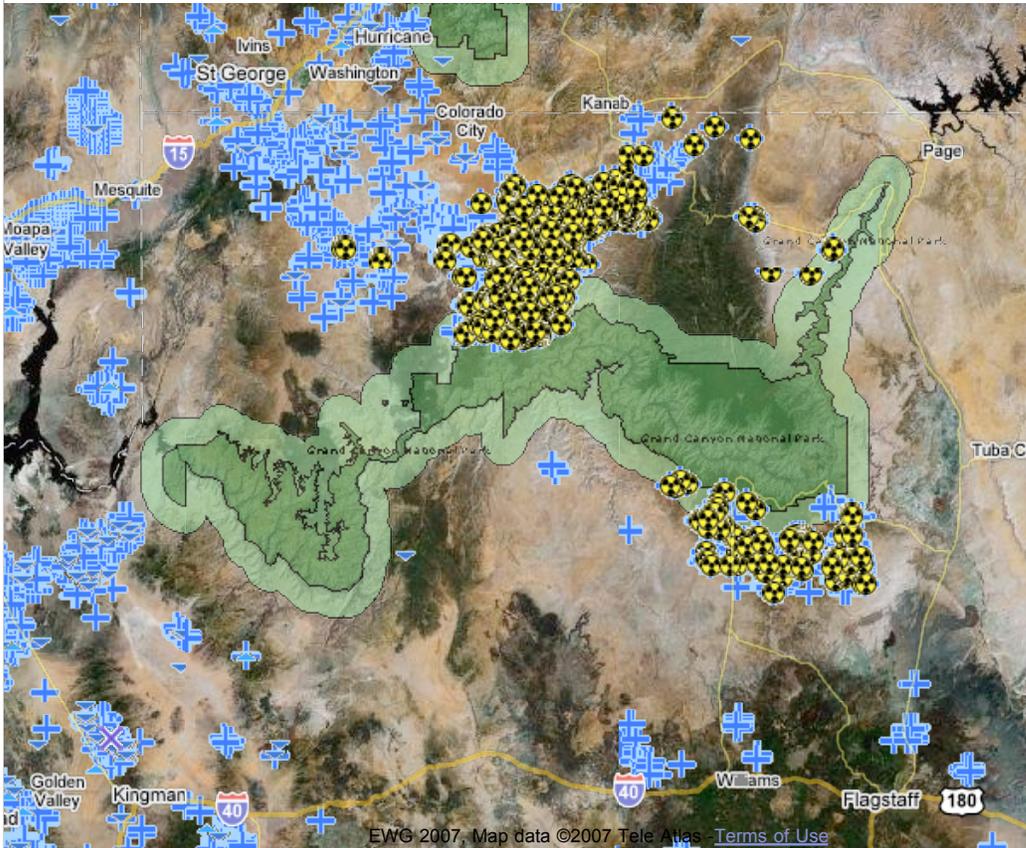
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815 Mining Claims within 5 Miles of Grand Canyon National Park



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LEGEND

- × mines
- + claims
- ▲ plans
- ▼ notices
- park boundary
- 5 mile outside boundary
- ☢ claim with uranium interest

Grand Canyon National Park, AZ

Within 5 miles, there are

- 815 claims within 5 miles
- 805 Claims within 5 miles Staked Since Jan. 2003

Top 10 claimants within 5 miles

Claimant	Claims
Patrick Hillard ☢	248
Patrick Hillard ☢	178
Liberty Star Gold Corp	88
Dir Exploration Inc ☢	63
Energy Metals Corp ☢	61
High Plains Uranium Inc ☢	42
Liberty Star Gold Corp	35
North Exploration LLC	19
George McCormick	18
Cliff Phillips	16

☢ Company/individual with uranium interests

Click on an X to identify the mine, its owner, and zoom to that mine.

Click on a + to identify the ownership of claims, plans, and notices.

A mining claim gives a company or individual the right to mine metals on public land. Claims may become large, destructive mines. Companies can stake claims for as little as \$1 per acre.

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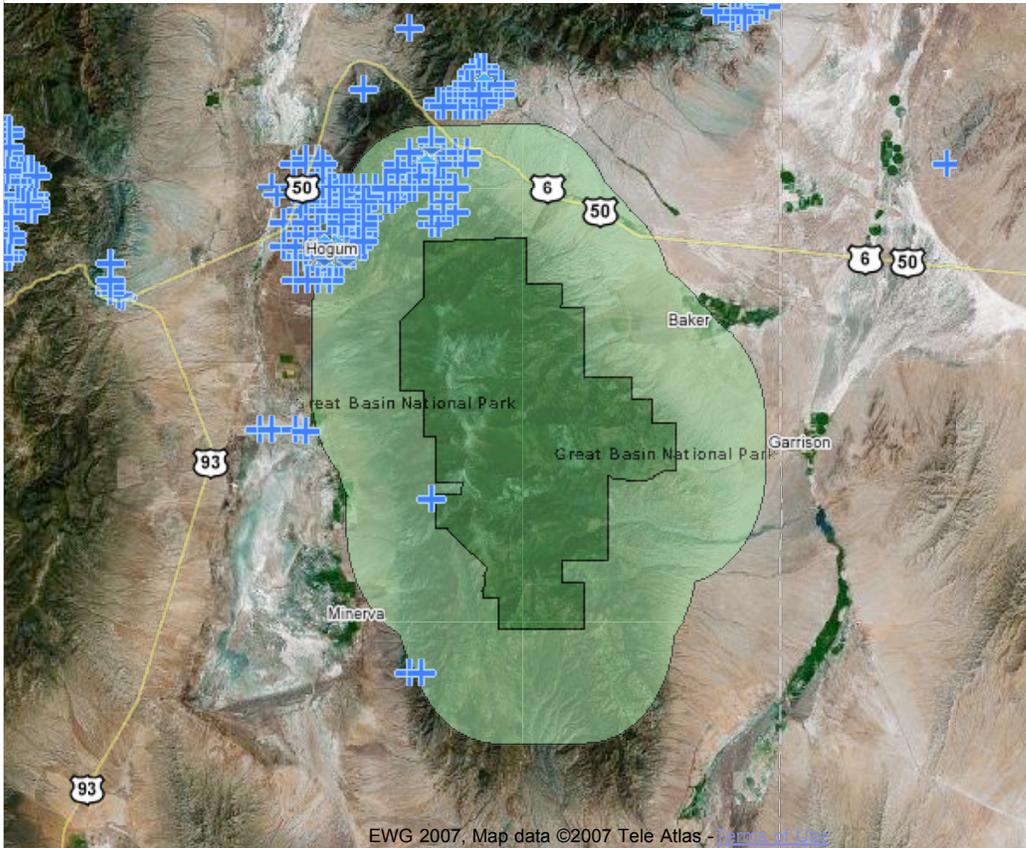
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zoom to treasure

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154 Mining Claims within 5 Miles of Great Basin National Park



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Great Basin National Park, NV

Within 5 miles, there are

- 154 claims within 5 miles
- 18 Claims within 5 miles Staked Since Jan. 2003

Top 10 claimants within 5 miles

Claimant	Claims
Cardigan-west Resources	34
Banner Development Corporation	12
Richard Burgess	11
Vernon Bosshardt	10
Lynn Hansen	8
Alan Hansen	8
Brian Tilford	8
Dave Tilford	7
Phil Salisbury	7
RBH Co Trust	7

Company/individual with uranium interests

Click on an X to identify the mine, its owner, and zoom to that mine.

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- park boundary
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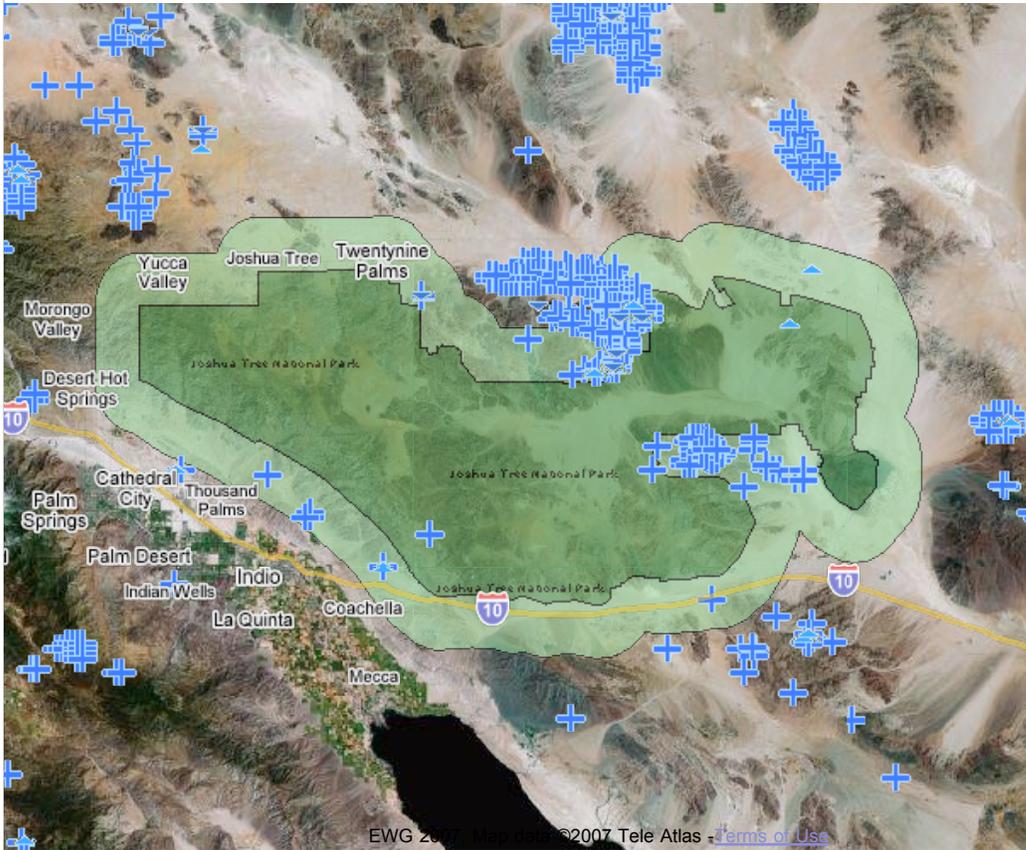
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zoom to treasure

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409 Mining Claims within 5 Miles of Joshua Tree National Park



Joshua Tree National Park, CA

Within 5 miles, there are

- 409 claims within 5 miles
- 117 Claims within 5 miles Staked Since Jan. 2003

Top 10 claimants within 5 miles

Company/Individual	Claims
Kaiser Eagle Mtn Inc	185
Mex-kota LLC	75
Bullion River Gold Corp	71
TKM Corp	26
Paula J Helit	13
A-Able Plumbing Inc	12
Adrian Helit	12
Melvin Helit	12
Michael S Helit	12
Paul B Helit	12

Company/individual with uranium interests

Click on an X to identify the mine, its owner, and zoom to that mine.

Click on a + to identify the ownership of claims, plans, and notices.

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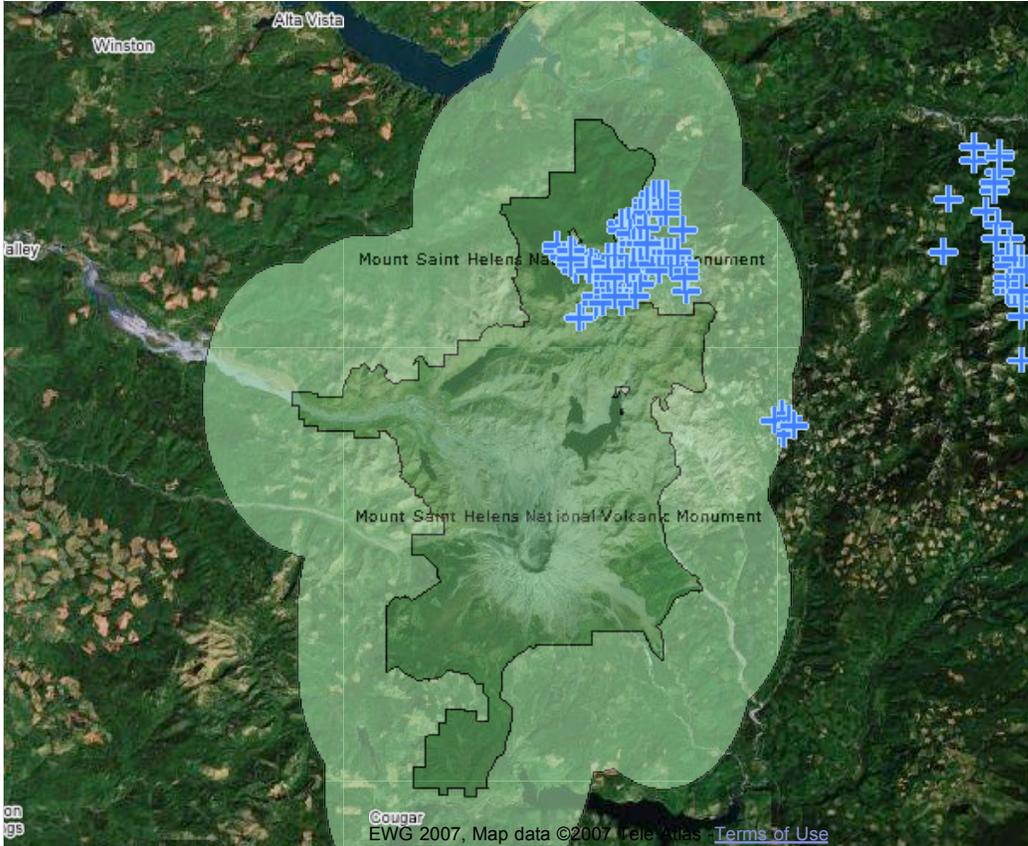
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204 Mining Claims within 5 Miles of Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument



Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument., WA

Within 5 miles, there are

- 204 claims within 5 miles
- 105 Claims within 5 miles Staked Since Jan. 2003

Top 10 claimants within 5 miles

	Claims
Idaho General Mines Inc	105
Mt St Helens Mining	90
Paul Mattila	7
Michael L Silva	2
Norma Byers	1

Company/individual with uranium interests

Click on an X to identify the mine, its owner, and zoom to that mine.

Click on a + to identify the ownership of claims, plans, and notices.

A mining claim gives a company or individual the right to mine metals on public land. Claims may become large, destructive mines. Companies can stake claims for as little as \$1 per acre.

LEGEND

- mines
- claims
- plans
- notices
- park boundary
- 5 mile outside boundary
- claim with uranium interest

Source: Uranium claims and companies/individuals with uranium interests were identified through BLM records and other public documents.

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zoom to state

zoom to treasure

[link to this map](#)



21 Mining Claims within 5 Miles of Yellowstone National Park



Yellowstone National Park, ID, MT, WY

Within 5 miles, there are

- 21 claims within 5 miles
- 1 Claims within 5 miles Staked Since Jan. 2003

Top 10 claimants within 5 miles

Claimant	Claims
David W Depuy ☠	15
Shirley M Depuy ☠	15
Donald Floberg ☠	12
Dorothy R Payne ☠	12
Robert Payne ☠	12
Marilyn Floberg	7
Roy B Marchington	3
William E Marchington	1
Marie M Slanger	1
Robert R Marchington	1

☠ Company/individual with uranium interests

Click on an X to identify the mine, its owner, and zoom to that mine.

Click on a + to identify the ownership of claims, plans, and notices.

A mining claim gives a company or individual the right to mine metals on public land. Claims may become large, destructive mines. Companies can stake claims for as little as \$1 per acre.

LEGEND

- ✕ mines
- + claims
- ▲ plans
- ▼ notices
- park boundary
- 5 mile outside boundary
- ☠ claim with uranium interest

Source: Uranium claims and companies/individuals with uranium interests were identified through BLM records and other public documents.

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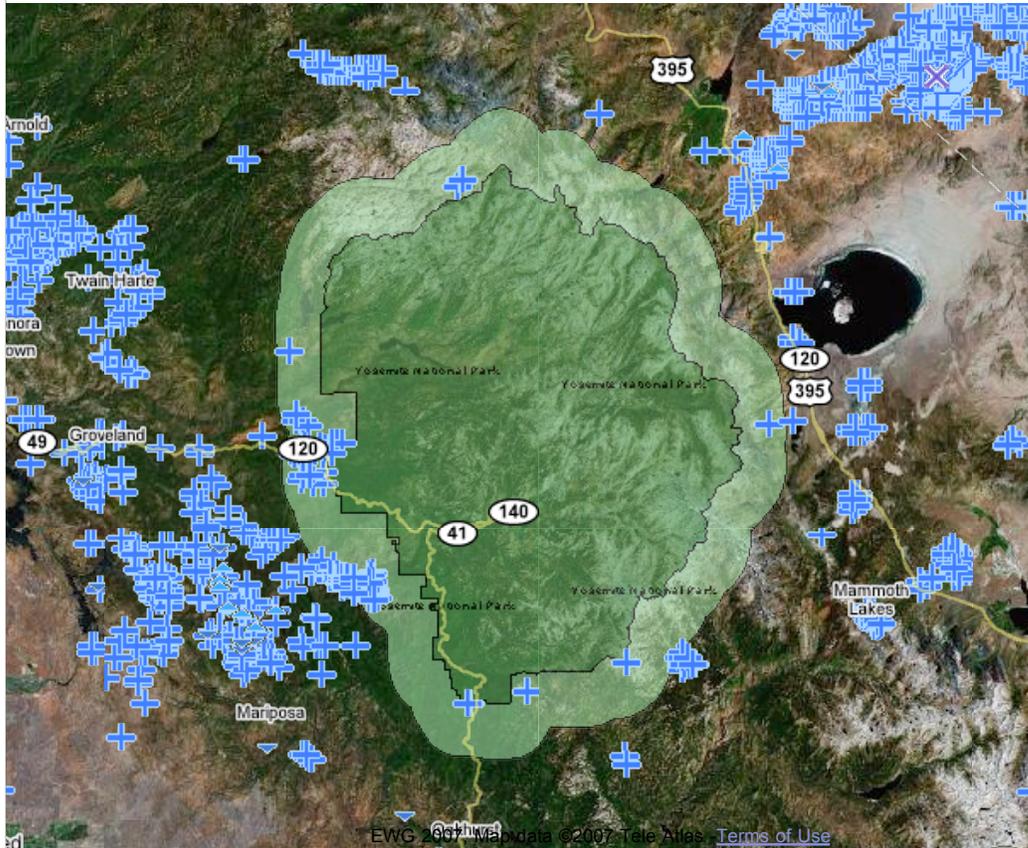
zoom to state

zoom to treasure

[link to this map](#)



83 Mining Claims within 5 Miles of Yosemite National Park



Yosemite National Park, CA

Within 5 miles, there are

- 83 claims within 5 miles
- 50 Claims within 5 miles Staked Since Jan. 2003

Top 10 claimants within 5 miles

	Claims
Troy Mining Corp	28
Roy Anderson	15
Elizabeth J Garner	10
Stiers Living Trust	10
Bruce Whittle	10
Donald R Whittle	10
Raymond L Whittle	10
Orrin K & Helen Airola Trust	7
Anthony M Roggero Jr	3
James Stiggins Jr	2

Company/individual with uranium interests

Click on an X to identify the mine, its owner, and zoom to that mine.

Click on a + to identify the ownership of claims, plans, and notices.

A mining claim gives a company or individual the right to mine metals on public land. Claims may become large, destructive mines. Companies can stake claims for as little as \$1 per acre.

LEGEND

- mines
- claims
- plans
- notices
- park boundary
- 5 mile outside boundary
- claim with uranium interest

Source: Uranium claims and companies/individuals with uranium interests were identified through BLM records and other public documents.

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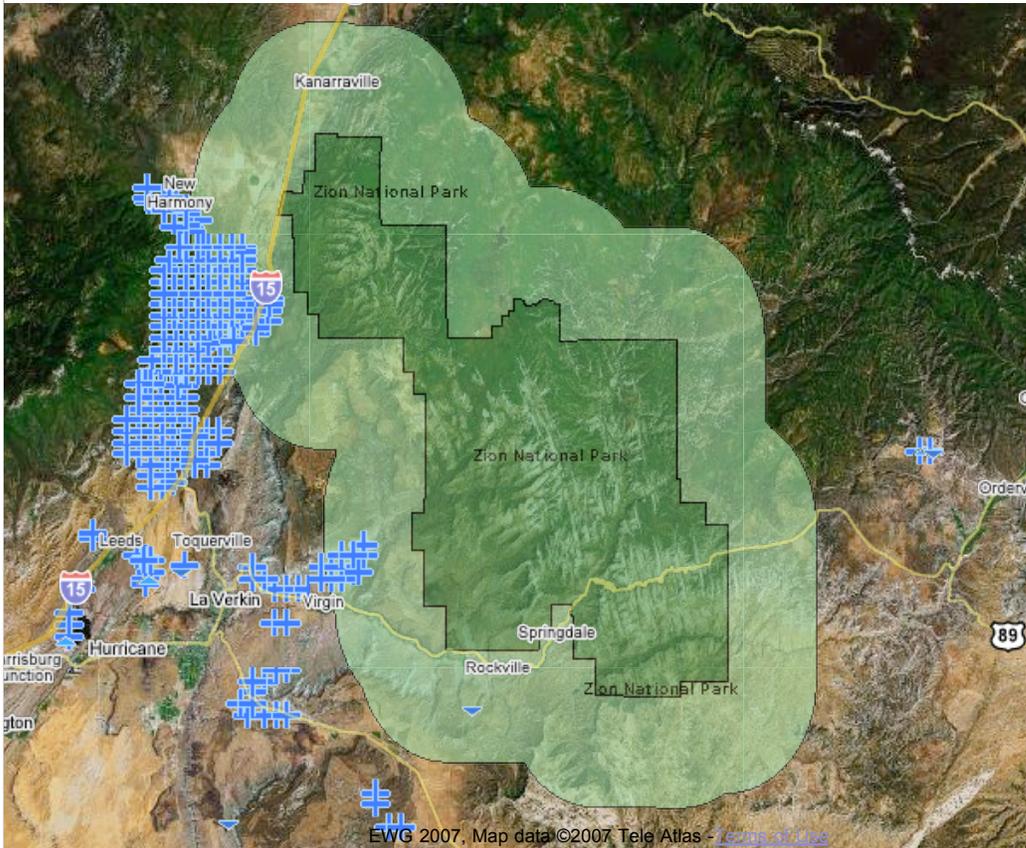
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Mining Law Threatens Grand Canyon, other Natural Treasures



66 Mining Claims within 5 Miles of Zion National Park



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LEGEND

- X mines
- + claims
- ▲ plans
- ▼ notices
- park boundary
- 5 mile outside boundary
- ☠ claim with uranium interest

Source: Uranium claims and companies/individuals with uranium interests were identified through BLM records and other public documents.

Zion National Park, UT

Within 5 miles, there are

- 66 claims within 5 miles
- 54 Claims within 5 miles Staked Since Jan. 2003

Top 10 claimants within 5 miles

Claimant	Claims
Christopher W Edwards	50
Will Adams	50
Tab Holdings Corp	45
J W King Corp	45
Holland 13 LLC	34
Wc Holding LLC	30
Patty & Bampy LLC	19
Christopher & Tigger LLC	19
Freedom Warriors LLC	18
Kathvleen Edwards	17

☠ Company/individual with uranium interests

Click on an X to identify the mine, its owner, and zoom to that mine.

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A mining claim gives a company or individual the right to mine metals on public land. Claims may become large, destructive mines. Companies can stake claims for as little as \$1 per acre.

