



**MWD**

*METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA*

March 25, 2008

The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne  
Secretary of the Interior  
United States Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Kempthorne:

Uranium Exploration in the Colorado River Basin

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) is a regional public agency and is the primary wholesale provider of supplemental water to Southern California. Metropolitan supplies water from the Colorado River, through our Colorado River Aqueduct, and from Northern California, through the California State Water Project, to over 18 million people within our 5,200 square-mile service area. We are committed to providing high quality drinking water to our customers.

Metropolitan recently became aware of a significant increase in uranium mining claims in the Grand Canyon National Park area, as well as throughout a number of Western states. This increased interest and potential for mining of uranium in areas near the Colorado River and its tributaries may be cause for concern. Metropolitan relies on high quality Colorado River supplies and any activity that may threaten the quality of that supply is a critical issue for our organization.

We understand the need for energy exploration and the important economic benefits that may be realized from mining these resources. If adequate controls are not in place, however, mining activities could have the potential of contaminating drinking water sources. Uranium is a regulated radioactive constituent with significant health concerns associated with it. In addition to the public health impacts, exploration and mining of radioactive material near a drinking water source may impact the public's confidence in the safety and reliability of the water supply.

Metropolitan has been actively involved in advocating for the remediation of the 16 million-ton pile of uranium mill tailings near Moab, Utah. The results of previous mining activities in this area have led to this large waste pile approximately 750 feet from the Colorado River, with cleanup efforts projected to take decades and cost several hundreds of millions of dollars. It is

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our hope that a similar threat does not result from future uranium mining activities in the Colorado River Basin.

We respectfully request any federal authorization of mineral exploration or mining in areas near the Colorado River or its tributaries to be contingent on a comprehensive environmental impact analysis, including identification of specific measures taken for source water protection, with full public review from all affected stakeholders, including Metropolitan. We strongly believe that all efforts possible should be made to ensure that the public's drinking water sources are safeguarded. We know that the protection of the Colorado River is as important an issue to you as it is to Metropolitan. Please exercise your full authority over mining claims in the Colorado River Basin to prevent any potential for deterioration of this important water supply for millions of people.

Should you have any questions regarding Metropolitan or our concerns, please contact me at (213) 217-6211. Thank you very much for your attention to this important issue.

Very truly yours,



Jeffrey Kightlinger  
General Manager

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cc: The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Governor of Arizona  
The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor of California  
The Honorable Jim Gibbons, Governor of Nevada  
The Honorable Barbara Boxer, United States Senator  
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, United States Senator  
The Honorable Raul Grijalva, U. S. House of Representatives  
The Honorable Jim Matheson, U. S. House of Representatives  
The Honorable Grace Napolitano, U. S. House of Representatives

Patricia Mulroy, General Manager  
Southern Nevada Water Authority

Herb Guenther, Director  
Arizona Department of Water Resources

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Gail Kimbell, Chief  
United States Forest Service

Jim Caswell, Director  
United States Bureau of Land Management