



## Your Winter Report

# ‘Yes, we canyon!’ Welcoming a new national monument

By Ellen Montgomery, director of our national public lands campaigns

With the stroke of a pen, last August the president established a new national monument on the threatened land surrounding Grand Canyon National Park, permanently making this land off-limits to mining. This action protects about 900,000 acres of land from pollution.

We’re celebrating thanks to supporters like you who told President Biden that uranium mining doesn’t belong anywhere near this natural wonder.

## You never forget your first visit to the Grand Canyon

No matter where you live, or how long ago you visited, you never forget your first glimpse of the Grand Canyon’s majestic walls; the deep hues of red, orange, yellow and green that shift by the hour; and the seemingly unfathomable distances from the rim to the canyon floor.

The Grand Canyon isn’t just a wondrous beauty for visitors, it’s also critical for wildlife. The park’s 1,900 square miles and the surrounding area serve as an ecological refuge for many threatened and endangered species such as the California condor, the Mexican spotted owl and the little brown bat.

The Grand Canyon is too important to destroy with toxic mining. More than 600 uranium mining claims surrounding the park, some as close as 10 miles from the park boundary,



Staff collect photo petitions at the Grand Canyon in support of its permanent protection from toxic uranium mining.

threatened to contaminate the greater Grand Canyon area with radioactive pollution.

New mining would have brought in heavy equipment to dig massive pits or pump chemicals into the groundwater. That groundwater feeds a river that supplies drinking water to 40 million Americans. Any one of the operations could leak radioactive materials into groundwater, or pollute the air with radioactive dust, threatening local residents, park visitors, as well as wildlife—from bald eagles and bighorn sheep to Gila monsters and desert tortoises.

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Photo credits: Staff. Top photo: Pat Tr via Shutterstock



Thanks  
for making it  
all possible

## Michigan commits to 100% clean electricity by 2040

Michigan now joins 11 other states with commitments to 100% clean or renewable electricity. The Michigan Legislature passed a package of bills that sets a statewide requirement for utilities to get all of their electricity from carbon-free sources by 2040 and invest in energy efficiency.

With the Clean Energy Future bills (Senate Bills 271, 273 and 502), Michigan will

tic mailing envelopes is welcome news. Most plastic is landfilled, burned in incinerators, or broken into small pieces in the environment, rather than being recycled. Plastics have been found in nearly every corner of the globe, as well as in human bodies, potentially with harmful impacts.

Amazon is changing its practices after Environment Michigan worked with PIRG and other allies to call on the company to reduce its single-use plastic packaging. Similar actions also have resulted in 1 in every 3 Americans living in a state with a ban of at least one type of single-use plastic.

Thanks to your action and support, we'll continue to urge companies to reduce wasteful plastic packaging.

## Michigan adopts nation's strongest plan to get the lead out of schools' water

By requiring the installation of water stations with filters certified to remove lead, new legislation signed in October gives Michigan the strongest policy in the nation, according to Environment America Research & Policy Center's "Get The Lead Out" report.

Across the nation, lead contamination of schools' water is widespread, and Michigan is no exception. Lead was found in the water at 89% of Michigan school and child care buildings tested from 2020 to 2022, according to an analysis by Safe Water Engineering.

"Our kids need safe drinking water when they go to school to learn and play each day. It's time to get the lead out," said John Rumpfer, director of our national clean water campaign.

"By preventing contamination at every tap, the Michigan 'Filter First' bills are much more effective than other state laws, which only fix outlets after lead is detected above a certain level. Public health experts note that there is no safe level of lead. We commend Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the state legislature for their bold leadership on this issue."

codify a number of crucial clean energy goals and actions, including setting a 100% clean electricity standard by 2040, requiring utilities to get 15% of their electricity from renewable energy sources—such as wind or solar—through 2029, and raising caps on distributed energy sources such as rooftop solar.

"Michigan is joining the ranks of states leading the charge toward a future powered entirely by clean, renewable energy. With Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signing these important bills into law, Michigan solidifies its place as a regional and national clean energy leader," said Johanna Neumann, senior director of our national Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy.

"Commitments such as Michigan's are expanding the realm of clean energy possibilities, and time is of the essence. The sooner we power our lives with renewable energy, the sooner our kids will have cleaner air and a healthier climate."

## Victory: Amazon announces end of plastic-padded shipping bags

In July 2023, Amazon announced that it is "phasing out padded bags containing plastics in favor of recyclable alternatives."

The eventual end of the blue and white plas-

Tim O'Connor



Johanna Neumann, senior director of our national Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy, tours a warehouse rooftop with solar panels. Our latest Renewables on the Rise dashboard showed that renewable energy has tripled in the U.S. over the past decade.



## Toward a greener future

Support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future by including a gift to Environment Michigan or Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center in your will, trust or retirement accounts.

For more information call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: [PlannedGiving@EnvironmentMichigan.org](mailto:PlannedGiving@EnvironmentMichigan.org)

Get more updates on our work online at <https://environmentmichigan.org>.



Deep Desert Photography via Shutterstock

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**‘Yes, we canyon!’**

For countless ecological, historical and cultural reasons, the Grand Canyon is too precious to risk the pollution that mining brings.

**A decade of advocacy and action**

For more than a decade, Environment Michigan and our national network has worked with coalition partners to protect it permanently from mining and other polluting and extractive activities.

Back in 2012, we helped win a 20-year moratorium on new uranium mining claims surrounding the park. A decade later, we joined the Grand Canyon Tribal Coalition to call on President Biden to establish a national monument on these threatened lands.

We were up against opposition from the mining industry—but we were successful in making the case for permanent protection.

Our research documented the risks of uranium mining, including contaminated water,

airborne uranium dust and toxic chemicals.

Our organizers helped win the support of key constituencies and earned coverage in local and national news outlets.

Our national network delivered more than 29,000 petition signatures last summer, many from members like you, opposing uranium mining in the Grand Canyon to the Biden administration. And our staff testified in Flagstaff, Arizona, to make the case for no new mining.

Thanks to President Biden and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland for designating the Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni—Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument. Congratulations to the tribes, our conservation community allies, outdoor business leaders and more who came together to help keep the Grand Canyon safe from dirty and dangerous uranium mining forever. And it's support from members and other environmentalists like you that allows us to defend our most special places from destruction.

*Our staff testified in Flagstaff, Arizona, to make the case for no new mining.*



Staff

**Featured staff**



CAISSA

Wendy Wendlandt  
President, Environment  
America

As president of Environment America, Wendy is a leading voice for the environment in the United States. She has been quoted in major national, state and local news outlets for nearly 40 years on issues ranging from air pollution to green investing. She is also a senior vice president with The Public Interest Network. She is a founding board member of Green Corps, the field school for environmental organizers, and Green Century Funds, the nation's first family of fossil fuel free mutual funds. Wendy started with WashPIRG, where she led campaigns to create Washington state's model toxic waste cleanup program and to stop the nation's first high-level nuclear waste dump site. She is a 1983 graduate of Whitman College. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and dog and hikes wherever and whenever she can.



Environment Michigan and The Public Interest Network are celebrating 50 years of action for a change.



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# Environment Michigan

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## Your 2024 Winter Report

### Our mission:

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Michigan, Inc., a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus on protecting Michigan's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

### Three surprising facts about bees

Most bees in the U.S. live very different lives than you may have heard. Here are three facts about wild bees that might surprise you:

- 1. **They don't all hail the queen.** European honeybees may be headed by a queen bee, but they're more the exception than the rule—more than 75% of all bee species are solitary and don't have a queen.
- 2. **They don't all make honey.** Bumblebees can make small batches of a honey-like

substance, and the cellophane bee brews a beer-like beverage from fermented pollen and agave nectar, but no wild bee produces the kind of honey that we eat.

- 3. **They face extinction.** Wild bees may be wildly diverse, but they all deal with the same threats: climate change, habitat loss and the widespread use of bee-killing pesticides.

And here's one more fact: Your support of Environment Michigan gives our team of researchers, advocates and organizers the resources we need to win protections for all bees.

Together, we're calling on major corporations to stop selling bee-killing pesticides, urging lawmakers to expand bee-friendly habitat, and providing the public with tips and guides to help us all do our part to make the world a little more welcoming to bees.

*Learn more fun facts about bees and how you can take action to save the bees on our website.*



Dave Angelini