

Protect communities and water by promoting responsible uranium mining

Support HOUSE BILL 08-1161

Sponsors: Rep. John Kefalas (D-Ft. Collins), Rep. Randy Fischer (D-Ft. Collins), Sen. Steve Johnson (R-Ft. Collins) and Sen. Bacon (D-Ft. Collins)

Hang onto your cowboy hats, the mining boom is back!

With the nation's third largest uranium reserves, price spikes have led to the staking of hundreds of new uranium mining claims across Colorado, affecting lands adjacent to farms and ranches on the Eastern Plains as well as the sportsmen and tourist centers in the Colorado River headwaters and the Dolores River Basin. The uranium rush threatens to pollute our rivers, streams, and groundwater with radioactive toxics and could harm local economies and hurt the quality of life for rural Coloradans. We need strong protections for our communities and water to ensure that mining companies "do it right."

Threats of uranium mining

- A Canadian-based company is proposing the Centennial Mine, an injection or "in-situ" uranium mining operation which would deliberately pump and contaminate the Laramie-Foxhills aquifer with chemicals designed to force or "leach" out uranium and toxic heavy metals from underground. Injection uranium mining projects regularly increase radioactive toxics and heavy metals into groundwater such as arsenic, selenium, radium, uranium, molybdenum, and vanadium. These pollutants are known to harm human health, wildlife, livestock, and agriculture. The Laramie-Fox Hills aquifer is part of the Denver Basin, stretching around the Front Range from Golden to Greeley to Colorado Springs.
- Colorado's experience with injection uranium mining near Grover in Weld County showed dramatically increased radioactive contamination to over 15 times its original and safe pre-mining condition. Currently, "in-situ" uranium mines are being considered or proposed in Weld, Fremont, Grand, Moffat, and Teller counties.
- According to an investigative report in the *Corpus Christi Caller Times*, of 32 injection uranium mining projects in Texas, no project successfully restored the water quality of underground aquifers back to pre-mining conditions.
- In 2007, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission stated that injection uranium mining tends to contaminate groundwater, leaving behind toxics and toxic metals such as arsenic, selenium, radium, vanadium, and uranium – even after restoration projects have taken place.
- Open pit and underground uranium mining can mar landscapes and contaminate the environment. These uranium mines can leak chemicals such as aluminum, lead, selenium, uranium, and zinc in violation of water quality standards and pose threats to human health and wildlife.

About HOUSE BILL 08-1161

Protect groundwater

- Water is too precious a resource in Colorado to be exposed to irresponsible mining practices. We need to protect groundwater quality by setting reasonable standards that allow mining to take place but protect domestic and agricultural water resources. Mining companies should demonstrate and prove that they can restore the affected aquifers to their pre-mining conditions before permits are issued.

Protect our waterways, environment, and public health

- We need to close the loophole and ensure that all uranium mining is subject to environment and public health protections as "designated mining operations." These sensible protections were created in response to the Summitville mining disaster and can help ensure that uranium mining happens more responsibly.

For more information:

Jeff Parsons, Western Mining Action Project (303) 823-5738

Matt Garrington, Environment Colorado (303) 573-3871 ext. 310