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**From:** twilton [mailto:twilton@frontiernet.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 12, 2008 3:25 PM  
**To:** 'letters@lasvegassun.com'  
**Subject:** Letter Regarding "Stop Mining Giveaways" Article

Dear Sir,

I read with considerable interest your February 10, 2008 article entitled "Stop Mining Giveaways". While this article undoubtedly represents the views of the author and editorial staff of the Las Vegas Sun, to which you are appropriately entitled to present, there are some serious untruths in the article, and these must be corrected. I write this letter to you, not as a representative of Vane Minerals, because I have no affiliation with them, but I do write as a concerned citizen who feels that the true story must be told.

You state that Vane Minerals' permit to conduct exploratory drilling at several locations in the Kaibab National Forest in the vicinity of the South Rim of the Grand Canyon came "after no public hearing and no formal environmental assessment because the nation's 1872 mining law does not require them." This is just a plain false statement that there was no formal environmental assessment of Vane Minerals' project.

To support my statement that this is an untrue statement by the Las Vegas Sun one only needs to go to the "Decision Memo" issued by the Tusayan Ranger District of the Kaibab national Forest, which is a public document:

1. A full review of the impact of the proposed exploration program's potential impact upon Threatened or Endangered species [as specified by the Endangered Species Act] was carried out by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Potential impacts upon plant species were also assessed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. In all cases the possible impacts were found to be non-existent ;
2. US Forest Service biologists assessed the possible impacts of Vane's proposed exploration program upon US Forest Service designated "sensitive species". They determined that there were no known goshawk nest sites in the areas proposed for exploration;
3. Biologists studied habitat for various plant species in the proposed exploration areas, and these independent scientists determined that there are no occurrences of US Forest Service sensitive plant species in the areas of proposed activities;
4. Floodplains, wetlands and municipal watershed surveys were also conducted in the project areas. These surveys found no wetlands, perennial or intermittent streams in the project area or its vicinity. Further the project area was found not to be in any municipal watershed. "Groundwater" was found to be at a depth of 3,000 feet below the surface, at least 1,000 feet deeper than any proposed exploration drill holes;
5. Cultural resources surveys, in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, were conducted, and heritage clearances for the project were received in April, 2007 after completion and evaluation of the surveys.

Clearly there were extensive environmental surveys and evaluations conducted for the project, yet your newspaper stated that there were none, which is a just plain wrong statement by the Las Vegas Sun.

Your newspaper also indicated that there was no public involvement in the process of review of Vane's permit application. In spite of your newspaper's contention:

1. The US Forest Service held government-to-government consultation [by letter] with the Hopi Tribe, the Navajo Nation, the Havasupai Tribe, the Hualapai Tribe, the Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe;
2. The Forest Service also initiated public scoping with the Broadway-Gap, Cameron, Coalmine, Coppermine, Lechee, and To' Nanees' Dizi Chapter Houses of the Western Agency of the Navajo Nation;
3. Follow-up meetings were held with the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office, the Navajo Nation Heritage Protection Department and Traditional Cultural Protection directors, and held an inter-tribal consultation meeting;
4. The project proposal was provided to the public and other governmental agencies for scoping on March 15, 2007. Press releases were sent to various media outlets, and an article was published in the March 29, 2007 edition of the *Grand Canyon News*;
5. Other agencies and organizations that were contacted include:
  - a. Arizona Game and Fish Department;
  - b. Center for Biological Diversity;
  - c. Coconino County Board of Supervisors;
  - d. Williams-Grand Canyon News;
  - e. Grand Canyon National Park;
  - f. Wildlands Council;
  - g. KSGC Radio;
  - h. Arizona Department of Water Resources;
  - i. Babbitt Ranches; and
  - j. Forest Guardians.

It is quite clear that there extensive consultations took place with various components of the public, and there was ample opportunity for the general public to "have a voice" in the evaluation of Vane Minerals' exploration permit application, prior to the final decision on the application by the Kaibab National Forest – yet this is not what was stated in your article.

Contrary to the implication in your article mineral exploration and development activities in the United States are governed by a complex and far-reaching body of laws, rules and regulations. In addition to the General Mining Law [commonly referred to as the 1872 Mining Law] mining and exploration companies must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and a myriad of State and Federal rules and regulations. And it is also very clear that the Vane Minerals' permit was subjected to considerable environmental scrutiny and consideration by a State and Federal land and environmental managers. The US Forest Service also provided numerous opportunities for the general public and interested parties to provide input and commentary prior to the development of a final decision about the issuance of the permit that you wrote about in your article/opinion piece. This environmental review of the Vane permit application was undertaken over a period of 18 months, with ample scientific and public input, and this must be made clear.

I strongly urge the Las Vegas Sun to more thoroughly investigate the US Forest Service Decision Memo, as I am quite sure that you will find that my recitation of the facts outlined above presents the accurate description of the evaluation process, and your February 10 opinion article does not.

Sincerely,

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