

ROANOKE RIVER BASIN BI-STATE COMMISSION

A Resolution Advising the General Assemblies and Governors of the Commonwealth of Virginia and State of North Carolina on the Mining and Milling of Uranium in Virginia

WHEREAS, the Roanoke River Basin Bi-State Commission is a body created by legislation enacted by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the State of North Carolina, Virginia Code §62.1-69.37 and N.C.G.S. §77-91, in part to provide guidance, conduct joint meetings, and make recommendations to local, state and federal legislative and administrative bodies, and to others as it deems necessary and appropriate, regarding the use, stewardship, and enhancement of the Basin's water and other natural resources; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia has deposits of uranium in various regions, including deposits in the Roanoke River Basin such as the Coles Hill deposit, the mining of which has been prohibited by legislative moratorium since 1982 by an act of the Virginia General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, at the request of the Virginia Coal and Energy Commission, the National Academics of Sciences (NAS) has completed a study entitled *Uranium Mining in Virginia: Scientific, Technical, Environmental, Human Health and Safety, and Regulatory Aspects of Uranium Mining and Processing in Virginia* which, along with other reports sponsored by various interested parties, have explored the risks and benefits of uranium mining; and

WHEREAS, significant opposition to the mining and milling of uranium has been expressed by local governments, citizen organizations, and landowners in the Roanoke River Basin;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE ROANOKE RIVER BASIN BI-STATE COMMISSION RESOLVES TO ADVISE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLIES AND GOVERNORS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA AND THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA THAT:

1. Uranium mining and milling in Virginia has unique challenges associated with extreme natural events. The Commonwealth's climate and hydrology are major challenges to mining in the Virginia.
2. Virginia has experience regulating hard rock and coal mining, as well as monitoring electrical production at nuclear power plants, but the Commonwealth has no regulatory structure to address uranium mining and no experience with such operations. The federal agency with oversight responsibilities for uranium milling has little experience at locations with Virginia's climate and hydrology.
3. The long term risks of tailings disposal are poorly defined. An off-site release of radioactive compounds or heavy metals from the operation proposed at the Coles Hill site would negatively impact communities that rely on the Roanoke River Basin's water resources for potable water, tourism and agricultural production as well as basin's fisheries and wildlife. Such impacts are likely to be a combination of actual damages and public perception of contamination that could extend over a significant period of time.

THE ROANOKE RIVER BASIN BI-STATE COMMISSION FURTHER RESOLVES THAT:

These risks, as well as others highlighted in the NAS report and various other studies, support a conclusion that the prohibition on uranium mining in Virginia should remain and the Commission hereby states its opposition to elimination or modification of the existing legislative moratorium.

Adopted this the 27th day of August 2012.


Michael T. McEvoy, Chair


Larry Yarborough, Vice Chair

This resolution shall be transmitted to the General Assemblies and Governors of Virginia and North Carolina as well as the Virginia Coal and Energy Commission and its uranium study sub-committees.