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GOV. RITTER SIGNS URANIUM MINING BILL

Gov. Bill Ritter today signed into law a measure that will strengthen water-protection, reclamation and other requirements as the state experiences a resurgence of uranium mining.

House Bill 1161, called the "Land and Water Stewardship Act of 2008" by supporters, was sponsored by Reps. John Kefalas and Randy Fischer and Sens. Steve Johnson and Bob Bacon. It stems from a proposal by a Canadian-based company to begin *in situ* leach mining in Weld County. The process uses high-pressure water injection to extract uranium from the earth.

"This bill strikes a good balance," Gov. Ritter said. "It allows for *in situ* uranium leach mining while taking into consideration the need to protect both ground and surface water supplies. When it comes to natural resource issues, we're doing all we can strike that balance across the board. Colorado is rich in minerals and energy resources such as oil, natural gas and coal. But we also are rich in environmental resources such as clean water, incredible wildlife and rugged mountains. We must always strive to find just the right balance."

The legislation strengthens reclamation requirements and notification requirements to nearby landowners. Other elements of the legislation:

Requires that mining applicants not have any existing violations to the Colorado Mined Land Reclamation Act or analogous acts issued by other states or the federal government.

Requires a description of at least five such operations that demonstrate that the proposed operation will not contaminate groundwater outside the permit area.

Requires a baseline site characterization and monitoring plan.

Outlines the criteria for the Mined Land Reclamation Board to deny or revoke a permit for *in situ* leach uranium mining.

Defines all uranium mining operations, whether *in situ* leach or conventional, as Designated Mining Operations, and requires existing permitted conventional operations to develop Environmental Protection Plans and contingency plans for possible failures at their sites. Also expands oversight by the state Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety during construction. There are 32 permitted conventional operations in the state – three of which are in production.