MEMO: **F7-d**

TO: Larry D. Voyles, Director

FROM: Mike Senn, Assistant Director, Wildlife Management Division

PRESENTER: Josh Avey, Habitat Branch Chief

TITLE: Consideration of MOU to Establish Cooperating Agency Status for the Bureau of Land Management Uranium Withdrawal Environmental Impact Statement Process

DESCRIPTION: The Commission will be asked to approve an MOU with the Bureau of Land Management to allow the Department to participate as a Cooperating Agency during the NEPA compliance process. The Commission may vote to take action on, or provide the Department direction on, this item.

DATE: April 28, 2010

Summary:
On July 21, 2009, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar proposed a 20-year withdrawal of nearly 1 million acres of federal mineral estate in Northern Arizona from the location of new mining claims under the Mining Law of 1872. The proposed withdrawal was in response to increased interest in the region's uranium deposits and concern over potential impacts of uranium mining to the Grand Canyon Watershed. This proposed withdrawal is for three areas in northern Arizona, two on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered lands and one on Kaibab National Forest (KNF) administered lands. One of the BLM areas lies west of the Kaibab Plateau and the other one east of the Kaibab Plateau north of the Grand Canyon. The KNF land lies on the Tusayan Ranger District south of the Grand Canyon.

The Secretary's order segregated these lands from new mining claims for a two year period during which an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would be conducted. The Department has been invited to participate in this EIS process as a cooperating agency. To participate in this level, a new MOU needs to be approved.

Recommendation
The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT AND THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT TO ALLOW THE DEPARTMENT TO PARTICIPATE AS A COOPERATING AGENCY IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PROCESS REGARDING THE PROPOSED URANIUM WITHDRAWAL AND TO EXECUTE THE AGREEMENT AS ATTACHED OR AS RECOMMENDED AND APPROVED BY THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.**