Uranium mining in the Western United States in the last century created a shameful legacy in terms of human and environmental devastation....
The Piedmont Environmental Council
a 35-year-old non-profit organization 
dedicated to promoting and protecting the 
Piedmont’s rural economy, natural resources, 
history and beauty.

PEC principally serves a 
nine County area –
Albemarle, Madison, 
Greene, Orange, 
Rappahannock, Fauquier, 
Loudoun, Culpeper, and 
Clarke.

Uranium Moratorium

• There has been a moratorium on uranium mining in Virginia since 1982
• The moratorium was put into place so that the Virginia Coal and Energy Commission could study this type of mining and determine whether it should be allowed in Virginia
Commission Report

- In 1985 the commission delivered its report to the Virginia General Assembly
- The report concluded that Uranium mining could be allowed in Virginia with certain conditions; however, there was a strong dissent.
- The Virginia General Assembly never lifted the moratorium on uranium mining & milling.

Dissent

The experimental nature of the uranium industry in Virginia’s wet climate and the environmental problems from radioactive tailings disposal in the West have caused the General Assembly to be justifiably cautious in approving the industry. Legislation called for an assessment of risks and benefits. The US/UAG has had no actual experience to evaluate. French uranium is cited by the industry as similar, but no impacts data were produced on this situation. Rather, the UTF and US/UAG reports and conclusions about costs, benefits and risks of a uranium industry are based upon consultants predictions using mathematical models and other techniques to speculate about future effects of one mine and one mill…No estimates were made of impacts of a statewide industry.
"Water is perhaps the most significant means of dispersal of uranium and related [radioactive materials] in the environment from mines and mine wastes…Uranium is very soluble in acidic and alkaline waters and can be transported easily from a mine site."

EPA
In Situ Mining

- Injection of wells deep into Earth’s core pump leaching substance
- Leaching dissolves ore, which can be extracted & evaporated at a plant
- In Situ Mining is ONLY type of mining regulated by NRC
- Unlikely at Coles Hill

Underground Mining

- Ore brought to surface by elevators or trolley systems
- Ratio of waste to ore is much lower than in open pit mines because waste can be placed in mine.
Types of Mining
Open Pit

- Overburden, which is the leftover rock, soil, and waste, is piled near the excavation site

- Uranium ore is processed at the nearby plant
What is wrong with a study?

• SB 525 - poorly written, inadequately funded

• 1980s’ study - expensive, divisive, inadequate
  
  – Dissent
  • No actual experience evaluated
  • Based on speculation

• Kuiper’s Study
  – EIS wrong 19 out of 25 times
  – 76% failure rate
Colorado Experience

RESOLVED, that the Colorado Medical Society opposes the practice of in-situ and open pit mining of uranium due to the adverse health impact of radioactively contaminated water on our agriculture, livestock and civilian population....

In 2007, Colorado adopted House Bill 1161 that requires any prospective applicant for an in situ leach mine to demonstrate five successful mines under similar circumstances before a mining permit may be issued
Virginia should take no action to initiate or sanction a study of uranium mining until the proponents of mining provide reviewable information demonstrating that mining and milling have been undertaken in five places with climate, geology, and population density similar to Virginia and in such a manner as to safeguard the environment, natural and historic resources, agricultural lands, and the health and well-being of citizens of those communities.

- Only after such demonstration should the General Assembly initiate a study of whether uranium mining and milling, transportation, and mine and mill reclamation can be undertaken in a manner that will safeguard the Commonwealth’s environment, natural and historic resources, agricultural lands, and the health and well-being of its citizens.
Sacrificing the permanent, unique, and irreplaceable for the common and temporary?
“[U]ranium mining in the Western United States in the last century created a shameful legacy in terms of human and environmental devastation....”