

Dear Friend of Arkaroola,

The threat of exploration and mining is again about to strike the forty year old Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary - and we need your support to help save the Sanctuary from desecration.

On October 10 Marathon Resources mineral exploration lease is due for renewal, a situation we at Arkaroola feel is a major threat to this environmentally fragile and sensitive land.

We believe Marathon Resources' operations at Arkaroola have been disastrous so far:

- They've illegally buried 23,000 bags of low level radioactive, plus general waste at Mt Gee in the heart of Arkaroola.
- They also illegally buried another 20 x 200 litre drums of similar material in the stunning Yudnamutana Gorge a couple of kilometres from Paralana Hot Springs.
- They damaged a unique fluorite reef at the Mt Gee Geological Monument.
- Prior to this, their contractors stole 90,000 litres of Arkaroola's rainwater (which Marathon later replaced at our insistence).
- Their contractors' operations polluted Mt Gee with a numerous hydrocarbon spills.
- Their contractors widened tracks and drill-pads needlessly.
- Failure to follow safety procedures that resulted in loss of wildlife.

South Australian Premier Mike Rann described the company as "cowboys" before his Government indefinitely suspended their operations and the Department of Primary Industries demanded Marathon clean up these sites. They've done this and now are likely to soon receive a refund of their monetary Bond.

Now it's greatly feared that Marathon will have their exploration lease renewed in October and be allowed to resume high level exploration. They will likely have the expectation of being allowed to go on to mining uranium from the heartland of Arkaroola in due course.

That prospect is unthinkable. While Marathon would not be allowed to mine uranium by open-cut the only alternative would be by tunneling to Mt Gee where there could be at least two options either of which would cause devastating consequences to the land.

Whichever way the uranium was mined it would produce an enormous amount of waste and much would be radioactive. Vast amounts of earth and rock from the tunneling and mining would need to be dumped and stored in the surrounding countryside. Giant ventilation structures with huge, noisy extraction fans for the removal of radioactive radon gas, and escape shafts would need to be installed across the mountains with the subsequent tracks to maintain them.

Rehabilitation will be required, but in arid mountain ranges with irregular and low rainfall, rehabilitation does not guarantee regeneration..

Not all seed is viable, and much can be lost. Seeds need sustainable rains at the right time to grow and survive. Our parents saw this in the early 1970s when a succession of wet years finally saw the first regeneration of mulga and native pines in 80 years. Even in the best case scenario, how many decades after mining will the country require to return to anything like its current condition?

Marathon have already advised the Federal Department of Environment and Water that to run the mine and process the uranium will require 2 to 2.5 gigalitres of water per year – an average of 6 million litres of water per day!

We ask where is this water coming from? What is the cost to the plants and animals of this arid environment not just on Arkaroola, but Lake Frome, its mound springs and surrounding plains or indeed the Artesian Basin?

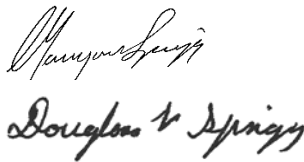
South Australia is a state rich in uranium, much of it in areas of far, far less environmental, cultural and scenic significance than the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary. Should Marathon's lease renewal even be considered?

We are asking for your support in our efforts to stop this from happening by writing to your local (or if living interstate the SA Premier – see below) or Federal Member of Parliament demanding that Exploration Lease 3258 never be re-issued – to Marathon Resources, or to any other company.

You may also think it worthwhile writing to your local newspaper, using talk-back radio, or any other means at your disposal to bring this issue to public prominence.

Your support would be greatly appreciated.

With our most sincere thanks,



Marg and Doug Sprigg  
Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary

24 August 2009

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