

# MOAB SUN NEWS

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## After a decade of delays, Utah moves forward with North Wash boat ramp improvements



The North Wash boat ramp area on the Colorado River, viewed from across the river. Photo by Peter Lefebvre.

After [more than a decade of delays](#), Utah is putting \$500,000 toward improvements at the North Wash boat ramp. Geotechnical engineering is underway, with construction expected to take approximately 35 days. The state is aiming to complete the work before spring runoff in early April.

For river guides, the news is overdue. Josh Panchision used to end Cataract Canyon trips at a boat ramp. Now the Moab-based Navtec Expeditions river manager says guides battle wind swells across Lake Powell “like you are in the rapids again,” adding an extra day and significant cost to every trip.

The North Wash boat ramp, located upstream of Hite Marina where the Dirty Devil River meets Lake Powell, serves as the primary take-out for commercial and private boaters running Cataract Canyon. As lake levels have dropped, the once-simple take-out has become an increasingly difficult challenge.

“The project team is aiming to finalize improvements on site before spring run-off,” said Carly Lansche, trails and planning program director for the [Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation](#).

Construction will focus on ramp improvements, though specific details of what will be built have not been released.

The \$500,000 was allocated by the Utah Outdoor Adventure Commission. The project is being championed by the Division of Outdoor Recreation and the Public Lands Policy Coordination Office, in partnership with the Utah Guides and Outfitters Association. State officials are coordinating with [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#) to ensure work continues even if a federal government shutdown occurs.

### **The squeeze on outfitters**

For river companies running Cataract Canyon, the deteriorating ramp conditions have become a major operational burden.

“Up to an extra full day is required to get a standard raft package across the lake, along with the additional logistical cost,” Panchision said. “It makes things considerably more complicated and expensive to make a living.”

The physical toll is real too. “Overall, it definitely takes a toll physically and psychologically,” he said. “I think all the companies have been feeling the squeeze and are keeping close tabs on what solutions are coming down the pipeline.”

### **Why the ramp keeps moving**

The challenge is not just the ramp itself — it is a river that will not stay put.

According to [USGS data](#), the water surface elevation at the North Wash bridge gauge has dropped from 3,610 feet to 3,567 feet since 2016. That is 43 feet of drop in 10 years.

“The river has cut down significantly in the past decade,” said Peter Lefebvre, who has been documenting changes at the site. “It helps show why the ramp has changed so much over the years and why it is difficult to deal with for outfitters and the people managing it too.”

Lefebvre visited the site this week and found the river at new winter lows. The rapid changes have exposed features that were underwater just years ago, leaving what was once a straightforward boat ramp far from the current water line.

### **What happens next**

River users can expect to see construction equipment on site for approximately 35 days once compliance and engineering work is complete. Exact dates have not been announced, and it is not yet clear whether the ramp will be accessible during construction.

The [Division of Outdoor Recreation](#) says it will issue a press release with specific construction dates and any impacts to river users once the timeline is finalized. Boaters planning spring trips should watch for updates.

Private boaters with Cataract Canyon permits should contact [Canyonlands National Park](#) with questions about how construction may affect their trips.

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