

Living Rivers Currents 12/13/01

## **COWlorado River Water Users Association Special Edition**

Each December the power brokers in Colorado River politics gather in Las Vegas under the banner of the Colorado River Water Users Association. LIVING RIVERS Currents is taking this opportunity to publicize the leading user of Colorado River water, alfalfa fields for cattle feed, and how this impedes Colorado River restoration.

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12/12/01

## **Environmental groups criticize plan to rescue endangered fish**

DENVER (AP) - A plan hailed as historic to save four rare species of fish in the Colorado River Basin is running into opposition from two environmental groups.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considering a plan to rescue the humpback chub, bonytail chub, razorback sucker and Colorado pikeminnow. The fish inhabit the Colorado River and its tributaries in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah.

Its plan was hailed by states, water users and Gov. Bill Owens.

But two groups, Utah-based Living Rivers and the Desert Fishes Council, say the goals are not ambitious enough to save the fish.

The proposals call for restoring fish populations, providing enough water at the right temperature, protecting their habitat, curtailing threats from nonnative fish and parasites, and keeping pollution out of the rivers.

"We're concerned that the agency, in its eagerness to please water and power interests in the seven Colorado River basin states, is rushing to set criteria that will cost

taxpayers millions more dollars while not helping recover the fish they're supposed to be saving," said David Orr of Living Rivers.

The group has outlined several criticisms. It said the plan places too much reliance on hatcheries to increase fish numbers; not enough habitat restoration; and not enough attention on removing invasive fish.

Dave Probst of the 300-member Desert Fishes Council said his group thinks the agency should require higher levels of fish before taking them off the endangered species list.

Robert Muth, director of the Colorado River endangered fish recovery program, said the concerns will be considered.

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12/12/01

## **Flap Over Endangered Fish**

Activists say proposal to save species in river doesn't go far enough  
By Todd Hartman

Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer

A recently crafted plan hailed as a breakthrough in saving four rare species of Colorado River fish is running into fresh opposition from biologists and environmentalists in the Southwest.

The criticism comes as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service tries to put the finishing touches on "recovery goals" for four species of obscure fish that are the targets of a \$100 million rescue effort -- one of the costliest such programs in the West.

The recovery goals lay out how many fish are needed and what projects must be completed for the four species -- the humpback chub, Colorado pikeminnow, razorback sucker and bonytail -- to someday thrive in the Colorado River and its tributaries, including the Gunnison and Yampa rivers on the Western Slope.

States, water users, power providers and some environmentalists have generally praised the goals as a major step in preserving the fish. Gov. Bill Owens' administration was among those pushing hardest for the goals, arguing they're crucial if the fish are ever to be taken off the endangered species list.

Suddenly, though, the plan is under fire from two groups.

Living Rivers, a Utah environmental group devoted to restoring the Colorado River to more natural conditions, and a nationwide group of biologists called the Desert Fishes Council, now say the goals aren't ambitious enough to save the fish species that once ruled the river from Colorado's Western Slope through the Grand Canyon.

"We're concerned that the agency, in its eagerness to please water and power interests in the seven Colorado River basin states, is rushing to set criteria that will cost

taxpayers millions more dollars while not helping recover the fish they're supposed to be saving," Living Rivers' David Orr said Tuesday.

Orr's group outlined several criticisms, including too much reliance on hatcheries to increase fish numbers; not enough habitat restoration, such as removal of dams that block fish migration; not enough attention to removing non-native, invasive fish that out-compete the rare species; and not enough emphasis on fish populations below Lake Powell.

Dave Propst of the 300-member Desert Fishes Council said the group takes issue with several elements of the goals. Top among them: whether the agency's numerical population goals to mark when the fish can come off the endangered species list are set high enough.

Robert Muth, director of the Colorado River endangered fish recovery program, said the concerns of the groups will be taken into consideration, along with others, as the agency puts together a final version of the recovery goals in the coming months. But he took issue with some of the criticism, particularly from Living Rivers.

"My overall response is that they have not read the recovery goals very well," Muth said. "All these points are addressed very well in my mind."

He cited complaints about over-reliance on hatchery fish as an example. Two of the species -- the razorback sucker and bonytail -- are down to so few specimens in the wild that cranking up numbers using hatcheries is crucial to preserving the creatures.

"A lot of people said, 'We don't like (the goals),' " Muth said. "But they haven't really given guidance to how to change them and for what reasons."

A demand of both Living Rivers and the Desert Fishes Council is for an outside, independent "peer review" of the science included in the recovery goals.

But Muth countered that the goals have been available for public comment for months, and anyone is welcome to scrutinize them. Indeed, he said, many individual biologists -- including some associated with the Desert Fishes Council -- have submitted criticism of the science on their own.

"The stack (of comments) is growing every day," Muth said.

Contact Todd Hartman at (303) 892-5048 or [hartmant@RockyMountainNews.com](mailto:hartmant@RockyMountainNews.com).

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12/12/01

### **Traditional Water Users Call for Reforming CO River Management**

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2001 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. TERRAZZA LOUNGE, on the CASINO LEVEL at the base of the escalators leading to the conference area)

CAESARS PALACE HOTEL & CASINO LAS VEGAS, NEVADA (Formerly scheduled for SENATORS BOARDROOM)

CONTACT: Lisa Force, 602-321-1753 (cell) David Orr, 435-260-2590 (cell) Owen Lammers, 435-259-1063

## WHILE COLORADO RIVER INDUSTRIAL WATER USERS MEET IN LAS VEGAS, TRADITIONAL USERS CALL FOR REFORMING COLORADO RIVER MANAGEMENT

For many years, the major stakeholders in Colorado River water use have gathered annually for a conference in Las Vegas. The group, however, has represented the interests of dam operators, large water districts, and corporate agri-business.

At this year's conference, scheduled for December 12-14 at Caesars Palace Hotel, the members of the Colorado River Water Users Association (CRWUA) will be joined by a contingent of formerly unrecognized stakeholders: representatives of Indian Nations, Mexican delta communities, and environmental and social justice groups concerned with Colorado River laws and practices.

These groups will hold a news conference Thursday, December 13, at 11:30 a.m. to introduce members of the news media to critical issues of water allocation and environmental protection that are not being addressed by the Water Users Association and the state and federal agencies that support them.

"Colorado River water users and agencies need to recognize the pressing water needs of indigenous people and communities in Mexico and the US," stated Lisa Force of LIVING RIVERS, who will be moderating the press conference. "Flows to the dried-up Colorado River delta need to be restored, and plans to construct additional reservoirs such as the Animas-La Plata project in Colorado should be abandoned."

Other speakers at the news conference will include advocates for protection of tribal water rights and cultural resources, preservation of delta communities, and restoration of endangered wildlife and fish populations.

"Ecosystem restoration is feasible in the Colorado River delta," stated Ms. Yamilett Carrillo-Guerrero, of ProNatura Sonora, a Mexican environmental protection group, and a native of the Colorado River delta region. "Local communities in the delta are open to alternative uses in their land, compatible with the restoration of the ecosystem. Mexican farmers realize the importance of instream flows and in their modest possibilities, they are ready to contribute with land and water to help restore the riparian forests and wetlands in the Colorado River delta. For them, a river with water means life and in no way do they consider water nurturing the Colorado River delta wetlands and the Upper Gulf of California as wasted water."

Joining Ms. Force and Ms. Carrillo-Guerrero will be Mr. Kevin Doyle, Director of Habitat Conservation Programs with the National Wildlife Federation, the nation's largest conservation and education organization. "While restoration of the delta to its former glory may sound like a pipedream to some," said Mr. Doyle, "incremental steps to

provide more water for this beleaguered ecosystem can have a dramatic impact on the region's biodeiversity. Despite the currently dessicated state, the delta is still a critical stopover for birds in the Pacific Flyway and the last fringe habitat on Earth for some endangered species. Already, we've seen the comebak of numerous wildlife species in the delta's Cienega de Santa Clara with just limited efforts to provide more water."

Mr. Chad Smith, representing the Ahamakav Cultural Society and Inter-Tribal Waters Organization, based in Mohave Valley, Arizona, will also speak at Thursday's news conference.

"The many water agreements, regulations, and projects that the Federal government and special interests have negotiated are actually a part of one phenomenon, the taking of water from the Colorado River ecosystems and from smaller, more rural users," stated Mr. Smith. "For example, the Fort Mojave Tribe opposes the three interrelated agreements: the Interim Surplus Criteria, the Quantification Settlement Agreement and the Cadiz Groundwater Storage Project... These are all for just one constituency: the large population along the coastal plain."

Also presenting will be Gilbert Sanchez, of Tribal Environmental Watch Alliance, an indigenous organization based in New Mexico. Mr. Sanchez is fighting to protect environmental and cultural resources and sacred sites from water development projects.

"The cultural heritage of Indian people is threatened by new water development projects like Animas-La Plata," stated Mr. Sanchez. "We have watched over the years as one dam after another has been built, pipelines and canals have been dug, while we see the graves of our ancestors dug up, artifacts taken, and sacred sites desecrated. All this damage, and for what? Much of this water is stored just to evaporate into the sky, and much of what is used is wasted. The resting places of the ancestors should not be sacrificed for more golf courses, backyard swimming pools and hayfields in the desert."

#### SPEAKER INFORMATION

LISA FORCE of LIVING RIVERS will moderate the Press Conference. As Program Director for LIVING RIVERS, Ms. Force, organizes environmental advocacy campaigns in the southwestern United States and Mexico. Ms. Force helped to assemble the "Coalition for Delta Restoration" with 133 groups representing 12 million people in the U.S. and Mexico – the largest coalition ever organized in defense of a North American river system. Before joining LIVING RIVERS, Ms. Force was a regional director for the Center for Biological Diversity, recognized as the most effective endangered species advocate in the Western United States. During her time there, she organized and led a successful campaign to decommission two hydroelectric power plants in central Arizona.

YAMILETT CARRILLO-GUERRERO, of ProNatura Sonora, a Mexican environmental protection group has spent the past four years working on wetland restoration and public advocacy of the Colorado River delta. Her current project is restoration of a wetland on privately-owned property on the Hardy River in the Mexican delta. Before

joining Pronatura, Ms. Carrillo-Guerrero worked for the prestigious Center for Conservation of Natural Resources (CECARENA-ITESM) in Guaymas, Sonora. Ms. Carrillo-Guerrero is also assisting Don Onesimo, the Cucapá Traditional Chief at El Mayor in the Mexican delta, in authoring a book of Cucapá legends that explain the relationship between the tribe's culture and survivorship and the changes in the Colorado River delta.

KEVIN DOYLE is the Director of Habitat Conservation Programs for the Western Field Office of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) - the nation's largest conservation and education organization. His work focuses on the protection of biological diversity through smart growth and habitat conservation planning, watershed protection, and proper management of public lands. Prior to joining NWF, he worked on air and water quality initiatives in California, including the landmark CalFed process. He spent six years with The Nature Conservancy, in Rhode Island and Hawaii, where he worked on invasive species prevention and control. Kevin served three years in the Peace Corps working for a joint USAID/National Park Service conservation program in Burundi, Africa.

GILBERT SANCHEZ is Director of the Tribal Environmental Watch Alliance (TEWA), an indigenous environmental organization based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Gilbert is a former tribal official with the San Ildefonso Pueblo, where he resides. Long active in a variety of environmental and social justice issues--including efforts to restore tribal lands taken from his pueblo for the Los Alamos National Laboratory, Gilbert and TEWA are working to protect the lands, air and waters of the ancestral homelands of his and other indigenous peoples of the Southwest.

CHAD SMITH is the Tribal Archeologist and Cultural Resource Manager for the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe. An archeologist since 1978, Mr. Smith has served as archeologist for the Department of Interior's Navajo Newlands, the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department, and the San Carlos Apache Tribe. Mr. Smith is of White Mountain Apache descent and has learned the traditional ways of the Tribes for whom he has worked, including their views on water and water use. Mr. Smith represents the Fort Mojave Tribe in the new multi-Tribe organization, InterTribal Waters Protection Network.

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12/10/01

**Comments on Recovery Goals for CO River Endangered Fish**

Dr. Robert T. Muth, Director Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program  
ES/Colorado River/MS 65115 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service P.O. Box 25486 Denver  
Federal Center Denver, CO 80225

Re: Comments on U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Draft Recovery Goals for  
endangered fish of the Colorado River basin (published September 10, 2001)

Dear Dr. Muth:

LIVING RIVERS submits the following comments in support of recovering four listed, endangered fish species native to the Colorado River: bonytail, Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub, and razorback sucker.

We note that recent data from the Grand Canyon Monitoring & Research Center indicate a steeply declining population trend for humpback chub in Grand Canyon. This is a warning sign that current efforts in the lower basin (at least) are not protecting the fish, much less providing for their recovery.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) has primary responsibility for ensuring the protection and recovery of these species. We call on the agency to reconsider its current strategies and devise effective, workable solutions that will assure survival and recovery of the humpback chub and the three other species that are currently absent from Grand Canyon.

Regarding the draft recovery goals, we request that the USFWS submit them to an independent, external scientific peer review panel before final publication. The panel should consider also all comments submitted in response to the draft document.

Because of the seriousness of the fishes' plight throughout the Colorado River basin, LIVING RIVERS requests the USFWS prepare a basinwide Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address recovery goals throughout the fishes' historic ranges. An effective and adequate recovery goals document must necessarily address a wide range of water management issues throughout the basin. Because the implementation of the recovery goals for the four listed fish--a federal action--necessarily entails significant impacts to water management, dam operations, and other environmental factors, the agency is required by law to prepare an EIS.

LIVING RIVERS opposes adoption of the recovery goals in their current form. We believe that, in general, the USFWS has emphasized too much the use of hatcheries and pond rearing to achieve numerical population increases, while ignoring the need to restore suitable habitat across the fishes' historic range. A true recovery plan must ensure that sufficient habitat is available to give species the greatest hope for survival over the long term.

1) LOWER BASIN CONCERNS: In the draft, USFWS emphasizes recovery of viable populations in the upper basin at the expense of lower basin populations, which have long been at much greater risk. The draft recovery goals appear to reflect an agency assumption that little can be done in the lower basin besides continuing the hatchery stocking program. USFWS must make recovery a priority in the lower basin as well as the upper basin, and must not permit downlisting/delisting of the fish so long as lower basin populations remain endangered. In addition, the USFWS must consider the Colorado River delta below Morelos Dam as potentially suitable habitat, and require that stream flows and viable populations be restored to that reach of the river in Mexico before recovery can be deemed to occur.

2) EMPHASIZE WILD FISH: The USFWS should give more attention to protecting and encouraging propagation of extant populations of wild fish, as opposed to hatchery-

raised fish. Over the long term, much more robust and genetically diverse populations are likely to result from wild fish. Recovery goals should require wild populations and aggregations to be viable and reproducing.

3) **STUDY DAM REMOVAL/DECOMMISSIONING:** In that light, LIVING RIVERS calls on the USFWS to address the need for removing dams throughout the Colorado River basin, as an obvious and beneficial way to restore potentially large areas of suitable habitat. Dam decommissioning can make available habitat that is currently inundated by reservoirs, as well as improve conditions in reaches downstream of dams. Dam removal will allow for re-establishing long-blocked fish migration routes, which may be beneficial for the Colorado pikeminnow, in particular.

In the Grand Canyon in particular, the benefits to the endangered fish of decommissioning Glen Canyon Dam must be considered as part of any long term recovery effort. Hundreds of stream miles above and below the dam could be made habitable once again with this single restoration strategy. Other dams in the basin should be studied for removal/decommissioning as well, including Navajo Dam on the San Juan, Flaming Gorge on the Green River, and one or more of the lower basin dams below Hoover (e.g., Laguna). USFWS cannot ignore the benefits of these undertakings.

4) **DOWNLISTING/DELISTING:** We fear that the emphasis on strict numerical targets, coupled with the reliance on hatcheries to produce maximum numbers of fish in the shortest period of time, reflects the intense political pressure on the agency to downlist and delist the fish at the earliest possible date. We urge USFWS to back away from the timetable-driven, "by-the-numbers" approach to recovery that is so evident in the draft goals document. Apparently healthy populations have been known to precipitously crash when diseases or environmental disasters occur. A habitat restoration-oriented model is much more likely to benefit species in the long term. Recovery goals should place as much emphasis on ensuring that a maximum amount of additional suitable habitat is made available, as on counting fish. Once downlisting or delisting has occurred, it is often much more difficult to protect populations from unforeseen disasters.

5) **STUDY BENEFITS OF REDUCING DIVERSIONS & DEPLETIONS:** The Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Implementation Program has emphasized that endangered fish management strategies are designed to permit additional water storage and diversions in the future. LIVING RIVERS calls on USFWS to abandon this policy, as it biases the agency against considering potentially substantial recovery benefits. The USFWS should analyze in detail the expected benefits to the fish of reducing current diversions (and overall depletions), and provide a range of alternative scenarios for instituting cutbacks on water deliveries to aid fish recovery. Such criteria would be especially valuable in dry years when streamflows are dramatically reduced, and fish are often stressed.

6) **REMOVE NON-NATIVE COMPETITORS AND PREDATORS:** The USFWS should emphasize an aggressive program to remove introduced, non-native fish that compete with and prey on endangered fish. Much scientific work remains to be done to determine

effective strategies for doing this, yet very little is currently being done. Indeed, throughout much of the upper and lower basins, "game fish" are still encouraged and stocked by state fish management agencies. USFWS should make recovery dependent on limiting or eliminating non-natives, including trout and other game species, wherever appropriate to achieve recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments. We look forward to publication of the final recovery goals, and we urge you to address the substantive issues we have raised, and implement all of our suggested changes.

Thank you for your consideration,

David Orr Director of Field Programs LIVING RIVERS PO Box 466 Moab, UT 84532  
435-259-1063 fax 259-7612

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12/10/01

### **Grand Canyon native fish at risk of extinction**

Grand Canyon native fish at risk of extinction  
Federal recovery goals provide no help

MOAB, UTAH (Dec. 10) -- The environmental and social justice advocacy organization LIVING RIVERS sent a letter today to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), warning of plummeting humpback chub populations in the Grand Canyon, and called for major revisions in its draft recovery goals for the humpback and three other species of endangered Colorado River fish.

Data from the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC) indicate a rapidly declining population trend for humpback chub in the Little Colorado River, the largest and only known successfully-reproducing population of their species. GCMRC researcher Lew Coggins recently announced that numbers of reproducing humpback chub are in a "steeply declining trend." Coggins' investigation found only about 500 individuals of reproducing age. He stressed that it is too soon to draw conclusions about whether the population may have dropped below the point where it can rebound.

Three other listed species, bonytail, Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker, have been extinct in the canyon for years.

"Despite spending millions of dollars over the years, the government has failed to protect and recover Grand Canyon's native fish," said David Orr, director of field programs for LIVING RIVERS. "Will the last of the endangered species have to disappear before changes are made?"

LIVING RIVERS' letter criticized the agency's draft recovery goals for the four fish species, and called on USFWS to subject its recovery goals to independent, external

scientific peer review. The goals were released for public comment on September 10 and ended today.

"Politics, not science, is driving the process," said Orr. "To ensure the survival and recovery of wild native fish, the agency must produce a scientifically sound plan. The proposal currently on the table doesn't come close."

The Desert Fishes Council, a prestigious scientific organization dedicated to preserving biological diversity in desert aquatic ecosystems, passed a resolution at its annual meeting last month in Alpine, Texas, opposing the draft recovery goals as currently written. The organization also called for outside peer review.

LIVING RIVERS' additional concerns include:

- \* Failure to emphasize restoration of habitat, including removal of dams that block fish migration and spawning areas, and that release water too cold for fish to survive in.

- \* Reliance on hatcheries and other artificial reproduction methods to increase fish numbers and downlist or delist species, even though fish may not survive to reproducing age.

- \* Lack of attention to removing introduced, non-native fish that compete with and prey on endangered fish.

- \* Failure to require recovery of the species throughout their ranges in both the upper and lower Colorado River basins.

"We're concerned that the agency, in its eagerness to please water and power interests in the seven Colorado River basin states, is rushing to set criteria that will cost taxpayers millions more dollars while not helping recover the fish they're supposed to be saving," said Orr.

###

LIVING RIVERS works to build a broad-based constituency for large-scale restoration of the Colorado River and neighboring watersheds. LIVING RIVERS has assembled a coalition of 133 U.S. and Mexican environmental and community groups, representing more than 12 million people, in support of Colorado River delta restoration.

On the Net:

LIVING RIVERS: <http://www.livingrivers2.org>

USFWS Draft Recovery Goals: <http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/ea/infopackets/coloradoriver>

USFWS Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program: <http://www.r6.fws.gov/crrip/>

Grand Canyon Monitoring & Research Center: <https://www.gcmrc.gov>

Desert Fishes Council: [http://www.utexas.edu/depts/tnhc/.www/fish/dfc/dfc\\_top.html](http://www.utexas.edu/depts/tnhc/.www/fish/dfc/dfc_top.html)

[NOTE: Websites for the USFWS and GCMRC are currently down, following a court order last week. No date has been announced for their restoral.]

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12/10/01

## Volume 1, Number 4

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12/05/01

## Comments: Not So Immediate Options for the Delta

In May, 2001 a preliminary report was released by Michael Clinton Engineering prescribing "immediate" solutions for Colorado River Delta restoration. Living Rivers, The Center for Biological Diversity, the Cocopah Indian Tribe and Centro Regional de Estudios Ambientales y Socioeconomicos, A.C. found numerous deficiencies in the analysis conducted and solutions proposed, and prepared the comments below.

To download a pdf of the report in question **Immediate Options for Augmenting Water Flows to the Colorado River Delta in Mexico**

[click here](#).

December 5, 2001

Michael Clinton  
Michael Clinton Engineering  
3004 Harbor Side Drive  
Las Vegas, NV 89117  
Dear Mr. Clinton:

Thank you for the briefing at the Colorado River Delta Symposium in Mexicali in September concerning your report "Immediate Options for Augmenting Water Flows to the Colorado River Delta in Mexico".

We very much commend you for beginning a process to explore options for getting additional water flows to the Colorado River delta in an immediate timeframe. We also appreciate your acknowledgement that immediate partial solutions are only valuable in the context of a longer-term, more holistic solution.

As discussed during the briefing, several factors are crucial to a more holistic approach, including acceptance by U.S. entities that additional water will have to flow across the border through the main channel; recognition that environmental issues are entwined with social issues; incorporation of the gulf and estuary ecosystem into proposed solutions; and an acknowledgment that a comprehensive solution must include lower water consumption on the US side. However, we recognize that the report is intended to address only short-term solutions and we will confine our comments to that objective.

We applaud the research effort undertaken to produce this report. We remain concerned however with the report's apparent over-emphasis on the likelihood that its recommendations will alleviate imminent threats to important delta wetlands. In fact, report recommendations will provide substantial environmental benefits through creation of new brackish wetlands. But the recommendations will not alleviate impending harm to the two most threatened delta wetlands, the Cienega de Santa Clara and riparian corridor, and may increase threats to these areas.

Overall, the report would benefit from a wider examination of possible water sources for priority delta wetlands. Recommendations should focus less on what report authors consider to be politically possible and more on all available sources, albeit with the understanding that these will obviously provide much less water than that necessary for a longer-term solution.

#### Background and Imminent Threats

Even short-term solutions should be directed at specific ecological problem areas within the delta. The report should indicate that the "Colorado River delta" is an often-used generic term referring to the following four particular priority wetland conservation areas:

- Cottonwood /willow riparian corridor between Moreles Dam and the Rio Hardy;
- Cienega de Santa Clara;
- Intertidal wetlands, including historic estuary at river's mouth;
- Various brackish wetlands

Each of these areas has very specific water needs and provides very specific ecosystem benefits. These need to be outlined in the report in order to avoid making blanket recommendations that may benefit some areas but cause harm to others.

Further, the report should incorporate recommendations from the Binational Declaration (see attached) distributed at the Mexicali Symposium, specifically:

- A framework for research to determine the amount, quality, and timing of water deliveries necessary to sustain and restore the Colorado River delta's ecosystems, including the riparian corridor below Morelos Dam, the Ciénega de Santa Clara, the River's estuary, and other brackish wetlands.
- Efforts to secure funding both for research needed to develop alternatives to protect and restore Colorado River delta's ecosystems, and for the implementation of those alternatives.

The Colorado River riparian corridor downstream of Morelos Dam, and the Cienega de Santa Clara are the two most threatened wetlands in the Colorado River delta region. The riparian corridor with its abundant cottonwood and willow vegetation faces several imminent threats, including fire from nearby garbage dumps, desiccation from reduced river flows, and increasing soil salinity. Additionally, the riparian corridor receives inadequate and inconsistent flood flows and therefore experiences little recruitment of new native woody vegetation necessary for sustained survival of the riparian corridors. These threats could greatly diminish or eliminate native cottonwood and willow riparian vegetation in the corridor in just a few years, depending on spills or floods from the U.S.

The Cienega de Santa Clara faces an imminent threat from the proposed operation of the Yuma Desalting Plant. In recent public meetings, the Bureau of Reclamation (BoR) has clearly stated its intent to recommend to Congress operation of the Plant, an action that could destroy the Cienega de Santa Clara. Yet the report states that "Operation of the [Yuma Desalting] Plant is not anticipated in the foreseeable future...therefore that contingency is not considered in this report." (p. 13)

The Cienega could be greatly reduced or lost in just a few short years with operation of the desalting plant and the resulting severe reduction in quantity and quality of Wellton-Mohawk drainage water delivered to the Cienega. This was demonstrated in 1993 when flow to the Cienega was interrupted for canal maintenance, causing the vegetated portion of the wetland to shrink from 11,200 acres to 2,750 acres in just a few months time.

#### Time Frame

The report suggests that the recommended measures be continued no longer than the term of the Interim Surplus Criteria, indicating that the intended time frame for the "immediate" options described in the report is 15 years. The term "immediate" is obviously open to broad interpretation, but report recommendations will not alleviate pending threats to the riparian corridor and the Cienega in a 15-year time period.

The authors' proposed 15-year time frame would provide ample time to identify and implement a long-term solution with much greater benefits than those contemplated in

the report. A long-term solution for delta wetland conservation, attainable in 15 years, might include conserving water in the U.S. and Mexico for delivery to delta wetlands through fallowing, increased agricultural efficiency, water recycling and other methods.

Further, the report states that "US water users want assurances that a more comprehensive Delta plan does not require additional water from the United States." (p.33). Successful implementation of report recommendations would not justify assurances to water users that no action will be taken to obtain additional water for a 15 year period.

### Complexities with Water Sources

The benefit of 15,000 acre feet as applied to the delta riparian corridor is unknown, and may be very limited due to the amount of water necessary to maintain riparian vegetation and to reverse and maintain low soil salinity. The best available scientific data suggests that a minimum average annual flow of approximately 106,000 acre feet per year are necessary to retain the delta riparian corridor. Specifically, flows of 32,000 acre feet per year below Moreles Dam plus pulse flows of 260,000 acre feet, released at a rate of 3,500-7,000 cfs, at three to four year intervals are the minimum needed to sustain riparian corridor vegetation.

Further, the proposed 15,000 acre feet of fresh water from Mexico is unlikely to be obtained on a schedule necessary to prevent significant habitat loss in the riparian corridor. Report recommendations for obtaining fresh water from retired, marginal agricultural lands in Mexico are very complex.

### Potentially Harmful Recommendations

The report refers to release of brackish waters into "the delta" generically. Again, even short-term solutions need to be directed at specific priority conservation areas within the delta as they have very different water quality, quantity and pulse regime needs. The report indicates that the Yuma area brackish water will be delivered to the "Colorado River wetlands" and that there exists a need for confirmation that the brackish water will be of sufficient quality to sustain the stands of riparian vegetation (cottonwoods and willows). Additionally, the report suggests that a 14-mile connector canal from the Bypass Drain to the Plan Ayala Drain would need to be constructed to deliver this water.

As discussed previously, brackish water will not benefit, and in fact is likely to greatly harm cottonwood and willow vegetation if applied to the riparian corridor. It is imperative that any reference to the use of brackish water for the riparian corridor be eliminated.

The report also suggests that occasionally, the entire flow of the Bypass Drain could alternate between the Colorado River wetlands and the Ciénaga de Santa Clara allowing the water now entering the Cienega to be delivered in surges. It is unclear what is meant by "Colorado River wetlands", however in referencing the Colorado River delta, the term includes cottonwood /willow riparian corridors, the Cienega de Santa Clara, intertidal wetlands, and various brackish wetlands.

Riparian corridor wetlands benefit from pulse flows while marshes likely do not. Therefore, the recommendations for periodic pulse flows between the Cienega and new brackish wetlands are unlikely to benefit these wetlands, and actually may harm the Cienega, as discussed above, by periodically diverting its source to other wetlands. Depending on how long flows were diverted to other brackish wetlands, the Cienega de Santa Clara could shrink again, most affecting populations of the endangered desert pupfish occupying very shallow areas around the periphery of the Cienega.

The recommendation to apply pulse flows to the Cienega appears to be the result of confusion by the authors over which wetlands would benefit from this type of management. The riparian corridor is the wetland that would benefit from pulse flows.

### Important Legal Obstacles

The report neglects to address the fact that there is no guarantee that the proposed brackish water deliveries from Yuma will not themselves be subject to the same legal challenges from water users as were the water to be going through the main channel. This is a possibility especially if the replacement water is to come from Lake Mead.

### Consumption Issues

Extremely inefficient water use on the U.S. side is well documented, especially for the agricultural sector. Any sustainable solution for the delta and gulf must address reducing water consumption in the U.S. The omission of any discussion of water utilization, and the role it can and must play in the future of the delta, ignores both the major challenge to, and significant potential for, restoration.

There are also recycling opportunities to be considered. Waters presently available through industrial discharge in both Mexico and the U.S. can be treated and used as secondary sources to be mixed with any initial U.S. contribution. Further, water used by power plants on both sides of the border could potentially be recycled. Of course, water quality criteria as well as flow rate and seasonal criteria must accompany any exchange of treated waters between the two nations. Mexicali-based industries have expressed a desire to consider this option.

### Inequitable Burden on Mexico

Mexico faces even greater demands for Colorado River water than does the U.S., given the allocation to Mexico of only 1.5 million acre feet annually and the heavy dependence on Colorado River water for agricultural, fishing and municipal use by low-income communities with few alternatives. The recommendations of this report, which include 15,000 acre feet of fresh water from Mexico compared with only 38,000 acre feet of brackish water from the U.S. place an inequitable burden on Mexico. The report should outline scenarios in which the U.S. and Mexico are contributing water to the delta in amounts proportional to their allocation.

### Social Needs are Overlooked

The needs of local communities including fishing associations and ejidos are entwined with environmental issues. The local delta residents are able to offer creative solutions as their livelihoods depend upon healthy delta habitats. The report overlooks such opportunities. For example, restoration of estuaries, one of the most vital environmental and social-needs resources of the delta region, is not mentioned.

Also, the poorest communities may suffer greatest harm under the report recommendations. The poorest lands often support the poorest communities. These are the Mexican agricultural lands targeted for retirement under the recommendations.

#### Local Groups Were Not Included

Although the report states that "...the involvement of local communities and NGOs is essential" (p.33), Mexican communities and environmental groups located in the delta were not included in its development, nor were representatives of the Cucapa Nation. Several local communities, Non Government Organizations, fishing cooperatives have expressed grave concerns about the recommendations in the report. They have stated that they are not at ease with the alternatives in the report being the only ones under consideration.

In conclusion, this report is valuable in helping to begin a discussion of specific actions that might lead toward restoring the delta. If this process is to continue, we urge the Sonoran Institute and Michael Clinton Engineering to communicate a more thorough understanding of the biological needs of the four priority wetland conservation areas. Recommendations for more water for the delta should be specific to the type of wetland targeted in order to be effective and to avoid harm. The Institute may wish also to undertake a more thorough study of creative alternatives for immediate sources of water, taking into consideration the points outlined above, before proceeding towards implementation of the report recommendations

Thank you again for sharing this report with us, and giving us the opportunity to offer our comments.

Sincerely,

David Hogan, Center for Biological Diversity

Carlos Yruretagoyena  
Centro Regional de Estudios Ambientales y Socioeconomicos, A.C. (CREAS)  
Regional Center for Environmental and Socioeconomic Studies

John Swenson  
Director, Environmental Protection Office, The Cocopah Indian Tribe

Lisa Force, Living Rivers

cc. Sonoran Institute

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12/04/01

## **Rally for Grand Canyon Restoration**

**Friday, January 18, 2002, 11:30 am**

**Arizona Center II**

**5th St and Van Buren**

**Downtown Phoenix**

Join LIVING RIVERS and others as we send a message to federal and state agencies, and water and power interests that will be gathering in Phoenix, January 17-18, 2002. This group has been convening for the past five years, charged with developing strategies to heal the Colorado River through Grand Canyon. The ecosystem does not lie, this group is failing.

It's critical that the public let them know that the time for action is NOW!

- Stop killing the Grand Canyon.
- Save the riparian habitat.
- Recover endangered fish.
- Bring back the canyon's beaches.
- Restore the natural process, before it's too late.
- Save this world renowned national park.

New information reveals that yet another species is on the verge of extinction in Grand Canyon National Park, the humpback chub. The Fish and Wildlife Service has decided that their priority for these and other declining fish species is not necessarily to restore natural habitat conditions. The agency would rather attempt to dump hatchery-raised fish into rivers with the hope to maintain an artificial population. These fish won't be able to reproduce in the Canyon, and it is questionable if the hatchery fish will survive at all. This is not restoration, it's a mechanism for water and power interest to continue destroying our rivers, and in the process, circumvent the Endangered Species Act.

[Download PDF of 8.5x11 Rally Flyer](#)

### **Information on efforts to restore Grand Canyon native fish:**

[Canyon Changes are Crucial](#)

Arizona Republic: January 16, 2002

[Grand Canyon Native fish: Going, Going, Gone?](#)

Living Rivers Currents, December 2001

[Grand Canyon Fish at Risk of Extinction](#) Living Rivers Press Release, December 10, 2001

[Living Rivers Comment Letter on Endangered Colorado River Fish to US Fish and Wildlife Service, December 10, 2001](#)

[Environmental groups criticize plan to rescue endangered fish](#)

Associated Press, December 11, 2001

[Flap over Endangered Fish](#)

Rocky Mountain News, December 11, 2001

[Resolution of the Desert Fishes Council on Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery, November 18, 2001](#)

[Decline of the aquatic food base in the Grand Canyon](#) Northern Arizona Aquatic Ecology Research Laboratory

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11/27/01

### **Help prevent unneeded new development at Lake Powell**

The National Park Service is promoting a massive, environmentally destructive new resort at "Lake" Powell Reservoir near Page, Arizona. Now is the time to submit comments on the Antelope Point Marina project.

SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS TODAY (details below)

MOAB, Utah, Nov. 27 -- The National Park Service (NPS) is currently accepting public comments on the proposal to build Antelope Point Marina, a sprawling resort planned for the desert shores of Lake Powell Reservoir in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (GCNRA) near Page, Arizona. Citizen groups are protesting the project's social and environmental impacts, and calling for a full study of alternatives to the proposed action.

The Antelope Point project is currently undergoing review for an Environmental Assessment (EA) to help the agency identify and analyze expected project impacts. LIVING RIVERS and other groups are urging citizens to write the Park Service to express concerns about this unneeded, polluting facility that would be built within a National Park recreation area.

Organizations that have already come out in opposition to the project include: Bluewater Network, Colorado Plateau River Guides, Diné CARE (Citizens Against Ruining the Environment), Diné Medicinemens Association, Escalante Wilderness Project, Flagstaff Activist Network, Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association, LIVING RIVERS, Sierra Club, Utah Environmental Congress and Wild Wilderness. [Other groups wishing to join this coalition, please contact LIVING RIVERS at ]

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires project proponents to consider a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project. The Antelope Point project is based on an assumption embedded in the park's 1979 General Management Plan

(GMP), that another large marina is needed near Page. The existing Wahweap Marina facilities could be expanded to accommodate additional demand, rather than construct a new resort nearby. Antelope Point will essentially duplicate existing services at Wahweap.

The project, which would be built partly on national parkland and on land controlled by the Navajo Nation, includes the following features:

More than 250-300 commercial houseboat rental slips, space for 60-100 rental houseboats and 60-70 small boats, 2 large tourboats, fuel dock and pumpout facilities, marina store, restrooms, launch ramp, parking for 800 vehicles, sewage system, dry storage, repair/maintenance facilities, 150-space RV campground complex with showers and dump stations, 200-room lodging complex, restaurant and cocktail lounge, and a cultural center complex.

The project is opposed by two Navajo grassroots organizations, Diné Medicinemens Association and Diné CARE. The marina is controversial within the Navajo Nation and elsewhere. Antelope Point is billed partly as economic development for the Navajo people, yet it would be owned and operated by a privately-held, white-owned concessionaire based in Phoenix. Alternative economic development strategies have not been considered as part of the environmental planning for the project.

Construction plans call for the first cocktail lounge on the Navajo reservation. A proposal for a nearby casino and shopping center complex is currently under study by the Navajo Nation. No casino has ever operated on the reservation.

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\* \* \* \* TAKE ACTION \* \* \* \*

SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS TODAY!!! (suggestions below)

- by EMAIL:

- by US MAIL: Superintendent Glen Canyon NRA P.O. Box 1507 Page, AZ 86040

For more information, consult the NPS official project website: <http://www.nps.gov/glca/antptpl.htm>

\* \* \* TOP TEN ISSUES FOR ANALYSIS \* \* \*

Ask the Park Service to put you on their official mailing list for the Environmental Assessment (EA), and ask them to address as many of these "Top Ten" issues we've identified (below) as you choose. Be sure to add your own ideas if you wish! Your comments are most effective if you put your thoughts in your own words. But feel free to use the information in this message to frame the issues as you see them.

1) Antelope Point Marina is not needed. The analysis must address the purpose and need for the project, and alternatives to the proposal. Expansion of existing development should occur, if needed, before building on undeveloped national parklands. The EA must address the need, if any, for additional development and the many potential alternatives for economic development for the Navajo Nation, while minimizing environmental damage to the greatest extent possible.

2) Alternative economic development options must be considered. Antelope Point may not be the best alternative for bringing jobs to the area and improving quality of life for Navajo people. Detailed economic alternatives analysis should examine anticipated revenues expected to accrue to the Navajo Nation and to individual employees over time under each alternative evaluated. Citizens, including Diné people, have suggested that the Navajo Nation take over operation of existing resort facilities around the reservoir, including Wahweap Marina, which can be expanded to accommodate additional boat slips. This would achieve the goal of promoting economic opportunity while avoiding the environmentally damaging and economically risky option of building and operating a major new resort. The current concessionaire, ARAMARK, is reportedly interested in divesting its concessions at Lake Powell reservoir.

3) Alternative uses for the Antelope Point site must be considered. Rather than operate a high-impact, motorized recreation-oriented resort, NPS should evaluate the possibility of constructing facilities that directly benefit the Navajo people. For example, a health clinic, educational institution, scientific/ecological research laboratories, or traditional healing center (as the Diné Medicinemen's Association has proposed) may be appropriate, compatible uses in this setting. The Navajo Nation currently lacks significant infrastructure for these uses and would clearly benefit from any of these.

4) A new park-wide General Management Plan (GMP) should be prepared before additional development occurs at GCNRA. Antelope Point must not go forward without re-evaluating many of the assumptions built into the park's outdated 1979 GMP, on which plans for the marina project are based. The need and purpose for the project, and many of the assumptions used to justify them, are no longer valid. Over the decades, many recreational activities--and impacts--have changed, e.g. proliferation of jet skis, or personal watercraft (PWC). At the same time, there is growing interest among recreational users for non-motorized recreational opportunities such as sea kayaking or canoeing. No non-motorized recreational zones currently exist on the reservoir. A new GMP should address the need for new recreational opportunities and management practices around the reservoir. The old river channel around Antelope Point would make an ideal motor-free zone, since motorboat users generally travel around the north side of Antelope Island.

5) Recreational safety concerns about the site must be addressed. Antelope Point is located on a narrow bend in the old river channel, a site that is prone to potential user conflicts between powerboat, houseboat and jet ski users. On a typical holiday weekend, hundreds of boats would be moored, floating and in motion in and around the new marina, with water skiers and jet skiers in abundance. The potential for serious visitor safety conflicts and accidents at Antelope Point would be quite high. Regional law

enforcement is already stretched thin covering Wahweap, and a marina at Antelope Point would create additional burdens and responsibilities. The ready availability of alcoholic beverages for sale at the marina would only exacerbate the risk of serious accidents. In 2000, Lake Powell Reservoir was identified by the Wall Street Journal as the nation's second-most dangerous recreational area.

6) Economic risk concerns must be evaluated. No analysis has been published by NPS to demonstrate the long-term economic viability of a second major new marina in the immediate vicinity of Page. In a period of declining visitation to the reservoir, sufficient demand may not exist to justify the investment and commitment of resources to support the Antelope Point project. Since one of the primary goals of the project is to promote economic development for the Navajo Nation, it is essential that specific data be presented to assist the Navajo people in evaluating whether the project would operate in the black over the long term, if it were built. 7) The Antelope Point project should not go forward until the Park Service first resolves its policy on jetskis (PWC), and completes an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)--currently in preparation--for PWC management at GCNRA. The EIS will examine the possibility of banning PWC and also of limiting them to certain zones of the reservoir. As stated above, the old river channel at Antelope Point would be an ideal motor-free zone, and should be evaluated in the EIS for such use. NPS should not bias its PWC planning process by assuming that Antelope Point Marina will be built.

8) Alternatives must be evaluated for mitigating archeological and cultural resource sites within the project boundary, including ceremonial sites that would be rendered unusable by construction of the project. Consultation with the Diné Medicinemen's Association and other traditional native groups must be conducted.

9) Analysis of the cumulative effects and reasonably foreseeable consequences of the Antelope Point project must be evaluated, including the potential impacts on area businesses, including Wahweap Marina. Increased use of motors on the reservoir and loss of opportunities for non-motorized recreation in the Antelope Point area must be evaluated. The impact of anticipated "companion" projects must also be evaluated (e.g. the Navajo Nation is currently considering a casino and shopping center to be located near the entrance to the resort).

10) Given the likelihood that significant environmental impacts will occur from this project, the law requires that NPS prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement.

PLEASE SEND A COPY OF YOUR COMMENTS TO LIVING RIVERS at:  
[info@livingrivers2.org](mailto:info@livingrivers2.org)

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11/27/01

## **Rally for Grand Canyon Restoration**

Friday, January 18, 2002 at 11:30 am  
Arizona Center II  
5th St and Van Buren  
Downtown Phoenix

Join LIVING RIVERS and others as we send a message to federal and state agencies, and water and power interests that will be gathering in Phoenix, January 17-18, 2002. This group has been convening for the past five years, charged with developing strategies to heal the Colorado River through Grand Canyon. The ecosystem does not lie, this group is failing. It's critical that the public let them know that the time for action is NOW! Stop Killing the Grand Canyon!

[LR Currents V1, N4](#)

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11/26/01

## **Alfalfa Blues in the Upper Basin**

**Living Rivers Currents** December 2001

[LR Currents V1, N4](#)

Peter Lawson stands next to Professor Creek, which drains into the Colorado River 20 miles upstream of Moab, Utah. For eight months each year he diverts Professor Creek's water for hay cultivation, one of the thousands of marginal alfalfa fields that dominate irrigated agriculture in the upper Colorado watershed. He offered to share his frustrations with how state and federal programs discourage efficient agricultural water use, and make it impossible for farmers to use their water rights to benefit the environment.

When Lawson purchased his farm in 1991, every drop of the Professor Creek's water was poured on to the fields. "I went ahead and installed some fairly sophisticated sprinklers which were much more efficient in delivering water to the alfalfa," he says. "Not only was water being left in the creek, but I was able to increase my acreage under cultivation."

Despite these gains, the state of Utah forced him to buy more water rights because he was farming more land. It made no difference that he was actually using less water than before. "One can't support a family with this business as it is, then when you try to increase efficiency, such that everyone wins, they force you to spend more money."

Lawson points out that he can only get between \$80 and \$100 per ton for his alfalfa. With four cuttings per year, and about one ton per acre from each cutting, that's less than \$40,000 annually from the farm. When deductions are made for land purchase,

equipment and supplies, there's very little left for anything else. This is why many farmers in the upper basin must have another source of income to make ends meet.

"I hate subsidies, but I've applied for them from the US Department of Agriculture on two occasions. It's impossible to keep up with the flood of forms, so I've never received any money," Lawson says. "Whether you have 50 acres, or 50,000, the paperwork is the same, thus it's the large growers with their attorneys that get all the hand outs, making it that much more difficult for the family farms to compete."

Lawson believes that it's vital that all farmers are provided mechanisms so that more water can be left in the rivers for habitat preservation and restoration. "Now there's nothing but disincentives, he says." Any water that he does not use can just be taken by someone else downstream, and were he to stop irrigating altogether, his water rights would be taken away and sold to somebody else.

"Despite this, I'm still trying to figure out how I might be able to use less water," he says. He's considered shifting to orchards with drip irrigation, but the state would require him to reduce the area irrigated, or purchase even more water rights. "These laws are crazy," Lawson concludes. "It would be so easy to for us to heal our rivers, and still feed ourselves, if only the politicians would focus on addressing the problems, not preserving the corporate welfare for the larger growers."

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11/26/01

## **Animas River Rally: Durango Turns out to Stop A-LP**

### [LR Currents V1, N4](#)

On a warm, sunny day 150 river activists gathered at noon in Durango, Colorado on November 9th alongside the endangered Animas River. Confidently the protestors marched downtown carrying colorful signs and banners while chanting slogans demanding the Animas remain wild and free.

The jubilant crowd, representing 35 groups, then gathered before the offices of the Bureau of Reclamation, calling for termination of the Animas-La Plata Project. Speakers included leaders of social justice, taxpayer and environmental groups from each of the Four Corners states. Citing violations of federal laws, the groups demanded an investigation of the project by the General Accounting Office (GAO).

The urgent nature of the group's complaints were heightened by the imminent excavation of ancient Native American gravesites that would occur in advance of construction. Prior to the rally, members of the Southern Ute and Navajo nations gathered at the proposed reservoir site and offered prayers for the preservation of these sacred grounds.

These concerns were listed in letters addressed to every member of Congress and deposited in the mailbox before the BuRec office. "We want accountability, not more

corporate subsidies," exclaimed Owen Lammers, executive director of LIVING RIVERS. "The real estate developers want to declare victory in this struggle, but we're here to tell them they're going to lose." The rally also signified the first public event in LIVING RIVERS' campaign to reform of the Bureau of Reclamation in its centennial year, 2002.

The march continued back to the shores of the Animas River where refreshments were presented and local musicians entertained till sunset.

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11/26/01

## **Going, Going, Gone? Grand Canyon Native Fish**

[LR Currents V1, N4](#)

New data from ongoing research in Grand Canyon National Park suggest a serious decline in humpback chub numbers in the Colorado River through Grand Canyon. This is one of the last wild populations of humpback in the world. The canyon's three other endangered species, Colorado pikeminnow, bonytail, and razorback sucker have long been extinct in the canyon.

Endangered fish throughout the Colorado River now have even more to fear. A new recovery plan issued in September by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) would make survival of these fish species largely dependent upon hatcheries, while river habitat restoration needs go unaddressed.

Fish recovery would not be based on viable wild populations that can reproduce in native habitat, but on hatchery fish being continuously dumped to maintain a given population size. "This is completely artificial," says John Weisheit, LIVING RIVERS Conservation Director. "If the river can't sustain the fish on its own, then there is no recovery."

Bowing to pressure from water and power interests, the USFWS continues to ignore the major problems driving these unique fishes to extinction: (1) dams that block migration paths and degrade habitat conditions; (2) water waste by irrigators and other users, dangerously depleting streamflows; and (3) introduced fish species that prey on and compete with natives. Final recovery goals are expected in early 2002. LIVING RIVERS and others have submitted comments, calling for a basinwide recovery plan that emphasizes dam decommissioning, habitat restoration, water conservation, and non-native fish removal. You can too! Write Dr. Robert Muth, Director, Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 25486, Denver, CO 80225; robert\_muth@fws.gov.

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11/26/01

## **Hay Burn: Alfalfa Subsidies and Public Health**

[LR Currents V1, N4](#), December 2001

By Gordon LaBedz, M.D.

More people die of heart disease and strokes than all other illnesses combined. The cause? The red-meat-oriented American diet, high in fat, with beef and dairy as the prime culprit. And you and I pay for it through government subsidies.

While many ranchers get their share of corporate welfare, the less-visible cattle feed industry is also cashing in: Corn is the main crop for fattening cattle in the Midwest, but here in the West, it's alfalfa.

Taxpayers unwittingly fund a system that perpetuates unhealthy diets for millions of Americans, bringing on early death or illness for tens of thousands every year.

A recent US Public Health Service report concluded that 1.29 million, or 54% of all U.S. deaths can be attributed to the substantial risk factors associated with the consumption of meat products. The Economic Research Center reports \$80 billion dollars in annual medical costs and lost productivity from over-consumption of fatty foods. Cows are killing us!

According to government and independent figures, we could save on average 75% of the water used to irrigate alfalfa by planting vegetables. If we subsidize crops, why not at least grow nutritious food? We could save money and river ecosystems, but most importantly, we would help people live healthier and longer lives.

As a physician I see more than my share of patients who are being killed by the beef? and alfalfa? industries. As a taxpayer I am outraged that my dollars are being used to keep these destructive industries in business.

Gordon LaBedz, M.D., is a physician in the Greater Los Angeles area and is Chair of the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter.

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11/26/01

## **Industrial Hay: Draining the Lower Colorado**

[LR Currents V1, N4](#), December 2001

by Christine Henges-Jeck

Each year, almost half the Colorado's annual flow, some six million acre feet, arrive at Imperial Dam just 150 miles from the river's mouth in the Gulf of California. In non-flood years, the water diverted from Imperial onward irrigates 1.2 million acres in southwestern Arizona, southeastern California, and the Mexican states of Baja

California and Sonora. Despite increasing demand for water throughout the Colorado River low-value, water-intensive crops, especially alfalfa, consume a disproportionate amount of the region's water. Alfalfa is the region's most water intensive crop, second largest crop by area, and of extremely low value.

The region's farmers irrigate over 230,000 acres of alfalfa annually. Nearly three-quarters of the crop grows in California's Imperial Valley. The remaining twenty-five percent of the region's alfalfa crop grows across the border in the Mexicali Valley and, to a lesser extent, in Arizona's Yuma area. Farmers grow alfalfa because it requires less labor than other crops, can be harvested multiple times during the region's long growing season, and tolerates the poorly drained clay soils of the Imperial and Mexicali valleys.

Alfalfa consumes more water than any other crop below Imperial Dam. Farmers apply as much as seven vertical feet of water to alfalfa crops, to promote growth under the hot desert sun. Although it comprises less than twenty percent of the region's irrigated acreage, alfalfa uses over forty percent of the water used by the region's crops. Per acre, alfalfa consumes sixty percent more water than wheat, the region's largest crop, forty percent more water than cotton, the third largest crop by acreage, and seventy-five percent more water than lettuce, the fourth largest crop. The region's alfalfa crop uses more water than all these crops combined.

Although alfalfa consumes an enormous quantity of water, its value per acre is relatively low. According to Imperial County, the Imperial Valley's alfalfa crop value was \$687 per acre in 1999. This stands in stark comparison to lettuces which generated \$3,895 to \$5,021 per acre. Even cotton, another low value crop generated higher values at \$959 per acre in the same year.

Alfalfa is a feed crop, especially for dairy operations in the Imperial Valley and California's Central Valley, among other locations. The plentiful, senior water rights enjoyed by farmers in the region permit the cultivation of this water-intensive crop. If price signals were different, it is quite likely that farmers would maximize their returns by turning to other, higher-value crops. Until such changes occur, millions of acre-feet will be diverted from the Colorado River to support these low-value feed crops.

Christine Henges-Jeck is a Research Associate with Pacific Institute. For more information on water use in the Lower Colorado region, see the Pacific Institute's new report, *Missing Water: The Uses and Flows of Water in the Colorado River Delta Region*, available on-line at [www.pacinst.org](http://www.pacinst.org).

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11/26/01

## **Trading Alfalfa for Delta Restoration**

[LR Currents V1, N4](#)

Scientists estimate that the currently desiccated Colorado River delta could begin regeneration with just one percent of the river's flow. To reach the one percent conservation goal for the Colorado River alfalfa growers could:

- Shift 43,000 acres of alfalfa from sprinkler to drip irrigation.
- Shift 38,500 acres of alfalfa to higher value, less water-intensive citrus and vegetable crops; or
- Fallow 17,200 acres of alfalfa

As Mark Lewis said in his Veteran's Day column in the Farmington Daily Times, regarding the One Percent Campaign, "Are we willing to sacrifice a little so something for the overall good is accomplished? We would be giving something of ourselves for the betterment of everyone. I wonder if we are up to it."

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11/19/01

## **Animas River--Most Endangered River--Update**

AMERICAN RIVERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 19, 2001

Contacts:

Elizabeth Maclin, American Rivers, (202) 347-7550, x3014

Dylan Norton, San Juan Citizens Alliance, (970) 375-7935

Owen Lammers, Living Rivers, (435) 259-1063

Eric Eckl, American Rivers, (202) 347-7550, x3023

### **Animas River worse off since "Most Endangered" listing 6 months ago**

#### **Six months after listing as one of nation's Most Endangered Rivers, water diversion project still pending threat**

Six months after American Rivers listed the Animas as one the nation's most endangered rivers, American Rivers and its partners find that the construction of a water diversion project that would threaten Native American cultural sites, local wildlife, trout fisheries and natural lands is more likely than ever.

The Animas-La Plata (ALP) project, which would divert approximately one quarter of the river's flow, will have a severe negative impact on endangered fish species, a thriving recreational rafting industry, riparian wetlands, and a gold medal trout fishery. However,

the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives both passed appropriations bills for FY 2002 that allocate \$16 million to construct ALP. At the time of this update, President Bush had not signed the legislation.

In November, a coalition of Native American, social justice, taxpayer, and environmental groups joined by American Rivers, launched a national campaign to de-authorize ALP. The coalition, which sent a letter to Congress seeking a halt to construction funding, also called for an investigation by the General Accounting Office (GAO) into numerous improprieties in the project that have been identified by citizens groups.

A significant amount of funding required to complete the project has not yet been appropriated, and efforts to block financial support for ALP will continue in an effort to prevent this half-billion dollar environmentally destructive government boondoggle from moving forward.

In April 2001, American Rivers released its annual Most Endangered Rivers report, documenting rivers of regional or national significance at the greatest risk of suffering damage in the coming 12 months. Six months later, American Rivers finds at least some positive progress on eight of the 13 rivers listed. In the report, American Rivers also identified the nation's inefficient and outmoded means for producing and consuming energy as a leading threat to rivers nationwide. Six months later, American Rivers finds that there has been no progress towards a 21st energy policy that balances supply and demand through energy conservation and efficiency, and increased reliance on renewable technologies such as wind and solar.

President Bush has released his national energy policy, a companion energy bill has passed the House of Representatives, several pieces of legislation are under consideration in the Senate, and the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 have significantly increased pressure to expand production of fossil fuels.

For more information on the 2001 Most Endangered Rivers report, visit

[www.AmericanRivers.org/MostEndangered2001](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/MostEndangered2001). For more information on American Rivers, visit [www.AmericanRivers.org](http://www.AmericanRivers.org).

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11/18/01

### **Resolution of the Desert Fishes Council**

Resolution adopted by Desert Fishes Council at its 15-18 November 2001 meeting. Relative to Draft Recovery Goals for the bonytail, humpback chub, Colorado pikeminnow, and razorback sucker of the Colorado River basin

WHEREAS, the draft recovery goals for the four fishes, developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will be integral to the future status of these fish species and the ecosystems upon which they depend; and

WHEREAS, much biological information has been presented during the development of these goals that indicates that disagreement exists regarding the appropriate approaches and methodologies to be used to develop the demographic and genetic bases for such recovery goals;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Desert Fishes Council, an international society composed of professionals from academic, government, and private organizations and private individuals, at its 2001 annual meeting held in Alpine, Texas, 15 – 18 November, is opposed to the adoption of the draft recovery goals for the bonytail, humpback chub, Colorado pikeminnow, and razorback sucker of the Colorado River basin as currently written; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Desert Fishes Council recommends that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service redraft the recovery goals based upon the results of a rigorous, independent, scientific review and review of all comments received by the Service by the National Research Council or an equivalent independent scientific body; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be sent to the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Regional Director of Region 6 of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Regional Director of Region 2 of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Director of the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program prior to the comment deadline.

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11/11/01

**Are Americans up to a little sacrifice?**

Farmington Daily Times  
Mark Lewis/Editorial Page Editor

I was in Durango Friday reporting on a group of people protesting the Animas-La Plata Project.

It was an interesting group of people. Young, old, middle-aged, etc. In some ways it took me back to my youth, when many young people took to the streets protesting for civil rights or against the Vietnam War.

This group was different, however.

While I don't doubt the sincerity of their beliefs, they just didn't have the same energy that I remember of bygone protests. I did, however, find many people willing to talk about Animas-La Plata, something of a rarity these days.

Among them was Evert Oldham, a man I've known for some time. If I had to use one word to describe Evert, it would be thoughtful. He has always struck me as a guy who thinks about what he is going to say and the meaning of the words he intends to use.

He also is not shy about sharing his knowledge with people, sometimes going into minute detail. So, when he described some of the other folks at the protest and of how their focus had changed, it struck my interest.

Living Rivers, the organization that sponsored Friday's protest, initially concentrated on efforts to drain Lake Powell. Whether those in the group have realized that such a narrow focus wasn't going to gain popular support, especially regarding Lake Powell, or whether some other reason arose, they have expanded their focus to the entire Colorado River Basin.

One of their main interests at this time is to find a way to restore the Colorado River delta, which is drying up because of overuse of water, endangering some species of wildlife in the process.

I was even more intrigued

I studied enough biology in college to at least understand that no species can exist if isolated in an ecosystem.

In other words, trying to save one breed of plant or animal, like the Colorado pikeminnow for example, is foolish unless the entire ecosystem is either preserved or at least restored enough to maintain the plants and animals that the pikeminnow depends on for food, shelter, etc.

That's why when people say they want to prevent Animas-La Plata, I usually give them the single-raised-eyebrow look and shake my head because it is just one small piece in a very large puzzle.

But here was a group willing to tackle the entire Colorado River Basin.

One idea they have come up with is for all water users in all areas of the Colorado River Basin, which would include us along the Animas and San Juan Rivers, to give up 1 percent of the water allocated to them to preserve and restore the river delta and thereby preserve the life that depends on it.

It sounds like a good idea, but there is a problem. Nobody will do it if everybody - and I mean everybody - doesn't go along with it.

After all, why should the people in the Upper Colorado River Basin give up water just so someone downstream, who hasn't agreed to the idea, can grab it to water a new golf course in Palm Springs?

Evert also mentioned that water is a states rights issue, which causes another problem.

If the water isn't used here, it is quite possible someone elsewhere in the state would lay claim to it.

A good example would be Albuquerque. It could get water from San Juan County via the San Juan-Chama diversion tunnel. For those unfamiliar with it, it is a tunnel that takes

water from the head of Navajo Reservoir and sends it under the continental divide into the Chama River, which flows into the Rio Grande.

If people here were of a giving nature and did dedicate 1 percent of their water to the Colorado River Delta, the water probably would never see the state line. Albuquerque or some other interest down south would snap it up in a moment.

Such a plan also involves something Americans have not had to do much of during the past decade or two - sacrifice.

Giving up 1 percent of their allocated water might mean one less golf course or football field. It might mean people would have to stop planting Kentucky blue grass.

Are we willing to sacrifice a little so something for the overall good is accomplished?

We have in the past.

Today is a day to remember just such sacrifices - those made by veterans in the numerous wars and conflicts in which America has fought. I realize there really is no comparison between the sacrifices of veterans and doing without a few luxuries like golf courses, but the idea is the same.

We would be giving something of ourselves for the betterment of everyone.

I wonder if we are up to it?

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11/10/01

### **A-LP opponents protest**

Durango Herald Page A-1

PHOTO: Opponents of the Animas-La Plata Project march up East Second Avenue on Friday.

By Melanie Brubaker Mazur Durango Herald Staff Writer

Chanting "no more dams," more than 100 people marched through Durango Friday to protest the official start of construction of the Animas-La Plata Project.

Marchers waved signs as they moved from Rotary Park to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Durango office at 835 E. Second Ave. and mailed more than 500 letters to the U.S. Congress and bureau headquarters. The letters protested the cost and environmental effects of A-LP and requested an investigation by the General Accounting Office into the project's funding.

The protest was sponsored by Living Rivers, an environmental group in Moab, Utah, with the support of 35 other businesses and environmental groups.

While Friday marked the government's official start of construction on A-LP, any actual earthwork in Ridges Basin, where a reservoir is supposed to be built to hold water from the Animas River, won't take place for at least a year. Design work on the pumping plant and reservoir, an archaeological study and relocation of two natural gas lines will begin with a \$16 million appropriation passed by a congressional conference committee on Oct. 17. In all, the project is expected to cost \$343.8 million.

Protesters carried signs stating "Dam the Bureau," "Revive the Colorado – an ecosystem, not a plumbing system," and "Bruce's Bathtub." The latter referred to former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt's support for the project. Babbitt and other supporters said the project will fulfill water treaties signed with the Southern Ute Indian Tribe.

American Indians signed treaties with the U.S. government under duress when few of them were educated about the effects of such treaties, said Thomas Morris Jr., president of the Diné Medicine Men's Association. He told the crowd at the bureau office that Navajo Indians don't live by written laws. David Orr, director of field programs for Living Rivers, a Moab, Utah, environmental group, and Owen Lammers, executive director, mail letters to Congress in front of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation office.

"We live by nature law," he said. "It's an open law, an unwritten law."

At a post-march gathering in Schneider Park, JoEtta Goldtooth, of Tuba City, Ariz., echoed Morris' comment. Goldtooth is a member of the Diné Sovereignty Defense Association, which is trying to secure Navajo water rights in the Colorado River.

"We are a very poor nation," Goldtooth told the crowd. "If we had the rights to our water, we would be a very rich nation. Water is gold – it is life."

If water is the blood of the Earth, Goldtooth said dams are blood clots.

"That's how I look at it," she said.

Catherine Olson, of Cedar Hill, N.M., brought her four children and carried a sign reading "Consider the children of tomorrow."

"We're just lovers of flowing water," she said.

Nancy Jacques, a Durangoan and a longtime opponent of A-LP, joined the group soaking up sunshine and listening to speakers.

"A-LP truly is a dinosaur of another generation," she said. "It's time for it to die and focus on other alternatives."

The bureau should re-examine the entire Colorado rivershed and how the water is divided among different users, she said.

David Orr of Living Rivers told the protesters their actions cannot end with the rally. They need to write their representatives and inform their neighbors about the detrimental effects of the project, he said.

[http://www.durangoherald.com/asp-bin/article\\_generation.asp?article\\_type=news&article\\_path=/news/news011110\\_1.htm](http://www.durangoherald.com/asp-bin/article_generation.asp?article_type=news&article_path=/news/news011110_1.htm)

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11/10/01

### **Marchers call for A-LP project to stop**

A-LP Protest: Marchers call for A-LP project to stop  
by Mark Lewis, Staff writer The Daily Times, page A-1, column 1 Farmington, New Mexico

DURANGO, Colo. -- Chanting "no more dams" and other slogans, about 150 people marched through downtown Durango on Friday protesting Congress' allocation of money for the Animas-La Plata Project.

David Orr, with Living Rivers, said he believes that when the facts about Animas-La Plata become known, it will be recognized as the least justifiable water project ever to come before Congress.

Animas-La Plata is a water storage project first authorized in 1968 by Congress and reauthorized in a scaled-down form in 2000. That bill was signed into law by President Bill Clinton.

The project would entail construction of a reservoir at Ridges Basin, a few miles south of Durango, and pumps on the Animas River to pump water into the reservoir. The project also involves settlement of water rights claims made by the Southern Ute and the Ute Mountain Ute tribes. Another smaller project added to the overall Animas-La Plata is a water line taking potable water from Farmington to Shiprock.

Living Rivers sponsored the march and rally in association with a number of other organizations, including the Taxpayers for the Animas River, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Four Corners River Sports, Southern Ute Grassroots Organization and the Sierra Club.

The march included people carrying picket signs, and in some cases, replicas of the endangered Colorado pikeminnow. Some marchers brought their children. While others distributed leaflets to passing motorists.

During the rally, Orr and others poured hundreds of copies of a letter detailing concerns about Animas-La Plata into mailboxes outside the Bureau of Reclamation offices in Durango. He also read the letter aloud to those gathered.

Among the allegations made in the letter were that non-structural alternatives were not given proper consideration, that the Colorado Ute Tribes don't have a legitimate claim to the water and that no needs for the stored water have been identified.

Christine Arbogast, with Kogovsek and Associates, a law firm representing project supporters, issued a statement Friday contesting the allegations made in the letter.

Arbogast counters that A-LP is a tribal water rights settlement with two-thirds of project water allocated to either the Colorado Ute tribes or the Navajo Nation.

During the rally before the Bureau of Reclamation offices, Orr and other speakers repeatedly called the project to be stopped.

"Just because its been approved doesn't mean it's been built. If need be, we can occupy," he said, referring to occupying the area at Ridges Basin where the reservoir is to be constructed.

Arbogast argues that dismissing the project would force the Ute tribes to proceed with litigation to secure their water rights.

Orr also cited alleged corruption and misdeeds associated with the project.

The statement released by Kogovsek and Associates dismisses those statements as false, citing the appearance of opponents who testified during Congressional hearings and the Environmental Impact Statement, which is several thousand pages long and took two years and multiple public hearings throughout the Four Corners to complete.

Another section of the letter which Orr read to the crowd claimed that significant Native American sites would be damaged by the reservoir, including a burial ground, and that opponents of the project should protect the interests of the tribes.

Arbogast said opponents ignored the will of tribal councils, which support Animas-la Plata, and are duly elected by the Native American people and represent their interests. The bureau also is working with the tribes to ensure that, should any be found, cultural artifacts or burials are protected, she said.

Thomas Morris, a Navajo medicine man representing the Diné Medicine Men Association in Window Rock, Ariz., said he opposed the project because it was yet another unfulfilled promise made to Native Americans. Rather than changing nature, people should learn to live with it, he said.

"We don't control nature, nature controls us," he said.

Mark Lewis: [markl@daily-times.com](mailto:markl@daily-times.com)

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11/09/01

## **A-LP opponents to demonstrate today**

By Melanie Brubaker Mazur Durango Herald Staff Writer

"The chances are pretty overwhelming the construction will go ahead, and it will get built. The environmental studies have been done, then done, then redone. I don't think a court will stop the project." - Mike Griswold, president of the A-LP Water Conservancy District

Opponents of the Animas-La Plata Project aren't giving up their fight, and they plan a demonstration at noon today.

Living Rivers, a Utah environmental group, is organizing the demonstration to protest the planned construction of the \$343 million project.

"They are draining more and more from a river that has nothing else to give," said John Weisheit, president of Living Rivers, formerly the Glen Canyon Action Network.

The group, located in Moab, is expanding its focus from deconstructing Glen Canyon Dam and draining Lake Powell to protecting all of the Colorado River watershed, Weisheit said. The Animas flows into the San Juan River, which empties into the Colorado River.

Mike Griswold, president of the Animas-La Plata Water Conservancy District, said he doesn't think protests at this point will stop A-LP.

"The chances are pretty overwhelming the construction will go ahead, and it will get built," Griswold said. "The environmental studies have been done, then done, then redone. I don't think a court will stop the project."

People opposing the project haven't kept in mind that A-LP has been scaled back 40 percent, Griswold said.

The project will use 14 percent of the Animas River's annual flow, mostly during the heavy spring runoffs.

"A lay person won't see a difference in the river levels," he said. "They won't notice it."

More than 35 groups and businesses support the protest, including the Diné Medicine Men's Association, the Sierra Club, the Southern Ute Grassroots Organization and the Wilderness Society.

The rally begins at noon at Rotary Park. Participants will then march to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Office at 835 East Second Ave., where protesters will present a letter to the agency and mail letters to Congress. The procession will continue south on Ninth Street to Schneider Park, north of the Ninth Street bridge, where it will culminate with speeches, refreshments and music.

Some members of the Navajo Nation say the project will destroy an ancient burial ground in the reservoir site.

"We must protect the resting places of our ancestors," said Thomas Morris, Jr., president of the Diné Medicine Men's Association and a resident of Window Rock, Ariz., in a news release. "Too many of our sacred places have already been drowned, we can't let them keep taking more."

Congress has approved the project and \$17 million in initial funding.

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11/09/01

### **Citizens Rally in Durango to Save the Animas River**

Grassroots organizations march on Bureau of Reclamation in Durango, demand halt to controversial Animas-La Plata water project

DURANGO, Colorado, Nov. 9 -- On the day that government officials had set to mark the beginning of the latest incarnation of the controversial Animas-La Plata (A-LP) water project, a crowd of 150 people, including representatives of more than 35 native and non-native organizations from across the United States rallied on the sidewalk in front of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation here today, calling for the project's cancellation.

Chanting "No more dams!" and "Investigation, not excavation," the upbeat crowd marched through Durango's business district with colorful signs and banners on an unusually warm and sunny November day. Citing a number of improprieties and violations of federal laws and regulations, the groups demanded an investigation of the project by the General Accounting Office (GAO). The urgent nature of the group's complaints were heightened by the imminent excavation of ancient Native American gravesites that would occur in advance of construction.

"We want accountability, not more corporate subsidies," exclaimed Owen Lammers, executive director of LIVING RIVERS. "The real estate developers want to declare victory in this struggle, but we're here to tell them they're going to lose."

The noon-hour procession to the Bureau of Reclamation office began at Rotary Park and made its way along Durango's busy Main Avenue, eliciting enthusiastic expressions of support from shopkeepers, pedestrians and motorists. Among the speakers addressing the crowd were leaders of Native American, social justice, taxpayer and environmental groups from each of the Four Corners states.

Earlier in the day, members of the Southern Ute and Navajo nations gathered for a ceremonial blessing and pipe ceremony at the site of the proposed dam and reservoir, the principal structural components of the A-LP project.

Thomas Morris, Jr., president of Diné Medicinemen's Association from Window Rock, Arizona, and Sage Douglas Remington of the Southern Ute Grassroots Organization, based in Ignacio, Colorado, were among the speakers who urged the A-LP project be cancelled due to its destructive impact on traditional cultural and archeological sites.

A highlight of the event was the mailing of a letter to each member of the U.S. Congress, asking for the GAO investigation, a halt to future funding, and the ultimate de-authorization of the project. Letters were deposited in the U.S. mailbox on the sidewalk outside the Bureau's office building. [A text version of the letter is included below.]

The march continued to Schneider Park alongside the Animas River, where local musicians entertained the participants until late in the day.

The rally also signified the first public event in LIVING RIVERS' campaign for overall reform of the Bureau of Reclamation in its centennial year, 2002.

"We are asking the Bureau to shift away from reclamation toward restoration," said Mr. Lammers.

Additional information about LIVING RIVERS' "Reclaim the Bureau" campaign may be found on the organization's website:

<http://www.livingrivers2.org>

#### LIST OF SPONSORING GROUPS AND BUSINESSES FOR TODAY'S RALLY:

The following organizations and businesses have endorsed today's event and campaign:

Aimee's Catering, American Rivers, American Whitewater, Audubon Society of Greater Denver, Diné Medicinemens Association, Citizens Coal Council, Citizens Progressive Alliance, Colorado Environmental Coalition, Colorado Plateau River Guides, Colorado Rivers Alliance, Colorado Whitewater, Electors Concerned About Animas Water, Escalante Wilderness Project, Flagstaff Activist Network, Forest Conservation Council, Forest Guardians, Four Corners Riversports, Friends of Arizona Rivers, Friends of the Earth, Glen Canyon Institute, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Green Party of Utah, High Country Citizens Alliance, Living Rivers, Native Forest Network, Oil & Gas Accountability Project, Old House Bakery, Remarkable Earth Photography, Ridgeline & Open Space Coalition, San Juan Audubon, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Shared Blanket Gallery, Sierra Club, Southern Ute Grassroots Organization, Taxpayers for the Animas River, Tribal Environmental Watch Alliance, Utah Environmental Congress, Utah Rivers Council, Water Information Network and Wilderness Society.

#### LETTER TO CONGRESS

November 9, 2001

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the representatives of 25 organizations from the Four Corners states of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, Indian Nations, and other groups around the United States are writing to express our profound disappointment over the recently approved appropriation for the controversial Animas-La Plata (A-LP) water project.

We believe that once certain facts about this project are known, A-LP will be exposed as the least justified water project ever proposed to Congress. We ask your help to stop imminent harm to Native American cultural and archeological resources while an investigation of our concerns by the General Accounting Office (GAO) can be completed. In the meantime, we ask you to halt future funding for the project and to support legislation to de-authorize A-LP, once and for all.

Funding for "pre-construction" activities for this half-billion dollar project in southwestern Colorado and northwestern New Mexico was just approved in the Fiscal Year 2002 Energy and Water Appropriations bill. However, local citizens are united more than ever in our commitment and resolve to convince the Congress to de-authorize the costly, unpopular A-LP. It was authorized last year in the form of a rider, passed late in the night without benefit of sufficient debate. The collective voices of affected citizens were not heard. We call on you now for help in defending our land, water and cultural heritage.

A full and open review of the facts will confirm a well-established pattern of misrepresentations by project proponents. A GAO investigation is needed to evaluate the irregularities and improprieties identified by citizen groups over the years.

\* The American people have not been told what specific benefits this project would provide. No need for A-LP project water has been identified, and non-structural alternatives to the project were not given adequate consideration.

\* A-LP violates federal regulations that govern the planning of federally financed water projects. Project planners have steadfastly ignored these "principles and guidelines" of the President's Water Resources Council, which require rigorous economic and environmental analysis to protect the public against wasteful, special interest spending on projects like A-LP.

\* The Department of Interior and other federal agencies have refused numerous requests for documents germane to the project. In addition, three objections have been filed against the project's water rights. These agencies are currently defendants in citizen suits under the Freedom of Information Act, seeking to force the release of this information to the public.

\* A-LP has been promoted as a water rights settlement for the Colorado Ute Indian nations, but it does not satisfy community water needs. Southern Ute tribal members' proposal for a non-structural alternative to the A-LP project was dismissed.

\* An additional component of the project is a water pipeline to serve future industrial development on and off the Navajo Nation. Members of the Navajo Nation have expressed concerns that diversion of A-LP project water to non-Navajo users infringes upon their nation's reserved water rights.

We appreciate Congress' desire to assist Native Americans. However, A-LP is the wrong response to the question of resolving Indian water rights claims. Fiscally and environmentally sound options for serving community water needs on and off the

reservations were not considered. A-LP is a subsidy to industrial and real estate development, masquerading as a project to benefit Native Americans.

We need your help to prevent the misuse of federal funds, desecration of sacred sites, destruction of fish and wildlife, and further pollution of air and water. Overwhelming, compelling evidence exists to suggest that the public has been systematically deceived about the purposes and benefits of A-LP.

At a time when Congress is increasingly concerned with fiscal responsibility in the face of dramatically shifting budget priorities, it is even more crucial to take a closer look at A-LP. Spending huge sums of public money on a problem-ridden project where no rational analysis has been done is simply not prudent. Neither is it an appropriate means of addressing Indian water rights questions.

Irretrievable actions are imminent. Authorized pre-construction activities include the excavation of an extensive, centuries-old Native American cemetery, sacred to many in our region. Traditional native leaders are voicing strong objections to disturbing their ancestors' remains. Please help us find a way to prevent this, pending the outcome of the requested GAO investigation.

We invite you to come visit us, and take a tour of the affected area. Let us explain to you firsthand our concerns and the issues we face; let us show you why A-LP is the problem, not the answer. We would be happy to discuss this matter further with you or your staff. Please feel free to contact one or all of the groups listed below for additional information.

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11/09/01

### **Coalition Asks Congress to De-Authorize AL-P**

November 9, 2001

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the representatives of 25 organizations from the Four Corners states of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, Indian Nations, and other groups around the United States are writing to express our profound disappointment over the recently approved appropriation for the controversial Animas-La Plata (A-LP) water project.

We believe that once certain facts about this project are known, A-LP will be exposed as the least justified water project ever proposed to Congress. We ask your help to stop imminent harm to Native American cultural and archeological resources while an investigation of our concerns by the General Accounting Office (GAO) can be completed. In the meantime, we ask you to halt future funding for the project and to support legislation to de-authorize A-LP, once and for all.

Funding for "pre-construction" activities for this half-billion dollar project in southwestern Colorado and northwestern New Mexico was just approved in the Fiscal Year 2002

Energy and Water Appropriations bill. However, local citizens are united more than ever in our commitment and resolve to convince the Congress to de-authorize the costly, unpopular A-LP.

It was authorized last year in the form of a rider, passed late in the night without benefit of sufficient debate. The collective voices of affected citizens were not heard. We call on you now for help in defending our land, water and cultural heritage.

A full and open review of the facts will confirm a well-established pattern of misrepresentations by project proponents. A GAO investigation is needed to evaluate the irregularities and improprieties identified by citizen groups over the years.

- The American people have not been told what specific benefits this project would provide. No need for A-LP project water has been identified, and non-structural alternatives to the project were not given adequate consideration.
- A-LP violates federal regulations that govern the planning of federally financed water projects. Project planners have steadfastly ignored these "principles and guidelines" of the President's Water Resources Council, which require rigorous economic and environmental analysis to protect the public against wasteful, special interest spending on projects like A-LP.
- The Department of Interior and other federal agencies have refused numerous requests for documents germane to the project. In addition, three objections have been filed against the project's water rights. These agencies are currently defendants in citizen suits under the Freedom of Information Act, seeking to force the release of this information to the public.
- A-LP has been promoted as a water rights settlement for the Colorado Ute Indian nations, but it does not satisfy community water needs. Southern Ute tribal members' proposal for a non-structural alternative to the A-LP project was dismissed.
- An additional component of the project is a water pipeline to serve future industrial development on and off the Navajo Nation. Members of the Navajo Nation have expressed concerns that diversion of A-LP project water to non-Navajo users infringes upon their nation's reserved water rights.

We appreciate Congress' desire to assist Native Americans. However, A-LP is the wrong response to the question of resolving Indian water rights claims. Fiscally and environmentally sound options for serving community water needs on and off the reservations were not considered. A-LP is a subsidy to industrial and real estate development, masquerading as a project to benefit Native Americans.

We need your help to prevent the misuse of federal funds, desecration of sacred sites, destruction of fish and wildlife, and further pollution of air and water. Overwhelming and compelling evidence exists to suggest that the public has been systematically deceived about the purposes and benefits of A-LP.

At a time when Congress is increasingly concerned with fiscal responsibility in the face of dramatically shifting budget priorities, it is even more crucial to take a closer look at A-LP. Spending huge sums of public money on a problem-ridden project where no rational analysis has been done is simply not prudent. Neither is it an appropriate means of addressing Indian water rights questions.

Irretrievable actions are imminent. Authorized pre-construction activities include the excavation of an extensive, centuries-old Native American cemetery, sacred to many in our region. Traditional native leaders are voicing strong objections to disturbing their ancestors' remains. Please help us find a way to prevent this, pending the outcome of the requested GAO investigation.

We invite you to come visit us, and take a tour of the affected area. Let us explain to you firsthand our concerns and the issues we face; let us show you why A-LP is the problem, not the answer. We would be happy to discuss this matter further with you or your staff. Please feel free to contact one or all of the groups listed below for additional information.

Sincerely,

Owen Lammers Executive Director Living Rivers

On behalf of: American Rivers, American Whitewater, Citizens Coal Council, Citizens Progressive Alliance, Colorado Plateau River Guides, Colorado Environmental Coalition, Colorado Rivers Alliance, Colorado Water Policy Institute, Colorado Wild, Electors Concerned About Animas Water, Diné Medicinemens Association, Escalante Wilderness Project, Forest Guardians, Forest Conservation Council, Friends of the Earth, Green Party of Utah, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Native Environmental Justice Advocacy Fund, Native Forest Network, Oil & Gas Accountability Project, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Southern Ute Grassroots Organization, Taxpayers for the Animas River, Utah Environmental Congress, Utah Rivers Council.

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11/09/01

### **Medicine man prays at A-LP site**

By Brian Newsome Durango Herald Staff Writer

Thomas Morris Jr. said he did not brave lightning and pelting rain Thursday to pray for the fall of the Animas La Plata Project – he prayed to the ancestral spirits A-LP would likely displace.

The Navajo medicine man, standing atop a hill that will be underwater if the project is completed, called out to the spirits of people who may be buried at the site of the future dam and reservoir southwest of Durango. He asked for the spirits' forgiveness and protection should their remains be relocated or submerged.

The A-LP project will divert water from the Animas River to the reservoir to provide water for the Ute Indians promised in a 19th-century U.S. treaty.

American Indian remains probably will be uncovered during the construction, according to Pat Schumacher, Durango manager for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which will build A-LP.

"It'd be real rare if we didn't run into some burials, because it's real common throughout Southwest Colorado," Schumacher said. Some sites could remain underwater, but others would have to be excavated, he said.

For Morris, president of the Diné Medicine Men's Association, this means more than removing bones and artifacts. It means disrespecting the dead and angering the spirits.

"This is the valley, here, where our ancestors have been laid to rest," he said.

Kenny Frost, a Southern Ute Tribal Member who works as a consultant dealing with burial sites and ancestry, said, "Our (the American Indian) belief is you're not supposed to disturb those who have passed on." He said traditionally there is a purification process for those who disturb the dead.

Morris chanted prayers in his native tongue and performed sacred rites amid five other AL-P opponents at the ceremony. Frost concluded the ceremony by singing a song to the spirits.

The group planned a second ceremony for sunset today to celebrate life and beauty at the same place, near a small parking area along County Road 211.

American Indian remains may not be the only discovery once the project begins. Oral history indicates a non-Indian family cemetery might exist somewhere within the site, Schumacher said.

If Indian remains are discovered, Schumacher said they would likely be ancestral Puebloan remains and would not be found in a burial ground comparable to modern-day cemeteries. He said the ancestral Puebloans buried their dead near kivas, large rooms used for religious and other purposes.

But how the ancestors were buried is not the issue for Morris.

"From the Western (point of view) there's no respect for native people, for their burial," he said.

Non-Indians give respect to their own dead at funerals, he said, but do not offer that same respect to other cultures. "We, native people, respect nature and leave it alone," he said.

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11/09/01

## **Official beginning declared for A-LP**

By Bob Schober Durango Herald Staff Writer With digging probably a year or more away, today marks the second time in nine years that federal officials will attempt to officially start construction of the Animas-La Plata water project.

The chief of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation named today as the official start of construction as well as the deadline for the four nontribal partners of the project to prepay their share of construction costs without incurring interest.

The designation allows the bureau to begin physical projects, although actual earth moving is at least a year away, officials said.

The first official start date, 1992, was derailed by a lawsuit filed on behalf of a coalition of environmental groups. That resulted in an injunction against "irreversible construction," nine years of project revision, new environmental impact studies and funding cutbacks.

Now, project supporters are hopeful opponents will finally stay out of court.

"There's been a huge amount of compromise forged over the years," said Sam Maynes, the Durango lawyer representing the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute tribes. "The main thing is, this is the best way to settle the tribes' water claims."

Don't be so sure, said Lori Potter, a Denver lawyer who filed the 1992 lawsuit on behalf of the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, Taxpayers for the Animas River and the Four Corners Action Coalition, among others. The groups are mulling over another possible lawsuit, but no decision has been made, Potter said. "It's a definite possibility," she said.

Maynes said he isn't surprised.

"I anticipate that at some point in time the national environmental groups will file a suit," he said. "They have nothing to lose. Delay is their game."

Nonsense, said Michael Black, spokesman for the Taxpayers for the Animas River.

"The reason they haven't built it is because it's a stupid project, and people realize that," Black said.

At least one group opposing the project has challenged the Department of Interior for not complying with the federal Freedom of Information Act.

Citizens' Progressive Alliance, a watchdog group based in Colorado and northwest New Mexico that opposes A-LP, filed a lawsuit Sept. 10 against the Interior Department for not providing a report evaluating the Ute tribes' water rights.

"We think the documents we are likely to get will expose so many violations of law and federal policy that it would be sufficient evidence to call for a grand jury investigation,"

said group spokeswoman Jeanne Englert. "We'll get the documents, and we'll see if that requires further action. We're still in the process of exposing their lies."

Nevertheless, today's date remains important for two reasons. As the date of the official start of construction, the Bureau of Reclamation can begin "irreversible construction," which would make stopping the project much more difficult.

"It's a huge step forward," Maynes said. "If the environmental groups are going to file, they'll have to do so before any irreversible construction."

And Congress recently approved \$16 million, plus an additional \$1 million from the fiscal 2001 federal budget, for the project.

"This will be enough to give us a good start," said Pat Schumacher, Bureau of Reclamation manager for Durango.

The San Juan Water Commission decided Sept. 2 to prepay its \$6.9 million share, saving an estimated \$2.6 million in interest.

The Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority, which is paying the \$7.3 million share of the A-LP Water Conservancy District, will save about \$2.5 million in interest, said Mike Griswold, president of the A-LP Conservancy District.

Those interest savings could be passed on to the city of Durango, should the municipality decide to buy water from the district in the future, Griswold said.

"We expect the cost of water would be about half (of what it is now)," he said.

A congressional conference committee passed the \$16 million appropriation for A-LP on Oct. 17. Federal officials expect the appropriations bill will be signed into law by President Bush.

The funding fell short of the \$21 million originally requested for the project for this fiscal year, but the lesser amount will pay for some key initial elements of the project – relocation of two natural gas pipelines, final design of the pumping plant and reservoir, and a study of archaeological sites that could be damaged by the construction.

The \$343.8 million A-LP project was authorized last year by Congress after the Clinton administration supported a scaled-back version. With the strong support of the Department of Interior and Colorado and New Mexico lawmakers, A-LP was approved by the House as part of an omnibus appropriations bill. The Senate later overwhelmingly approved the project.

The A-LP legislation spells out a seven-year time frame for completion, with funds appropriated on a year-by-year basis.

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11/09/01

## **Utah Environmental Groups Strive to Halt Planned Dam**

By Layne Miller Special to the Salt Lake Tribune

Several Utah environmental groups are supporting attempts to derail construction of a controversial dam near Durango, Colo.

David Orr, director of field programs for Living Rivers, with offices in Moab, is corralling Utahns to attend a rally in Durango today in opposition to construction of the Animas-La Plata project and support efforts to have the dam's authorization withdrawn.

"The project is one of the most controversial and contentious water development schemes in U. S. history," Orr said.

"Our campaign is designed to point out the deficiencies in the planning process for the project and to organize opposition against it."

Orr said a coalition of environmental and American Indian groups have agreed to attend the rally. Environmental groups include the Green Party of Utah, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, The Sierra Club and Utah Environmental Congress in addition to Living Rivers.

Under the current plan, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation wants to divert 265,000 acre feet of water from the Animas River, just outside the city limits of Durango in Southwest Colorado.

The water will be pumped more than 500 feet uphill to a reservoir formed by the damming of Ridges Basin, a state wildlife area and elk refuge. The water will be used for industrial and culinary purposes.

The Animas-La Plata project was first proposed in the 1930s and was authorized by Congress in 1968.

In the face of criticism from taxpayer and environmental groups, the project was scaled back and the location of the dam moved.

In 1972, the Southern Ute and Mountain Ute tribes in Colorado went to court to claim 93,000 acre feet of water from the project under a promise they received from the federal government in a treaty signed in 1868. Under terms of the latest agreement the Utes will receive 60,000 acre feet of water from the project.

The project nearly died in 1995 when the U. S. House of Representatives stripped \$10 million from it. The money was restored last year only after pressure from Colorado Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell.

Although the Navajo and Southern Ute tribes support the project, Thomas Morris Jr., president of the DinZ Medicine Men's Association, said his group is opposing the project and will attend today's rally.

Morris said Navajo Dam on the San Juan River in Arizona and the Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River near Page, Ariz., which creates Lake Powell in southern Utah, have inundated many prehistoric and historic American Indian sites.

The Animas joins the La Plata River, which flows into the San Juan River, which then meets the Colorado River at Lake Powell.

"We must protect the resting places of our ancestors," said Morris.

Pat Schumacher, a spokesman for the Bureau of Reclamation office in Durango, said Wednesday that getting the \$710 million project approved was difficult, but compromises reached during the planning process have brought about a coalition of user groups that include non-Indians and three different tribes.

Archaeological work on the impacted area will comply with all laws relating to American Indian remains and artifacts.

"We know from our surface inventories that there are 300 archaeological sites in the reservoir basin," said Schumacher.

"We are working out a plan now with the tribes for what we will do with any burials we might find. That agreement is almost completed."

He said artifacts of significance will be stored at the Anasazi Heritage Museum near Dolores, Colo.

The archaeological work is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2002 and construction in 2003. © Copyright 2001, The Salt Lake Tribune

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11/01/01

## **Glen Canyon Dam: Dam Failure Study**

By Stephen E. Latham, Bureau of Reclamation July 1998

Note: This document is abridged

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to estimate the magnitude of flooding that would result along the Colorado River from Lake Powell to Hoover Dam due to the failure of Glen Canyon Dam. This study was requested, pursuant to policy, by the Bureau of Reclamation. This information can be used in Reclamation's emergency action plan for Glen Canyon Dam, and as a reference in preparing inundation maps for areas downstream of the dam. It can also be used to help local authorities develop warning and evacuation plans.

## Flood Scenarios Evaluated

The following two scenarios were considered to cover the range of events that could cause failure of Glen Canyon dam. Both scenarios represent worst-case scenarios that result in the largest uncontrolled releases of the reservoir. Various assumptions were made to help test the sensitivity of results to these assumptions.

1) Dam failure caused by foundation failure or other defect (Sunny-Day Failure). This scenario includes a 100-year base snowmelt inflow to Lake Powell.

2) Dam failure caused by overtopping brought about by the overtopping failure of Flaming Gorge Dam. This scenario involves an extremely large flood inflow to Lake Powell 580 miles upstream.

For this study, it was assumed that Flaming Gorge Dam would fail during overtopping. Should this overtopping failure occur with the starting reservoir water surface at normal capacity, a combined outflow of 5,320,300 acre-feet would result. With Lake Powell at its normal capacity (elevation 3700 feet), this combined outflow would exceed the available surcharge storage capacity at Glen Canyon by 2,498,560 acre-feet.

The flood forecasting computer program, BOSS DAMBRK (DAMBRK), was used to help prepare this study. For the Sunny-Day Failure, the initial water surface for the computer model was assumed to be elevation 3711, which is the design maximum water surface at Lake Powell. For the Overtopping Failure, the initial reservoir water surface for the computer model was assumed to be elevation 3700, or the top of active conservation pool. To determine the duration and magnitude of overtopping potential, a flood inflow hydrograph (due to the Flaming Gorge failure) was first estimated. The Dam Failure Inundation Study for Flaming Gorge Dam of January 1990, was used as a reference to help develop this hydrograph. Since that study ended at Green River, Utah (about 130 miles from the upper reaches of Lake Powell), peak discharges were extrapolated downstream to Lake Powell, and an estimated inflow hydrograph was generated using the Flaming Gorge failure volume (5,320,300 acre-feet). It would take roughly 34 hours for the maximum stage of the flood wave to arrive at the upper reaches of Lake Powell. Routing the estimated flood inflow hydrograph indicated that Glen Canyon Dam would be overtopped for a duration of about 40 hours, with a peak depth of 2.9 feet over the parapet wall.

While it is unlikely this overtopping flow would cause the dam to fail, for the purposes of evaluating this scenario, failure was assumed.

Outflow assumptions prior to the Overtopping Failure were as follows. Measures would likely have been taken at Glen Canyon Dam to lower Lake Powell, probably by opening the spillways 2 to 3 hours after notification of the Flaming Gorge Dam failure. Upon arrival of the flood wave at Lake Powell, it was assumed that the spillway gates would be opened uniformly to the normal maximum discharge of 238,000 cfs.

## Study Results

Evaluation indicates that the leading edge of the flood wave from Glen Canyon Dam failure would likely reach Diamond Creek (Mile 225) in 10 hours to 12 hours for either failure scenario. This converts to a flood wave travel rate of 20 miles per hour (mph). Arrival of maximum flood stage would occur about 20 hours to 22 hours after dam failure.

The leading, edge of the Overtopping Failure flood wave would likely reach South American Point (Mile 296) in 13 hours to 15 hours after dam failure. This equates to a flood rate in the upper reaches of Lake Mead of 17 mph to 18 mph. Arrival of maximum flood stage would occur about 19 hours to 20 hours after dam failure

The reason for the maximum flood stage times at South American Point being less than at Diamond Creek is likely due to a combination of at least two things: 1) a much shallower channel slope at the upper reaches of Lake Mead, and (2) the fact that the canyon cross section at South American Point is suddenly very narrow and creates a constriction producing some backwater.

The Overtopping Failure of Glen Canyon was routed through Lake Mead and Hoover Dam. The results were practically identical for the water surface elevations assumed for Lake Mead. Assuming Hoover Dam does not fail, overtopping would begin about 23 to 24 hours after the failure of Glen Canyon Dam, continue for about 258 hours (10.75 days), and reach a peak depth of about 68 feet over the parapet wall on the dam crest at hour 74. The depth corresponds to a maximum water surface elevation in Lake Mead of 1304 feet. Maximum discharges would be about 485,600 cfs through the river outlet works, powerplant, and spillways, and 2.02 million cfs over the dam crest. This makes a total discharge immediately downstream from Hoover Dam of over 2.5 million cfs.

Obviously any type of structure less than 400 feet to 500 feet above the Colorado River between Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Mead as shown on USGS topographic maps would be completely inundated and destroyed by the flood from either type of failure. Even Navajo Bridge, which is about 400 feet above the Colorado River, could be damaged or destroyed. Results indicate depths of around 500 feet at this location. Flooding of this altitude here in the canyon would be very severe and lethal. Anyone still on the river at the time, would have to climb the equivalent of a 40-story building, at a minimum, to have any hope of surviving. The study indicated that the travel rate for the leading edge of the flood wave was estimated to be 20 mph to 25 mph. Although there have been no dam failures of this magnitude observed, historically, these travel rates may be reasonable for this huge a failure outflow. Some flood wave travel times from other dam failures with similar downstream reaches include:

(1) St. Francis Dam, California, failed on March 12, 1928. Flows traveled 18 mph in the first 1.5 miles downstream from the dam. Peak discharge unknown.

(2) Hell Hole Dam, California, failed on December 23, 1964. Flows traveled 14 mph 1 through the narrow and uninhabited rock canyon 56 miles to Folsom Reservoir. Peak discharge was estimated to be 260,000 cfs. Volume released was 24,800 acre-feet.

(3) Teton Dam, Idaho, failed on June 5, 1976. Flows traveled 19 mph in the narrow canyon for 2.5 miles and averaged 16 mph for the first 8.8 miles downstream from the dam. Peak discharge was estimated to be 2,300,000 cfs. Volume released was 251,700 acre-feet.

(4). Little Deer Creek Dam, Utah, failed on June 16, 1963. Flows traveled 18.9 mph for the first 2.2 miles downstream from the dam, Peak discharge was estimated to be 47,000 cfs. Volume released was 1000 acre-feet.

The study indicated that flood depths in the upper reaches of Lake Mead would progress 507 feet at river mile 238, to 246 feet at river mile 281.5 (approximate end of Pearce Basin). More populated areas around Lake Mead that would be inundated include marinas, campgrounds, and other concentrations of population and activity. Water depths would be around 94 feet above the July target elevation of 1219.61 feet for Lake Mead.

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Contact info: Stephen E. Latham, 303 445-2519 Peer reviewed by: Wayne Graham, 303-445-2553

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Living Rivers Currents 11/01/01

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**Media Advisory** 10/31/01

## **Groups to Launch National Campaign to De-Authorize A-LP Water Project**

### **Contacts**

[Owen Lammers](#), Executive Director (435) 259-1063

[David Orr](#), Director of Field Programs (435) 259-1063

November 9, March & Rally in Durango, Colorado

MOAB, UTAH -- The Animas-La Plata (A-LP) project, one of the most controversial and contentious water development schemes in U.S. history, is the focus of a de-authorization campaign that will be launched November 9 by a coalition of Native American and non-Indian organizations. The project, which includes a dam, reservoir, pumping system, and water pipeline, was authorized last year by Congress without a hearing. Citizens have called foul, and are demanding that the government repeal the authorization legislation.

A rally will be held in Durango, Colorado on Friday, November 9 to announce the campaign and detail the proposed alternatives that the coalition supports.

The central element of the A-LP project is Ridges Basin Dam and Reservoir near Durango, which would inundate valuable wildlife habitat and an area of great archeological and historic significance to the indigenous people of the Four Corners region.

"We are energized by the support we're seeing for stopping this project, and doing what's right for our people and for the river," said Sage Douglas Remington, Director of Southern Ute Grassroots Organization and resident of Ignacio, Colorado. "Congress got hoodwinked last year into voting for the project without hearing from the people, but it's not too late to fix the mistake."

Recognizing that numerous big dam projects have been shelved in the past, despite authorizing legislation, the coalition members are optimistic that they can persuade Congress to authorize an environmentally sound and socially beneficial alternative while de-authorizing A-LP.

"The billion-dollar Auburn Dam in California has been stopped dead in its tracks for fifteen years because of citizen pressure," said Mike Black of Taxpayers for the Animas River, a leader in the effort to stop A-LP in his hometown of Durango. "Echo Park Dam in Utah, Orme Dam in Arizona, and Hooker Dam in New Mexico were all cancelled in the face of public opposition, and we'll do the same with A-LP!"

A-LP would cost upwards of \$500 million with no demonstrated need for the diverted and stored water. November 9 is the date when local water agencies must commit their token share of project costs. But Congress has not yet appropriated any of the 82 percent share of taxpayer funds necessary for construction to begin.

A major concern with the project is the proposed destruction of an ancient burial ground in the reservoir site, considered by traditional people to be sacred. A large number of graves would be dug up for the Ridges Basin Dam.

"We must protect the resting places of our ancestors," said Thomas Morris, Jr., President of the Diné Medicinemen's Association, and a resident of Window Rock, Arizona. "Too many of our sacred places have already been drowned, we can't let them keep taking more."

Morris noted that Navajo Dam on the San Juan River and Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River destroyed countless Navajo sacred sites. The medicinemen's association has called for decommissioning these dams and restoring the San Juan and Colorado as free-flowing rivers. "We must prevent additional damage," he said.

Environmental groups are supporting the indigenous peoples' concerns, and calling for an overhaul of the federal Bureau of Reclamation, the agency responsible for development of most of the rivers of the West. The A-LP project's construction is scheduled to begin in the agency's centennial year, 2002.

"We are asking the Bureau to shift away from reclamation toward restoration," said Owen Lammers of LIVING RIVERS. "The agency has never done the job it was given by Teddy Roosevelt in 1902, to promote small family farms; instead it has from the beginning acted as a subsidy for corporate agribusiness and real estate development. A-LP is one of the worst examples of this long, sad history."

The coalition is calling for major changes in the way the Reclamation agency does business, including ending support for corporate farms and requiring mandatory water conservation measures to be put in place for the first time. In the Colorado River basin, the coalition wants a full review of the entire plumbing system--all the dams and diversions--and to take down some of the dams, including Glen Canyon Dam near Page, Arizona.

"They've had a century to get it right, and they've failed miserably at their charge," said Lammers. "The only thing they've really succeeded at is turning the rivers of the West into an elaborate, expensive network of pipes, ditches, and canals, and in driving numerous species to the brink of extinction."

#### MARCH AND RALLY ON NOVEMBER 9

Members of the news media are invited to attend the rally and march on November 9, which will kick off at noon at Rotary Park at 15th Street and Second Avenue in Durango. Marchers will then proceed to the Bureau of Reclamation office at 835 Second Street, where they will present a letter to the agency and mail letters to the US Congress. Then the procession will travel westward down 9th Street to the rally site at Schneider Park, on the banks of the Animas River. Brief speeches will be given by key campaign leaders. Refreshments and musical entertainment will be provided.

Organizational representatives will be available onsite for interviews. The following groups have endorsed the event and campaign to date:

American Rivers, American Whitewater, Diné Medicinemens Association, Citizens Coal Council, Citizens Progressive Alliance, Colorado Environmental Coalition, Colorado Plateau River Guides, Colorado Rivers Alliance, Colorado Whitewater, Electors Concerned About Animas Water, Escalante Wilderness Project, Flagstaff Activist Network, Four Corners Riversports, Friends of Arizona Rivers, Friends of the Earth, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Green Party of Utah, High Country Citizens Alliance, Living Rivers, Native Forest Network, Remarkable Earth Photography, Ridgeline & Open Space Coalition, San Juan Audubon, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Shared Blanket Gallery, Sierra Club, Southern Ute Grassroots Organization, Taxpayers for the Animas River, Tribal Environmental Watch Alliance, Utah Environmental Congress, and Wilderness Society.

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Reference 10/26/01

### **GCMRC Comments to USFWS on Humpback Chub Recovery Goals**

[CLICK HERE](#) to read recovery goal comments from Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center

Dr. Robert T. Muth, Director  
Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
P.O. Box 25486  
Denver Federal Center  
Denver, CO 80225

Re: GCMRC Comments on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Recovery Goals for the Humpback Chub (*Gila Cypha*) of the Colorado River Basin A Supplement and Amendment to the Humpback Chub Recovery Plan (draft dated September 7, 2001)

Dear Dr. Muth:

We support the work of Region 6 in developing the draft recovery goals for the Humpback chub and appreciate the opportunity to comment on this draft. The development of effective recovery goals for the conservation of humpback chub is a monumental task. We acknowledge the work that has gone into this first step and hope that our comments can make a positive contribution to improving the final product.

On October 8, 1996, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior signed the Record of Decision concerning the operation of Glen Canyon Dam. This action, in combination with the Grand Canyon Protection Act of 1992, established the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program (AMP). The AMP is composed of the Secretary of the Interior's Designee, the Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG), the Technical Work Group

(TWG), the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC), and independent review panels.

The AMWG and TWG have the responsibility of recommending management objectives associated with Grand Canyon resources and making recommendations for the development of a long-term monitoring program to assess those resources. GCMRC is charged with developing and implementing long-term monitoring and research programs to obtain information needed by the AMP.

The Humpback chub (*Gila cypha*) is one of a suite of resources that the AMP is charged with managing. Given that the largest and only known successfully-reproducing population of Humpback chub in the lower basin of the Colorado River is within the Grand Canyon and falls under the responsibilities of the AMP, it is appropriate that GCMRC offer comments on the Draft Recovery Goals. However, it should be noted that the comments contained within the attached document are solely the views of the scientists within GCMRC and may not reflect the views of all of the AMP participants.

The comments contained within the attached document are relevant to the September 7, 2001, draft of "Recovery Goals for the Humpback Chub (*Gila Cypha*) of the Colorado River Basin A Supplement and Amendment to the Humpback Chub Recovery Plan" (hereafter referred to as the "recovery goals"). The attached document is organized in 2 sections: (1) general comments on the process of developing the recovery goals, and (2) specific comments on the recovery goals. Within each of these sections, our comments are numbered to facilitate any responses that are forthcoming following the review process.

Sincerely, /s/  
Dr. Barry D. Gold, Chief  
Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center

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## **Join river lovers and advocates from the Four Corners States and Indian Nations to launch the de-authorization campaign for the Animas La Plata Project...**

**When:** 12:00 noon, Friday, November 9

**Where:** Durango, Colorado

Start at Rotary Park, 15th St.& 2nd Ave.  
March to Bureau of Reclamation office, 835 E. 2nd Ave.  
Then to Schneider Park - music & refreshments, 9th & Roosa

### **The Importance of the Animas River**

The free-flowing Animas River is a critically important, life-giving force for the communities and economy of southwestern Colorado and northwestern New Mexico. It is one of the last remaining undammed rivers in the southwestern United States. Rising

in Colorado's San Juan Mountains, the Animas defines the heart of Durango, Colorado, as it passes through the city, and flows into the San Juan River near Farmington, New Mexico.

The Animas is the San Juan River's largest tributary; its flows help sustain the dying San Juan's ecosystem downstream in New Mexico, where its native fish populations have been rendered virtually extinct by numerous diversions and an unnecessary dam. The survival of the San Juan River, and the recovery of its ecosystem, may depend on keeping the Animas River alive and healthy.

### **The Tragedy of the A-LP Project**

Authorized by Congress in 2000, the Animas-La Plata Project (A-LP) is a water-wasting, environmentally destructive boondoggle that will seriously impact both the Animas and San Juan Rivers. There is no demonstrated need for the project, it's merely a subsidy for real estate developers, coal companies, and electric power utilities.

A-LP was promoted to Congress as a water rights settlement for two Ute Indian tribes, The tribes could benefit far more by implementing environmentally sound alternatives to A-LP, but no alternatives were considered. Congress held no hearings on the project last year before voting to authorize it.

The half-billion dollar fraud will drain water from the Animas River at a point near downtown Durango, and pump it 500 vertical feet over a mountain to a proposed reservoir in Ridges Basin. This pristine mountain basin has been a prime area for human habitation dating back 8,000 years. Untold ancient burial sites are located there which hold great significance to traditional Native Americans, who strongly object to disturbing these remains. The basin is a critical wildlife habitat area and includes pristine wetlands which would be lost forever were the 215-foot high dam and its 1,500 acre reservoir to be constructed.

November 9 is the date when local water agencies must commit their token share of project costs. But Congress has not yet appropriated funds for the massive federal share of the project, so groundbreaking has been put on hold.

### **De-fund & De-Authorize A-LP!**

River advocates from across the country want to keep it that way. Project opponents, led by LIVING RIVERS, are organizing to stop federal funding for A-LP and get Congress to de-authorize the project. For nearly half a century activists have succeeded in de-authorizing numerous dams around the country, and several in the Colorado River watershed. The most famous, Echo Park Dam, was proposed for Dinosaur National Monument. Ridges Basin Reservoir and the ALP will be next.

De-authorizing ALP is a key component of LIVING RIVERS' ten-point nationwide campaign to Reclaim the Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec). With its centennial coming up in June 2002, river activists are demanding that BuRec end its compulsive dam-building behavior and enter the era of dam removal and river restoration.

Join American Rivers, American Whitewater, Diné Medicinemens Association, Citizens Coal Council, Citizens Progressive Alliance, Colorado Environmental Coalition, Colorado Plateau River Guides, Colorado Rivers Alliance, Colorado Whitewater, Electors Concerned About Animas Water, Escalante Wilderness Project, Flagstaff Activist Network, Four Corners Riversports, Friends of Arizona Rivers, Friends of the Earth, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Green Party of Utah, High Country Citizens Alliance, Living Rivers, Native Forest Network, Remarkable Earth Photography, Ridgeline & Open Space Coalition, San Juan Audubon, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Shared Blanket Gallery, Sierra Club, Southern Ute Grassroots Organization, Taxpayers for the Animas River, Tribal Environmental Watch Alliance, Utah Environmental Congress, and Wilderness Society and others to:

**Rally & march for water to meet human needs, not corporate greed.**

**Celebrate & preserve Native American heritage, and protect ancient burial grounds.**

**De-authorize A-LP Now!**

**Take Action!**

Please write to your Member of Congress at House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515, and your Senators at U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20505, and ask them to DE-AUTHORIZE A-LP!

**More Information:**

[Download Color Rally Poster \(70k PDF file\)](#)

[Download black and white Rally Poster \(94k PDF file\)](#)

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LR Press Release 10/10/01

**Dam Security Measures Flawed--Public Kept in Dark Over Risk**

CONTACT: Owen Lammers, Executive Director, 435-259-1063, David Orr, Director of Field Programs, 435-259-1063

In the wake of the tragic airline hijacking attacks of September 11, 2001, emergency security measures have been put in place at major dams in the Colorado River system. But the newly evolving security plans of the federal government are flawed, and reflect a continuing unwillingness to seriously address dam safety issues, as before the attacks.

LIVING RIVERS has learned that the new measures instituted by the Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec) are weakest at two of the system's most vulnerable structures, Glen Canyon and Flaming Gorge Dams. The failure of either could set the stage for a series of catastrophic events with massive human and economic impacts from Utah to Mexico.

While federal resources are currently focused on protecting 726-foot Hoover Dam near Las Vegas from possible terrorist attack, comparatively little is being done at Glen Canyon Dam upstream on the Colorado River, and at Flaming Gorge Dam upstream on the Green River. These two dams represent the second and third largest dams, respectively, in the Colorado River basin, after Hoover.

Dam failure, whether caused by terrorist attack or by floodwaters, would cause not only catastrophic damage to the reservoir and immediate downstream areas, but also a possible "domino effect" that could result in major impacts on the water supply systems of more than 25 million people in the lower basin, and lead to economic disruptions in Nevada, Arizona, California, and northwestern Mexico.

#### Focus on Hoover Ignores Real Risks

While around-the-clock patrols at Hoover prevent boaters from approaching the dam within a mile upstream and a half-mile downstream, no such controls are in place at either Glen Canyon or Flaming Gorge. Boats may freely approach Glen Canyon Dam from the downstream side, and only a small-diameter cable 150 yards from the dam impedes boater access from the reservoir. Boats have free access to both the visitor center and dam area at Flaming Gorge.

Trucks and trailers are prohibited from crossing Hoover Dam, and passenger vehicles are subject to search by state highway patrol officers at checkpoints on either side of the dam. Yet truck traffic still flows freely over the crest of Flaming Gorge Dam and across the Glen Canyon Dam Bridge, as before September 11. No security checkpoints have been erected at either site.

Oddly, despite the extraordinary security attention Hoover is receiving, it is by far the best-constructed component of the Colorado River plumbing system. Built into massive igneous rock canyon walls and designed with enough mass for gravity to hold its reservoir--the nation's largest--in check, a major attack is unlikely to cause structural failure. The real problems are further upriver.

Near Page, Arizona stands 710-foot Glen Canyon Dam, tucked into porous, weak, Navajo sandstone that constantly leaks water around the dam. Large pieces of sandstone adjacent to the dam routinely break away. BuRec must install increasingly longer rock bolts in an ongoing attempt to protect the dam's powerplant from falling rock, and to ensure stability of the dam's abutment. This past summer workers could be seen patching the dam's face where massive slabs of concrete had fallen off.

In 1983, high water flows caused the dam's sandstone spillway tunnels to crumble in places, posing a threat to the integrity of the abutment. The dam's greatest vulnerability is in a high-water event.

Any compromise of the crumbling sandstone abutments would allow two years' annual flow of the Colorado River to blast its way around the dam, scouring the Grand Canyon before surging across Lake Mead on its way to Hoover Dam. In the best-case scenario, this water would flow over the top of Hoover, creating a downstream flood similar to that were Hoover to fail by itself. At worst, failure of Glen Canyon would compromise Hoover Dam, multiplying the flow by a factor of two, and sending four years' annual flow of the Colorado River heading toward Mexico all at once. "Glen Canyon Dam is an accident waiting to happen," said Owen Lammers of LIVING RIVERS. "Not only should security be stepped-up, but serious plans must be put in place for the dam's controlled decommissioning, as the dam very likely could fail on its own."

A failure at Flaming Gorge Dam, with a full pool of 3.7 million acre-feet, would threaten Glen Canyon Dam downstream if Glen Canyon's reservoir were incapable of accommodating the inflow. This is often the case during peak flow periods in the spring and early summer. As at Glen Canyon, security at Flaming Gorge is comparatively weak.

Regardless of the scenario, the most significant damage would occur below Hoover Dam. Despite their smaller size, Davis, Parker and Imperial Dams constitute critically important elements of the Colorado River plumbing system. These dams are not constructed to absorb massive inflows, and would be severely damaged by a catastrophic flood event. The Central Arizona Project Canal, California Aqueduct, and All-American Canal — the region's major water delivery systems — would also be jeopardized. Municipal water supplies for cities from Las Vegas to San Diego could be wiped out.

The riverside communities of Laughlin, Nevada, Needles and Blythe, California, and Bullhead City, Lake Havasu City, and Yuma, Arizona are all at risk in the event of a major lower basin flood. The reservations of the Fort Mojave, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Chemehuevi, Cocopah, and Quechan nations lie along the lower river and are all at great risk of flooding, as are numerous Mexican farming communities in the Colorado River delta region. Three interstate highways and numerous oil and gas pipelines cross the river below Laughlin.

The federal government is supposed to make available dam failure inundation maps to inform the public of these potential threats. However, BuRec recently told LIVING RIVERS that access to these maps is restricted under new security measures. LIVING RIVERS has filed a Freedom of Information Act request, which had not yet been honored at presstime.

"We certainly don't want to aid any terrorist in mapping out potential targets, but these safety concerns exist regardless of the threat of terrorism," said Lammers. "It's time for the Bureau to get serious about addressing dam safety, starting with ensuring the public is fully aware of the risks its projects pose."

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Internet Info Resources:

Bureau of Reclamation: [www.usbr.gov](http://www.usbr.gov)

Hoover Dam: [www.hooverdam.usbr.gov](http://www.hooverdam.usbr.gov)

Glen Canyon Dam Facts: [www.uc.usbr.gov/information/gcdfacts.html](http://www.uc.usbr.gov/information/gcdfacts.html)

Flaming Gorge Dam Facts: [www.uc.usbr.gov/information/fg\\_factsheet.html](http://www.uc.usbr.gov/information/fg_factsheet.html)

USGS: Grand Canyon Floods: [walrus.wr.usgs.gov/grandcan/floodflows.html](http://walrus.wr.usgs.gov/grandcan/floodflows.html)

1997 Flaming Gorge Emergency: [www.uc.usbr.gov/pao/gorge/fgorge.html](http://www.uc.usbr.gov/pao/gorge/fgorge.html)

Davis Dam Facts: [www.lc.usbr.gov/~pao/davis.html](http://www.lc.usbr.gov/~pao/davis.html)

Parker Dam Facts: [www.lc.usbr.gov/~pao/parker.html](http://www.lc.usbr.gov/~pao/parker.html)

Central Arizona Project: [www.cap-az.com](http://www.cap-az.com)

Las Vegas Valley Water District: [www.lvwwd.com](http://www.lvwwd.com)

Metropolitan Water District: [www.mwd.dst.ca.us/mwdh2o/index02.html](http://www.mwd.dst.ca.us/mwdh2o/index02.html)

**More Information:**

[Glen Canyon Dam Failure Study](#)

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LR in the News 10/03/01

**Delta restoration meets resistance from water users**

GREENWIRE April Reese, Greenwire staff writer

For most of a century, the southwestern United States has relied on Colorado River water to slake the thirst of its cities and water its crops. But now, just as growth in the region is projected to skyrocket over the next several decades, users are being asked to accommodate the needs of another recipient of Colorado River water: the river's delta.

Although a first-ever delta symposium attended by state and federal water officials, scientists and environmentalists offered hope to some that at least some additional water could eventually be sent to the delta, all of those involved acknowledge the high demands placed on limited resources will make accommodating ecological needs extremely difficult.

Historically, the delta, where the river flows into Mexico's Gulf of California, received an average of 16.7 million acre-feet (maf) of water from the river each year. Now, the delta receives about 4.2 maf per year -- a decrease of about 75 percent. (An acre-foot equals 326,000 gallons, or the amount of water that would cover a football field without the end zones to a depth of one foot.) That decrease, as well as conversion of wetlands into farmland, has reduced the delta's wetlands to less than 10 percent of their historical extent, from 1.93 million acres to about 150,000 acres, according to a report by Environmental Defense.

According to NASA's Earth Observatory program, which tracks changes in the delta using satellite images, "Irrigation and urban sprawl now prevent the river from reaching

its final destination. ... Nearly all the water that flows into the Colorado River is now siphoned off for use in crop irrigation and for residential use."

Nonetheless, the delta remains a key stop along the Pacific Flyway and supports many species of wintering waterfowl. It also harbors the largest known populations of two endangered species, the desert pupfish and the Yuma clapper rail.

In some recent years, El Nino effects have sent torrents of water down the river, boosting flows and allowing some water to reach the delta. But it's "hit or miss," with a significant amount of water making it to the sea some years and none reaching it in others, says Ed Glenn, an environmental science professor at the University of Arizona who has studied the ecosystem.

Getting more water to the delta would involve an extraordinary level of collaboration, involving two countries, nine states (seven in the United States and two in Mexico), millions of water users, and 1,450 miles of river. Although environmentalists say even a small influx of water could go a long way in reviving the delta, skeptics say galvanizing the necessary political will to send any additional water downstream will be a considerable challenge.

The basin, which drains 244,000 square miles, is managed under a complex set of state and federal laws, court decisions, an interstate compact and an international treaty, all collectively known as the "Law of the River." Under those mandates, 7.5 million acre-feet of water is fed to the upper Colorado River Basin (Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming), another 7.5 million acre-feet of water is sent to the lower basin states (Arizona, California and Nevada); and 1.5 million acre-feet crosses the border into Mexico. Over 25 tribes also have water rights to the Colorado.

Under the current allocation scheme, a state such as California, where demand exceeds its legal allotment, can meet its needs by getting surplus water from other basin states. But as the growing cities of upper basin states demand more water over the next few decades, surpluses will no longer be available to send elsewhere. These "combustible realities," as former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt called them, make it highly unlikely that state water managers will be willing to send water downstream to replenish the delta, some environmentalists and water officials say.

California has come up with a plan to gradually reduce its reliance on Colorado River water to its 4.4 maf limit over a 15-year period, but those measures could cause problems in themselves, environmentalists say. For example, a plan to line canals so that less water seeps into the groundwater would save water for California, but would reduce the amount of water that makes its way into Mexico through the aquifer. And an interim plan to cover the state's water needs while it works toward its 4.4 maf goal guarantees California surplus Colorado River water every year until it reaches its legal allotment -- surpluses some environmentalists say should be sent to the delta instead.

"It won't impact the basin states, but it may impact what administrative waste that goes to Mexico," says Larry Anderson, director of the Utah Division of Water Resources, referring to the water headed for California under so-called Interim Surplus Guidelines.

The fervent opposition of some states, such as California and Arizona, to delta conservation "is indicative of the backwards, oftentimes knuckle-dragging mindset of western extractive agencies in those states," Hogan charges. He allows that some states are reacting from a practical concern about competition for scarce water resources, but adds "most of the opposition is the result of a nearly religious sentiment that any water not used by humans is wasted water."

And some are concerned increased flows may end up in Mexican farms and cities instead of in the delta. Said Anderson: "Let's just say the basin states were willing to find a block of water. Say we'll send down 30,000 acre feet. What is the guarantee that that water will ever get by the diversions for agricultural use in Mexico?"

Glenn disagrees. "Even without that water, they've done more than their share for those species," he said, pointing out that the Mexican government has created a biosphere reserve in part of the delta. "The agencies that have made those claims are the same ones that have attempted to sabotage a dialogue with Mexican agencies to work toward just that result," Hogan adds.

Environmentalists and some scientists say fears about the delta siphoning water from human needs are largely unfounded. According to separate reports by the Center for Biological Diversity and Environmental Defense, the delta could be returned to health with an increased water flow of as little as 1 percent, requiring relatively painless adjustments in water use, such as enhanced conservation and improving irrigation systems' efficiency.

"The environment has to have some standing at the table," says Glenn. "It only needs 1 percent. The delta is probably the smallest user on the river." Ironically, Glenn says, because only a small part of the original delta remains, little water is needed to replenish the wild areas that are left.

But little is known about how the delta ecosystem functions or exactly how much water would be necessary to restore it to at least some of its former glory. Although studies have been conducted on water levels needed to support vegetation in the delta, little is known about the needs of its fish and wildlife.

"I don't know that we've received the data that justifies an immediate decision," says Anderson. "When you ask for hard facts -- Will you need more? Could you do it with less? -- no one can give them to you."

But Lisa Force, program director for Living Rivers, says there is enough evidence of the delta's decline to merit immediate action. "The delta needs water now," she says. "If we're not careful, the delta could be studied literally to death."

Last December, the International Boundary Waters Commission, the government body that governs water management along the border, issued a "conceptual minute," known as Minute 306, that officially recognizes the need to "ensure use of water for ecological purposes" in the delta, and called for cooperation by the United States and Mexico in studying the ecosystem. Delta advocates say that although it is not a commitment to

take specific action, the framework is the first step to improving the ecological health of the delta.

That so many interested parties attended last month's symposium, held in Mexicali, Mexico, was a sign to some that a solution to the problem may not be so far off. "Even some of the 'water buffalos' recognized there could be enough water for the delta," said Glenn.

In the United States, the Lower Colorado River Multiple Species Conservation Plan calls for the Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec) and other water agencies to commit a certain amount of water to support over 50 endangered and threatened species in the lower U.S. stretch of the river. Ironically, however, that arrangement could threaten implementation of Minute 306, environmentalists fear.

Although the Law of the River does not include specific provisions for conservation, it does give BuRec -- the Colorado's "water master" -- some discretion in determining how the river is managed, Hogan says. That wiggle room allows the agency ample opportunity to "do what's necessary to protect the environment," Hogan adds.

Bob Walsh, spokesman for BuRec's Lower Colorado Region office in Boulder City, Nev., says it will be difficult, if not impossible, to change the current allocation framework to accommodate the delta. "The water is allocated by law, by Supreme Court decree and by treaty from Mexico, and you don't just change those things," says. "It would probably be a very long and litigious process to do that."

Instead, he says, agencies should find ways to work within the existing legal framework. For instance, purchasing marginal farmland to take it out of production could help decrease the demand for irrigation water, and agricultural wastewater could be directed to the delta, he says. Others suggest making water conservation a priority in the basin states to lessen demand.

"That's where the water would have to come from," says CBD's Hogan. "The best way to fight fear is with truth. The truth is that with strong water conservation and efficiency measures -- including limits on gross water use for such things as Las Vegas fountains and L.A. golf courses -- there is enough water for both people and long-term conservation of the river in the U.S. and its delta in Mexico."

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LR in the News 09/17/01

## **Delta Remains at Odds With Water Rights**

BY BRENT ISRAELSEN THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

MEXICALI, Mexico -- Once a thriving wilderness of nearly 2 million acres, the Colorado River delta is a remnant of its former self, its water and nutrients cut off by development along the river's 1,450-mile run from the Rocky Mountains to the Gulf of California.

It has been that way for decades, a seldom-discussed consequence of the much-heralded era of dam building on the Colorado that transformed deserts into farms and gleaming cities.

"It has been an abandoned topic," said Olga Ojeda Cardenas of the Mexican Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources.

Today, the delta's plight is officially out in the open.

About 400 water users, bureaucrats and researchers from the United States and Mexico assembled here this past week to learn more about what is happening at the end of the Southwest's most important river.

Utah, a major river user, sent a delegation of five, including three representatives from the Utah Division of Water Resources and two assistant attorneys general.

The two-day Colorado River delta symposium at the Autonomous University of Baja California was the first meeting of its kind on the delta, which some observers believe could become the next big issue on the Colorado, one of the most fought-over rivers in North America.

The symposium's enthusiasm was dampened significantly by Tuesday's terrorist attacks on America. Mexican participants expressed condolences to their American counterparts, which included State Department and Interior Department officials, many of whom were ordered by their superiors to return to the United States for fear of further attacks on U.S. structures, such as dams.

Although the symposium was designed to be informational -- with experts from both sides of the border explaining the laws, plumbing systems and environmental research -- the question of how to solve the delta's problems was unavoidable.

To environmentalist Lisa Force, the answer is simple.

"What the delta needs is more water," said Force, of Living Rivers, an activist group that has lobbied to put the issue on the international agenda.

Before humans began altering the river, the estuary received from 10 million to 25 million acre-feet of fresh water from the river each year. One acre-foot equals about 326,000 gallons. The water fed a lush, 1.9 million-acre ecosystem that teemed with vegetation, fish and wildlife that supported the Cucapa Indians, whose traditional way of life has been imperiled by the delta's decline.

Today, flows to the delta range from 2.4 million acre-feet to as little as a few thousand. And it is of poor quality, laced with urban and agricultural pollutants.

Thanks to above-normal precipitation in the late 1990s, the delta ecosystem, once considered "dead," has rebounded to about 150,000 acres, prompting scientists and environmentalists to call for efforts to maintain, even enhance, delta restoration.

Researchers say maintaining and improving the delta ecosystem would require annual dedicated flows of about 32,000 acre-feet of water, with a larger "pulse" flow of about 260,000 acre-feet every three years to soak the floodplains and stimulate seed germination.

Bennett Raley, assistant Interior secretary for water and power, said he and Interior Secretary Gale Norton consider the Mexican delta "an important ecological resource."

But to restore or maintain it will take creativity and a political resolve that appears elusive at this time.

The obstacle, of course, is that the river already is almost fully tapped. In the case of California, which gulps 18 percent more than its share of 4.4 million acre-feet, the river is overused.

California's overconsumption is possible largely because the Upper Colorado River Basin states of Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico use less than two-thirds of their 7.5 million acre-feet share. (Utah currently draws about 900,000 acre-feet from its allotment of 1.7 million acre-feet.) To protect their rights, the Upper Basin States are wary of any calls for more water downstream.

U.S. officials also have been cool to the idea of releasing more American water for the delta.

Federal Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner John Keys, who was not at the symposium, has offered to assist the Mexicans in utilizing their 1.5 million-acre allotment more efficiently, with the saved water dedicated for the delta.

"It's a lot easier to send money and expertise [to Mexico] than to send water," said Wayne Cook, director of the Salt Lake City-based Upper Colorado River Commission.

D. Larry Anderson, director of the Utah Division of Water Resources (DWR), says he does not want the delta to dry up, but he wonders whether saving it is a U.S. responsibility.

"If we have an environmental problem in the United States, there's no way we are going to get Mexico to give us some of their water, so why should we consider giving them water?" said Anderson.

Environmental activists argue that the flows needed for maintaining the restored delta are achievable through conservation or by shifting use of Colorado River water away from low-value, high-water crops such as alfalfa.

Another possible solution calls for the purchase of water rights from some farmers in Mexico, keeping the water in the river for the delta.

The International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), which oversees the Mexican-American water treaties, has set up working groups to draft proposals for maintaining the delta. American IBWC Commissioner Carlos Ramirez said there is no timetable for that work.

If the solution mandates additional releases from the United States, some U.S. water users fear that Mexico, whose border towns of Mexicali and Tijuana are growing rapidly, might divert delta-dedicated water for urban needs.

J. Arturo Herrera, Mexican member of the International Boundary and Water Commission, said they shouldn't worry. "We have the legal means to ensure the allocation is used for that purpose."

Mexican environmentalist Carlos Yruretagoyena doubts the debate will ever get that far: "Take one drop of water from someone in the United States for Mexican needs? I don't see it happening."

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LR Press Release 09/12/01

## **Colorado River Delta Needs More Water**

### **Contacts**

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### **Stakeholders From U.S. and Mexico Release Principles to Guide Restoration**

MEXICALI, BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO – In order to restore the damaged Colorado River Delta, the area needs water. That was the central message of a historic binational conference hosted by the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), the United States Department of the Interior, and the Mexican Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT). The participants presented research on a wide range of legal and scientific issues that affect the Colorado River Delta and surrounding areas, but the heart of the matter was water.

"For the first time, researchers, policy makers and stakeholders from the United States and Mexico have come together to learn about the delta and steps already underway to protect and restore it," noted Michael Cohen, Senior Associate at the Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security. "Yet this symposium is only a first step. Now that we all know the condition of the delta, we must take action to ensure that the delta's needs are met. The principles and recommendations devised by some 20 groups from Mexico and U.S. will guide us in the right direction as we begin the work of meeting these needs," continued Michael Cohen.

### **One Percent of River Flow Could Save Delta**

"This is an important conference because water users in the U.S. and Mexico have finally acknowledged that, despite their best intentions, too much Colorado River water is being used along the way," said Ed Glenn, Professor of Soil, water, and Environmental Science at the University of Arizona. The good news according to

professor Glenn: "As little as 1 percent of the river's flow might be enough to preserve key habitats."

"The symposium and treaty amendment give cause for hope," concurred David Hogan, Urban Wildlands and Rivers Program Coordinator for the Center for Biological Diversity. "But not one drop of water is legally dedicated to nature, so we look forward to working with others to strike a balance between water for agriculture, cities and the delta environment."

"This conference is a strong indicator of how committed the two governments are to seriously addressing the imperative of Delta restoration," said William Snape, Vice President for Legal Affairs at Defenders of Wildlife. But "The delta needs water now," added Lisa Force, Program Director for Living Rivers. "If we're not careful, the delta could be studied literally to death. The Mexican and U.S. governments and Colorado River water users need to commit to secured flows for the delta, as prescribed by the science already completed, while further studies proceed."

Participants at the conference pointed to the cooperation between U.S. and Mexican stakeholders as a key part of any solution: "Getting a good understanding of water and environmental laws in the U.S. and Mexico is an important ingredient to solving the problems in the delta," said Steve Glazer, Chair of the Sierra Club Colorado River Task Force.

Jennifer Pitt, Senior Analyst with Environmental Defense added that, "the international border creates a real challenge to good ecosystem management, but if the United States and Mexico can continue the dialogue started here, there is hope for the river."

### River Restoration Faces a Host of Challenges

The symposium is an important first step towards delta conservation, but other activities in the U.S. may limit the effectiveness of Minute 306, as the agreement between Mexico and the U.S. to cooperate on Colorado River Delta restoration is called.

Among these challenges: The Bureau of Reclamation has recently approved the Interim Surplus Guidelines and water-banking regulations, which will markedly reduce the delta-nourishing floods that once spilled from Hoover Dam. And the U.S.-based Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program may also significantly undermine the success of the agreement.

"The state's multi-species program is a real threat to the delta because contracts under the program will tie up any water which might otherwise be available for delta conservation," stated David Hogan of Center for Biological Diversity. "Both the U.S. and Mexican governments need to step up to the plate on delta restoration. With the principles contained in the binational declaration, we have created a framework for moving forward," summed Pam Hyde, Director of Policy for Southwest Rivers. "But the question remains: Do we have the political will to protect and restore this unique area for future generations?"

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River News 09/02/01

## **Binational Declaration for the Colorado River Delta**

Whereas the Mexican and United States governments, through Minute 306 of the IBWC/CILA, have agreed to:

"establish a framework for cooperation by the United States and Mexico through the development of joint studies that include possible approaches to ensure use of water for ecological purposes in this reach [of the Colorado River] and formulation of recommendations for cooperative projects, based on the principle of an equitable distribution of resources."

Whereas management over recent decades in both Mexico and the United States has devastated the Colorado River's ecosystems;

Whereas the historical record of Colorado River flow has been estimated at approximately 15 million acre-feet per year, and in recent years the flow below the last major diversion at Morelos Dam is often only 0.2% of the river's estimated historical annual flow;

Whereas the 1944 Colorado River Treaty grants to Mexico the annual right to only 1.5 million acre-feet of Colorado River water (plus 0.2 million acre-feet under certain conditions) while the Colorado River Compact grants to the United States the annual right to up to 16 million acre-feet;

Whereas the Colorado River delta encompasses several important ecosystems in need of conservation attention, including the Colorado River riparian corridor south of Morelos Dam, the open water wetlands of the Cienega de Santa Clara, the Colorado River estuary at the northern Gulf of California, and numerous brackish wetlands throughout the historic delta;

Whereas the Colorado River riparian corridor below Morelos Dam has demonstrated marked regeneration and resilience in response to recent flood releases from Hoover Dam and the Gila River, and now contains more native riparian habitat than the reach of the river from Hoover Dam to Morelos Dam;

Whereas preliminary estimates indicate that the Colorado River corridor below Morelos Dam must continue to receive at minimum an instream flow of 32,000 acre-feet annually in addition to periodic floods of 260,000 acre-feet on average every four years in order to sustain endangered species such as the Southwestern willow flycatcher, in addition to a rich diversity and abundance of other terrestrial and aquatic species;

Whereas the Cienega de Santa Clara was created by irrigation return flows from the United States and must continue to receive approximately 135,000 acre-feet of water annually with salinity no higher than present levels (2,400 ppm) in order to remain a significant wetland, providing habitat for thousands of migrating and resident waterfowl and endangered species including the Yuma clapper rail and the desert pupfish;

Whereas the Colorado River estuary at the northern Gulf of California was historically one of the world's largest and richest desert estuaries and provided important habitat for Gulf fisheries, shorebirds, migratory birds, and the now endangered vaquita porpoise and totoaba, and will require freshwater flows of unknown quantities to restore its ecosystem;

Whereas the numerous brackish wetlands that remain throughout the historic delta have not been well studied, but provide habitat for thousands of migrating and resident waterfowl, and rely on an unknown quantity of agricultural drainage from the surrounding San Luis and Mexicali agricultural valleys;

Whereas several actions recently taken or proposed within the United States threaten the existence of the Colorado River delta's ecosystems, including the use of water under the Interim Surplus Guidelines and the development of off-stream banking, both of which will eliminate flood releases from Hoover Dam and devastate the native riparian corridor below Morelos Dam, and the operation of the Yuma Desalting Plant, which will destroy the Cienega de Santa Clara;

Whereas surface water and groundwater are inseparable in the Colorado River watershed, and both water quantity and water quality are integral to ecosystem health;

Whereas the human communities in and around the Colorado River delta are impacted by the decisions of agencies both near and far that manage the River and its resources;

Whereas the participation of informed stakeholders promotes the development of sound, acceptable restoration alternatives, and Mexico and the United States have to date implemented Minute 306 with participation from Colorado River stakeholders;

The undersigned Mexican and United States conservation organizations do hereby declare that their governments should consider and adopt the following recommendations in a collaboration to restore the Colorado River delta ecosystems:

The United States and Mexico must commit to dedicating freshwater for the purpose of protecting and restoring the ecosystems of the Colorado River delta, before they are further degraded.

The United States and Mexico must adopt the precautionary principle and integrate it, based on the best available science, into existing programs. The precautionary principle would dictate that neither country should take unilateral actions that limit future actions for restoring the Colorado River delta's ecosystems.

The highest priority must be placed on determining the amount, quality, and timing of water deliveries necessary to sustain and restore Colorado River delta's ecosystems, including the riparian corridor below Morelos Dam, the Cienega de Santa Clara, the River's estuary, and other brackish wetlands.

A scientific approach that uses experimentation and includes specific milestones for long-term monitoring, as well as the flexibility to respond to new information, should be

used to determine the quantity and quality of freshwater needed to protect and restore the Colorado River delta's ecosystems.

The United States and Mexico should work together to secure funding both for research needed to develop alternatives to protect and restore Colorado River delta's ecosystems, and for the implementation of those alternatives.

Research and development of alternatives for protection and restoration of delta ecosystems must acknowledge the interconnectivity of groundwater and surface water.

The development of alternatives to protect and restore the Colorado River delta's ecosystems should be transparent and inclusive, and the United States and Mexico should include stakeholders on both sides of the border in the development of any agreements to provide these ecosystems with water.

Asociaciun Ecológica de Usuarios del Río Hardy-Colorado, A.C. Center for Biological Diversity Centro de Derecho Ambiental y Integración Económica de Sur, A.C. Centro Intercultural de Estudios de Desiertos y Océanos, A.C. Centro Regional de Estudios Ambientales y Científicos Defenders of Wildlife ECO-SOL Educación y Cultura Ecológica A.C. Environmental Defense El Grupo Ecológico Antares, A.C. Friends of Arizona Rivers High Country Citizens' Alliance International Rivers Network La Sociedad de Historia Natural Niparaj, A.C. Living Rivers Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security Pro Esteros Pronatura Península de Baja California Sierra Club, Colorado River Task Force Sonoran Institute Southwest Rivers

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LR in the News 08/22/01

## **Banning Jet Skis on Lake Powell**

*Lake Powell Jet-Skiers Argue Against Any Ban*

By Tom Wharton THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

The National Park Service asked for public input this week on how personal watercraft -- known by brand names such as Jet Ski or Waverunner--should be managed at Lake Powell.

A court settlement between the federal agency and the environmental group Bluewater Network mandated that an environmental analysis be done on use of personal watercraft at the 1.2 million-acre Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

Under that deal, jet-skis will be banned at Lake Powell after Sept. 15, 2002, without a specific rule allowing their use. Alternatives being examined include continuing existing practices, allowing use of the craft in specific areas, restricting them in sensitive areas, limiting their use to the main channel or banning them.

With more than 10,000 jet-skis registered in Utah, owners had plenty to say at Park Service meetings Monday in Page, Ariz., and Tuesday in Salt Lake City.

The public comment is part of a study looking at how use of the craft-- which make up 9 percent of the registered vessels on Lake Powell --affect the area's visitor experience and natural resources.

Some said the agency had made up its mind to ban the craft.

"It is a stacked deck in favor of the Park Service," said Bill Lindsey of Bountiful, who is against the ban. "They want to ban all two-stroke engines and then ban all the people. "

Moab-based Living Rivers favored a ban.

"Jet-skis are disproportionately responsible for accidents, injuries and deaths relative to other watercraft," said David Orr, the group's director of field programs.

According to Park Service officials most of those who commented want to continue allowing unlimited use on the 180-mile-long lake.

According to Ted Woolley, boating coordinator for the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation, a youth personal watercraft education program put into effect in 1994 has reduced accidents and injuries. He favors a mandatory licensing program for all boats, not just jet-skis.

"Our constituency wants us to be fair," said Kitty Roberts, the superintendent of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. "And education is a big theme."

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LR in the News 08/15/01

## **Living Rivers Forces "Lake" Powell Friends to Staff-up**

Making friends: Nonprofit group *Friends of Lake Powell* hires executive director  
By Seth Muller Lake Powell Chronicle August 15, 2001

From its grass roots beginnings to its status as a viable and politically recognized nonprofit organization, the Friends of Lake Powell has moved into a new phase with the creation of a paid director position.

Former Page economic development director Diane Hansen, 34, returned to the area to serve as the Friends of Lake Powell executive director, and is not taking the job lightly. Her work involves boosting membership, educating the public and gaining recognition for the organization.

"Our overall mission is to promote the positive aspects of Lake Powell and Glen Canyon Dam through education and public awareness," Hansen said. "Since the organization formed in 1997, it has relied on volunteers, but the work became overwhelming as the issues (with the lake) went public."

The issues came to light during the past few years as a group of environmentalists known as the Living Rivers want to see the lake drained. While the Friends of Lake Powell stands in opposition of draining the lake and is vocal on the issue, its primary focus is to promote the positive aspects of Lake Powell, Hansen said.

The organization is now 2,000 members strong and the growth has brought the need for a full-time, paid position.

Charter board member Steve Ward said the hiring of an executive director was inevitable.

"I think we've always known we would need a paid position," Ward said. "We know we'll also need a paid staff."

Board member Paul Ostapuk believes Hansen will increase the organization's viability.

"With Diane, we will take membership to new levels," he said.

Ward led a small tour on Lake Powell Aug. 2. He took Hansen and Ostapuk to places like Independence Cove and Face Canyon to get them some time on the lake and show them areas where the amount of carved graffiti has increased.

One of the projects Friends of Lake Powell plans to undertake is the removal of the vandalistic carvings. The project will involve a partnership with the National Park Service, which started efforts to remove the graffiti this spring.

While Hansen enjoyed getting some time on the lake during the trip, she spends most of her time working out of the Page-Lake Powell Chamber of Commerce, where her office is located.

Hansen is currently working closely with U.S. Rep. John Shadegg's office on upcoming projects and continued political support. Shadegg, R-Phoenix, strongly advocates the preservation and improvements on Lake Powell. He recently proposed an amendment to a Coast Guard bill to examine the carbon monoxide problem on houseboats.

Hansen's work further includes updating all of the organization's literature, working on the membership database, attending meetings and forums as a representative of Friends of Lake Powell and responding to e-mail and requests for information.

Hansen said a number of inquiries come from college students who are working on papers concerning Lake Powell.

Hansen is enthusiastic about her new position that serves as a milestone for Friends of Lake Powell.

"Having a full time director takes it to another level," Hansen said.

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LR in the News08/07/01

## **Arizona Republic Op Ed on Gail Norton's visit**

ARIZONA REPUBLIC

August 7, 2001

### **Interior chief needs to talk conservation**

Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton is coming to town.

She will be in Flagstaff tomorrow and Phoenix on Thursday to talk about water, the most vital natural resource in the arid Southwest. We welcome Secretary Norton's attention to this issue on which our cities, jobs and ecosystems depend.

The situation with water in the Southwest has come down to this: we're running out.

The Colorado River, our primary source of water in Arizona, has been over-allocated, meaning more water has been promised to the seven Basin states and Mexico than exists. This hasn't been a problem so far because some of the states haven't needed their full allocation. But that's over.

According to the 2000 U.S. census, four of the five fastest-growing states in the country are in the Colorado River Basin, with populations, ecosystems, growth and economies all dependent on Colorado River water. The growth boom in those states, including Arizona, is expected to continue.

Meanwhile, groundwater tables are dropping, rivers are drying up, habitats and species are disappearing and battles over the last remaining aquifers are reaching fever pitch.

Suggested new sources such as importation of water from Canada, trans basin exchanges, "glacier mining" and construction of new dams do not create more water.

Moreover, these proposals are simply methods for moving water around, when the real issue is how to use water more efficiently.

Unfortunately, the secretary's visit will include only water-movers: Central Arizona Project, Colorado River dam operators, Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., and Gov. Jane Hull. Yet the only long-term feasible new source of water is conservation.

Norton often cites natural resource conservation as a goal of the current administration. In fact, she consistently states her desire to develop workable, consensus-based programs and cites her "4 C's: communication, consultation, and cooperation, all in the service of conservation." Yet when Living Rivers, representing more than 130 conservation organizations, requested a meeting with Norton during her Arizona visit, we received a swift and blunt "no" from the secretary's office.

We hoped to discuss with Norton Colorado River management issues, particularly preservation of the Colorado River delta, which would require less than 1 percent of the river's flow and could be achieved through very modest conservation measures. The

delta is just one of several Colorado River-dependent ecosystems that is on the verge of disappearing due to near-total diversion and pollution of the river's flows.

Conservation will be effective for preserving ecosystems, as well as for satisfying the needs of increasing human populations, for one simple reason. Ecosystems are dying not because nature has been stingy with water but because humans have wasted it with impunity.

Agribusiness dumps billions of gallons of water on crops never meant to grow in the desert, using flood irrigation, the most wasteful technique available.

Secretary Norton, we understand that there are many interests who want your attention during your visit, and that you must be selective. Again, we encourage you to select a constituency of 12 million Americans, the largest coalition of groups ever to form around Colorado River issues, for a discussion concerning conservation. We respectfully request a 30-minute meeting. That's 0.00015 seconds per person. We'll be brief.

Lisa Force is program director of Living Rivers, a national non-profit organization with offices in Utah and Arizona. She is based in Scottsdale.

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08/07/01

### **Interior Secretary Norton Refuses to Meet with Environmentalists**

**Contact:** Lisa Force, Living Rivers (480) 990-7839 or (602) 321-1753  
David Hogan, Center for Biological Diversity (619) 523-1498  
Owen Lammers, Living Rivers, (435) 259-1063

U.S. Interior Secretary Gale Norton has refused a request sent last week by an environmental coalition to meet and discuss Colorado River conservation issues during her Arizona visit this week. The environmental coalition had hoped to discuss with Norton several Colorado River conservation and management issues such as the delta and faulty Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program.

Living Rivers sent a letter requesting the meeting on August 3rd on behalf of itself, the Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of Arizona Rivers, Environmental Defense, Southwest Rivers and the Pacific Institute. Conservation of the Colorado River delta is a top concern for the groups. The issue has galvanized the largest coalition ever formed promoting Colorado River restoration: 130 organizations representing 12 million people from the US and Mexico. An Interior spokesperson declined to explain Norton's refusal to meet with the groups.

"We are disappointed in Secretary Norton's initial refusal to meet with our coalition," said Lisa Force, Program Director of Living Rivers. "We're hoping she'll reconsider given the importance of the delta and the number of people who are concerned with its protection."

The Colorado River delta is of international importance, yet today is facing a water crisis. The delta has been reduced to less than ten percent of its original size due to the near-total diversion of the river's flows on both sides of the border. Water banking, offstream storage, and other efforts to divert even more water for urban sprawl and agribusiness have put wildlife, fisheries, bird populations, indigenous communities and the total ecosystem at risk.

Scientists have made preliminary estimates that the delta conservation process can begin with a modest amount of water - less than one percent of the river's average annual flow. "Southwestern states and the federal government have so far rejected the notion of providing so much as a drop of guaranteed water for delta conservation," said David Hogan, Rivers Program Coordinator for the Center for Biological Diversity. "They're just not willing to budge."

"Addressing the major issues on the Colorado River will require reaching out to all interested groups, not just the traditional water and power interests," says Michael Cohen of the Pacific Institute. "By ignoring environmental interests, Secretary Norton does a real disservice to the rising spirit of cooperation in the basin."

Environmentalists have led recent efforts to bring the basin states, federal agencies and other stakeholders to the negotiating table to discuss delta restoration. In December 2000, an accord was signed which commits the U.S. and Mexico to discuss studying the delta problem. "Closing the lines of communication just moves everyone back a step," says William Snape of Defenders of Wildlife. "The accord commits the US and Mexico to open dialogue that includes environmental groups. Secretary Norton's refusal to meet with us violates the spirit of the accord."

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LR in the News 08/07/01

### **McDonald's Attracts Criticism from Activists**

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Saturday, August 4, 2001

By Brent Israelsen

In the realm of modern marketing schemes, this one seems rather tame: Offer the hamburger-buying public the chance to win cash, electronics, vacations and vehicles.

But McDonald's Corp. -- regular target of criticism for its food and global corporate imperialism -- has managed yet again to attract activist ire. This time, it's about a category of prizes McDonald's is awarding in its Monopoly game promotion.

Collect all four railroads and you win a snowmobile, an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) or a personal watercraft -- all of which are despised by environmentalists. "This is about

promoting deadly machinery as giveaway toys. . . . It's no happy meal," said David Orr, field director for Living Rivers, based in Moab.

Living Rivers and two dozen other environmental groups on Friday urged McDonald's CEO Jack Greenberg to remove the "thrillcraft" from the prize list.

A McDonald's spokeswoman did not return a phone call for comment. But the Pocatello, Idaho-based Blue Ribbon Coalition, which represents the off-highway vehicle industry, called the anti-McDonald's campaign "bizarre."

"This is another example of environmental extremism," said the coalition's Adena Cook.

In a letter mailed to Greenberg, Living Rivers and allies praised McDonald's for its recent efforts to become more environmentally conscious. But they chided the company for not considering the impacts of snowmobiles, ATVs and personal watercraft, such as Jet Skis.

"[These] prizes are certainly inconsistent with McDonald's stated corporate values of environmental and social responsibility," states the letter.

For the past decade, environmental groups have stepped up their campaigns against adventure vehicles, arguing they cause air, water and noise pollution, damage the land and disturb wildlife.

During the Clinton administration, the campaigns to a large degree paid off, though President Bush appears poised to reverse some of the decisions.

The National Park Service last year banned snowmobiles in most national parks, including Yellowstone. Facing a lawsuit by the snowmobile industry, the Bush administration this year put the Yellowstone ban up for further review.

The Park Service also banned personal watercraft, pending comprehensive park-by-park environmental studies. Public meetings on whether personal watercraft should be allowed at Lake Powell are scheduled this month in Arizona and Utah.

Environmentalists also have fought to restrict the use of ATVs and other off-highway vehicles in national forests and on Bureau of Land Management lands. They argue the machines tear up vegetation, cause erosion and disrupt wild animals' reproductive cycles.

In addition to pointing out the environmental consequences to McDonald's, environmental groups cite Consumer Product Safety Commission statistics showing that ATVs caused 95,000 injuries and snowmobiles sent 14,000 people to the hospital last year. Personal watercraft, they noted, account for 40 percent of boating accidents even though they account for just 10 percent of boating traffic.

Snowmobiles, ATVs and personal watercraft "may be fun to the user but they are an annoyance to nonusers. They cause injury and death and damage to the environment," Orr said.

McDonald's need not feel alone in the criticism, however. "Pepsi is offering Jet Skis, snowmobiles and ATVs as prizes too," Orr said. "We're going after them next." © Copyright 2001, The Salt Lake Tribune

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LR Press Release 08/03/01

## **Groups Target McDonald's to Halt Promotion of Polluting Jet Skis**

### **Contact:**

Katy Rexford, Bluewater Network 415.788.3666 x157

David Orr, Living Rivers 435.259.1063

MCDONALD'S PROMOTES DEADLY MACHINERY AS TOYS IN "MONOPOLY" GAME

GROUPS ASK COMPANY TO SUBSTITUTE SAFE, NON-POLLUTING ALTERNATIVES FOR SWEEPSTAKES PRIZES

Leaders of 26 organizations representing the environment, consumer advocates, and concerned parents from across the nation blasted McDonald's Food Corporation for offering as sweepstakes prizes three of the deadliest and most environmentally harmful recreation vehicles currently on the market — snowmobiles, personal watercraft (PWC, or "jet ski"), and all-terrain vehicles (ATV). In a joint letter sent today to McDonald's CEO Jack Greenberg in Oak Brook, Illinois, 23 organizations called on the fast-food magnate to substitute safer and less environmentally-destructive products for the company's nationwide "Monopoly" sweepstakes game.

"The McDonald's Corporation promotes itself as caring about 'safe fun for children' and protecting the environment, but the Monopoly game prizes contradict those corporate values," said Katy Rexford of Bluewater Network. "We're shocked that McDonald's would offer to children prizes that are responsible for so many injuries and deaths."

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, ATVs alone sent over 95,000 Americans to the emergency room in 2000; snowmobiles were responsible for over 14,000 emergency room visits. Moreover, while PWCs comprise only 10 percent of the United States' recreational boating population, they are responsible for over 40 percent of injury accidents.

The National Park Service (NPS) recently agreed to ban PWCs from most national parks, and a subsequent federal court settlement agreement with NPS calls for a possible ban on PWCs at all other park units, including Lake Mead and Lake Powell on the Colorado River.

"Jetskis are unsafe and contribute to the pollution of water supplies for more than twenty million people in the Colorado River alone," said David Orr, of Living Rivers in Moab, Utah, a co-plaintiff with Bluewater Network on the NPS lawsuit. "While citizens struggle to protect their families and their drinking water from these destructive machines, McDonald's is busy serving them up as good, clean fun."

Not only do these motorized "thrillcraft" have abysmal safety records, they are bad for the environment. Almost exclusively powered by dirty two-stroke engines, these machines dump between 25 and 30 percent of their unburned fuel mixture directly into the water, or onto the land or snow over which they ride.

Joining Bluewater Network and Living Rivers in the letter to McDonald's were groups from Alaska to Virginia, including the Alaska Center for the Environment, American Canoe Association, Bay Area Wilderness Training, Boreal Footprint Project, California Wilderness Coalition, Campaign to Safeguard America's Waters, Center for Biological Diversity, Colorado Mountain Club, Friends of the River, International Marine Mammal Project, John Muir Project, Minnesotans for Responsible Recreation, Montana Wilderness Association, National Parks Conservation Association, Planning & Conservation League, Public Citizen, Schubert & Associates, Sea Turtle Restoration Project, Superior Wilderness Action Network, Swan View Coalition, Wild Wilderness, Wildlands Center for Preventing Roads, Winter Wildlands Alliance, and the Yggdrasil Institute.

In their letter, the groups expressed their desire to work with Mr. Greenberg to "change the emphasis of the Monopoly game from one of dangerous, disruptive, and disproportionately polluting motorized recreation to a wholly different set of values that respects the environment and promotes the 'safe fun for children' theme that McDonald's proudly proclaims."

- The California Air Resources Board reported that a seven-hour ride on a PWC emits the same amount of smog-forming air pollution as does driving over 100,000 miles in a typical passenger car.
- Snowmobiles in Yellowstone National Park were responsible for spewing over 90 percent of the total hydrocarbon pollution in the park, despite being outnumbered by automobiles 16 to 1. Fresh oxygen has to be pumped into the ranger station at the West Yellowstone entrance because rangers complained of nausea, headaches, and dizziness from carbon monoxide poisoning.

McDonald's Food Corporation claims to be an environmental leader, yet the message sent by these sweepstakes prizes is one of environmental dominance and destruction rather than harmony and respect.

Thrillcraft manufacturers often claim that damage and injuries caused by thrillcraft are the result of a few "bad apple" operators; however, it is the inherent design and intended use of the machines that is problematic.

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LR in the News 08/02/01

**Groups Seek Meeting with Interior Secretary Norton on Colorado River Delta**

The Honorable Gale Norton  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street  
Washington, D.C. 20240  
Dear Secretary Norton:

Thank you for your attention to Colorado River issues and for your interest in reaching out to local stakeholders to develop workable, consensus based programs. We look forward to your scheduled visit to Arizona next week and the opportunity it affords to engage in a meaningful dialogue with all Colorado River stakeholders. To that end, we respectfully request a meeting with you during your visit to discuss our interest in Colorado River management, particularly in regards to the Colorado River delta.

The Colorado River delta is of international importance, yet today the delta is facing a crisis. It has been reduced to less than ten percent of its original size due to the near total diversion of the river's flows on both sides of the border. Pressure to develop even more water for consumptive use from the Colorado River is relentless, and wildlife, freshwater fisheries, marine fisheries, bird populations, indigenous communities and the ecosystem itself are at risk.

Scientists have made preliminary estimates that the preservation process can begin with a modest amount of water -- less than one percent of the river's average annual flow. A guaranteed base flow of 32,000 acre feet per year, plus a flood flow of 260,000 acre feet every three to four years, would provide a minimal source of life sustaining water for the recently regenerated, native riparian habitat. In addition, dedication of some 100,000 acre feet of brackish agricultural wastewater would ensure the future of the Cienega de Santa Clara.

As you know, your predecessor and several basin state representatives have noted the importance of recognizing and addressing the issue of Colorado River delta restoration. Recently, representatives of the basin states, federal agencies, and the environmental community have been working together to plan a binational symposium that will provide Colorado River stakeholders with a common understanding of the Colorado River delta and its needs. This level of cooperation represents a welcome step forward, increasing communication and trust as we strive to address ecosystem needs along the lower Colorado River.

We are hopeful that, in the spirit of communication, consultation, and cooperation, all in the service of conservation you will be able to make time during your trip to Arizona next week to meet with us to discuss a consensus based approach to Colorado River delta restoration. Please contact Lisa Force of Living Rivers, at (480) 990-7839 so that we might schedule a meeting that is convenient for you.

We are sending you this request on behalf of Living Rivers, Environmental Defense, Pacific Institute, and Friends of Arizona Rivers. In addition, we would like to request a parallel meeting with you at your earliest convenience in Washington, D.C. Attached is a copy of a letter which went to Colorado River water users and agencies in March on behalf of the 133 groups, representing more than 12 million people from the United States and Mexico, who support delta restoration.

We look forward to working with you in the service of conservation.

Sincerely,

Lisa Force  
Program Director  
Living Rivers

On behalf of:

Jennifer Pitt, Environmental Defense  
Michael Cohen, Pacific Institute  
Tim Flood, Friends of Arizona Rivers

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LR Letter

July 18, 2001

**Letter to Commissioner Keys, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation**

Mr. John W. Keys, III  
Commissioner  
United States Bureau of Reclamation  
Department of Interior  
1849 'C' Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001  
Sent via fax: 202-513-0314

July 18, 2001

Dear Commissioner Keys:

We wish to congratulate you on your recent appointment and confirmation as Commissioner of Reclamation. You have undertaken an important challenge at a difficult time for the once-powerful Bureau of Reclamation, as the agency approaches the end of its first century. June 17, 2002 will mark the centennial anniversary of the federal Reclamation Act, which led to the creation of the Reclamation Service and the dramatic transformation of the rivers and landscapes of the American West that followed.

At this moment, irrigators in New Mexico are threatening to blow up Navajo Dam on the San Juan River, while in Oregon's Klamath basin, farmers are excavating a new channel bypass around the Reclamation-owned A-Canal Dam. Never before has the agency faced such criticism and anger from the very constituents that it was founded to serve. Clearly, your job will not be easy as you struggle to balance competing demands for protecting the environment while providing subsidized water and power to irrigators, cities, and industries in the West.

Major coalitions have formed over the last year, demanding that Reclamation implement basinwide environmental impact studies to restore endangered species throughout their historic ranges, decommission major dams like Glen Canyon on the Colorado River, and restore flows to the dried-up deltas of the Colorado and Rio Grande Rivers.

This letter is an invitation to work with you and your staff to address these concerns and to help shape the Bureau's future, to reflect the changing needs of our society and the needs of the rivers themselves.

Today, more than 450 Reclamation dams and diversions stand across our Western rivers in seventeen states, creating about 350 reservoirs that provide water for 180 irrigation projects and water supply for more than 30 million people. These structures and engineering achievements, some of which are among the largest in the world, store huge amounts of water and generate over forty thousand megawatts of electric power, combined. Over nine million acres of farmland are irrigated by Reclamation projects. The scope and magnitude of the public works undertaken by Reclamation is unsurpassed in terms of the effects these projects have had on the lives of the millions of people who depend in some way on the rivers of this arid region.

Certainly many associated with the Bureau of Reclamation will find cause for celebrating the upcoming centennial. But for those committed to the sound stewardship of the rivers of the West, the sentiment is reversed. This century of impounding and diverting has brought with it extensive environmental and social problems that only worsen with time.

Western rivers are critical to the protection of the region's biological diversity. Scientists tell us that many Reclamation projects are at least partly to blame for the near-extinction of many native fish and other river-dependent species across the West. Pressure is building to take down some Reclamation dams, in order to restore rivers' ecological health and recover populations of native fish and river-dependent wildlife.

A century after its founding, the agency finds itself facing declining budgets, increasing pressure to reduce the enormous subsidies to water and power users that have fueled the engine of political support for much of the Bureau's public works. Reclamation itself has said, "the arid West essentially has been reclaimed." Yet some politicians still look to Reclamation to fulfill the elusive dream of boundless resource use. While the West may have been reclaimed, its rivers are far from functioning as ecosystems and may best be described as plumbing systems.

To that end, we submit to you a summary of the key issues we look forward to addressing with you and your staff. They reflect the growing public concern that Reclamation's actions and policies are out-of-step with the environmental constraints and social demands of this modern era.

1) **RECOGNIZE FEDERAL PRIMACY OF A PUBLIC RESOURCE:** Reclamation must recognize that the rivers under its jurisdiction are not the property of water agencies under contract, the states, or even in some cases the United States alone, but are held in trust for the benefit of the public. Uniform leadership, authority and policy must come from the Bureau. Reclamation must begin working to overhaul antiquated laws such as the Colorado River Compact that no longer reflect current realities of the region's available water supplies or public demands for habitat preservation and social equity.

2) **BASINWIDE EIS ON RIVER MANAGEMENT:** Reclamation must conduct Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) on the operations and management of dams and diversions, on each river basin, for the purpose of restoring ecosystem function, to fully recover endangered native fish species throughout their historic ranges, and to address the cumulative impacts resulting from both subsidized water and hydropower development.

3) **BUILD NO NEW DIVERSION OR DAMS:** Reclamation must focus its attention on reversing the environmental damage and social inequities brought on by its projects. Building new infrastructure will only exacerbate existing problems and conflicts. Reclamation must support de-authorization of the proposed Animas-La Plata water project in southwestern Colorado, for which no need has been identified for the water that would be diverted from the Animas River, and which is estimated to cost federal taxpayers at least a half-billion dollars.

4) **REDUCE THE NUMBER OF DAMS AND DIVERSIONS:** Reclamation must conduct regular reviews in accordance with NEPA guidelines of the operations of Bureau dams, as is required of private dams under FERC. Prepare decommissioning plans for all Bureau dams, so the public is aware of direct and indirect costs that will need to be incurred once decommissioning is technically, economically, or politically deemed necessary.

5) **UPHOLD INDIAN RIGHTS:** Reclamation must fully and fairly compensate Indian Nations for their water rights and offer attractive financial incentives for these Nations to dedicate a portion of their water for instream flows for habitat protection. Reclamation must ensure that all traditional fishing rights are restored and maintained, and that efforts are made to restore sacred sites impacted by Bureau infrastructure.

6) **ASSURE INSTREAM FLOW RIGHTS:** Reclamation must establish basinwide accounting systems that establish instream flows as beneficial uses and guarantee that water left in the rivers as a result of implementing conservation programs will not be available for appropriation by other users.

7) DELTA RESTORATION: Reclamation must allocate necessary water and sediment flows to restore and protect river deltas, with immediate action for the Colorado and Rio Grande Rivers.

8) MANDATORY WATER CONSERVATION & RECYCLING: Reclamation must mandate all users of federal water projects, regardless of water rights priority status, to meet mandated targeted reductions in water consumption, by implementing water conservation and recycling programs and promoting efficient technologies in municipal, industrial, and agricultural sectors. Reclamation must mandate shifts in cropping patterns by requiring irrigators to replace water-wasting, low-value alfalfa, hay, and other livestock feed crops grown on lands served by Reclamation irrigation contracts, with vegetable and other crops that use significantly less water per acre. Reclamation must work to revive the spirit of the Reclamation Act to support only family-owned farms with federal project water.

9) REFORM HYDROPOWER MARKETING: Reclamation must adjust subsidized rates for hydropower generated at federal dams to reflect current national-average wholesale price for electricity. Require retailers of federal power to meet mandated targeted reductions in customer consumption by implementing aggressive demand-side management and energy conservation programs, including providing low-cost loans to all ratepayers for installing their own renewable energy supply infrastructure.

10) ENFORCE ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS: Reclamation must assist in the aggressive enforcement of environmental laws including the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and other laws, to stop the point and nonpoint sources of pollution, and ensure clean-up of all known pollution sources by 2010, and recognize a right to clean drinking water for all people in the watershed.

Too many dams have been built across the over-allocated rivers of the West, and too much water is being diverted from them. Outdated laws discourage water users from conserving and stand in the way of restoring water flows to stressed streambeds. The dried-up deltas of the Colorado and Rio Grande Rivers bear silent testimony to Reclamation's failure to act as responsible stewards of the rivers it has developed.

Living Rivers looks forward to working with you to bring about the long-needed changes at the Bureau of Reclamation. We look forward to a meeting with you at your earliest convenience.

But please also understand that the rivers of the West can't survive much longer the bureaucratic inertia and neglect that has characterized Reclamation's first century. If the agency is unwilling to change, then conflicts such as those currently being played out in the Klamath Basin and the San Juan River are bound to continue. For the sake of rivers and the people and other life that depends upon them, we look forward to working with you as you face this challenge of leading the Bureau of Reclamation into its second century.

Sincerely,

Owen Lammers  
Executive Director

On behalf of:

Denise Boggs  
Executive Director  
Utah Environmental Congress  
Salt Lake City, Utah

Shawn Cantrell  
Northwest Director  
Friends of the Earth  
Seattle, Washington

Daniel Patterson  
Ecologist  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Tucson, Arizona

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LR Press Release 07/18/01

## **John W. Keys, III takes over helm of Bureau of Reclamation**

### **Environmental groups welcome new Reclamation Commissioner, express desire to work with agency during troubled times to redirect the Bureau's mission toward restoration.**

MOAB, UTAH -- Environmentalists welcomed today John W. Keys, III as Commissioner of Reclamation, expressing their desire to work with him and his agency in redirecting the mission of the US Bureau of Reclamation from development to environmental restoration.

In a letter sent today on Mr. Keys' first full day at work, the environmental group Living Rivers requested a meeting with the new Commissioner to discuss a ten-point restoration agenda for Reclamation's second century. The city of Moab, Utah is Mr. Keys' hometown, as well as Livingm Rivers' headquarters.

"We welcome Mr. Keys' appointment and look forward to working with him on critical issues affecting the rivers of the West, and ensuring that Reclamation will be admired in its second century as an agency that solved the problems of dried-up rivers and fish species going extinct," said Owen Lammers, executive director of Living Rivers. "With only 334 days left in Reclamation's first century, time is running out to address the major problems with the collapse of the elaborate plumbing systems the agency has constructed and managed."

Joining Living Rivers in the letter to Mr. Keys was the Tucson, Arizona-based Center for Biological Diversity, Salt Lake City-based Utah Environmental Congress, and the national organization Friends of the Earth.

Mr. Keys is taking the reins at Reclamation during an historical and difficult time for the once-powerful federal bureau. His confirmation comes amid reports that angry irrigators are committing vandalism at Reclamation facilities in Oregon's Klamath Basin and threatening to blow up the Navajo Dam in New Mexico.

"Protection and recovery of endangered fish and other species dependent on healthy Western rivers needs to be the number-one priority for Reclamation," said Daniel Patterson, ecologist with the Center for Biological Diversity. "Reclamation must act swiftly and decisively to stop the illegal vandalism and anti-environmental threats by irrigators, and get to work saving the species before they go extinct."

The groups noted in their letter that the agency will celebrate its centennial in 2002, and sought a meeting with the new Commissioner.

"A hundred years of dam building, canal digging, tunnel blasting, and flood irrigating have created benefits but also many problems," said Shawn Cantrell, the Seattle-based northwest director of Friends of the Earth. "Leadership is sorely needed in the federal agencies at this time to reassert federal control over Western rivers and begin dismantling fish-killing dams such as those along the Snake River."

River activists across the country are now coming together to promote major reform within the Bureau, and demanding the agency undertake basinwide studies to reveal the most effective and fastest ways to recover endangered species, restore the dying deltas of the Colorado and Rio Grande Rivers, halt construction of new dams such as Animas-La Plata in southwestern Colorado, and decommission dams such as Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River.

"Reclamation's engineering prowess may have been the theme of its first 100 years, but cleaning up the mess and ensuring equitable water supplies and environmental restoration must be the focus now," said Denise Boggs, executive director of the Utah Environmental Congress. "While our children will be paying for Reclamation's multibillion dollar boondoggles well into the next century, we still have a narrow window of time to fix much of the physical damage to the rivers' ecosystems."

The above organizations represent part of the rapidly growing nationwide coalition that is organizing around the agency's centennial to mobilize public awareness of the need for reform of the Bureau of Reclamation.

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07/30/01

## **Commissioner Keys Responds**

United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Washington, D.C. 20240  
Owen Lammers  
Executive Director, Living Rivers  
P.O. Box 466  
Moab, UT 84532

Thanks for [your letter of July 18, 2001](#). I am indeed excited about being the 18th Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation. It gives me the opportunity to work with water users and water user organizations all over the West to address our many pressing water issues.

I am especially honored to be the Commissioner of Reclamation during the 100th anniversary of the passage of the Reclamation Act of 1902, which created the Bureau of Reclamation. There's much more to a centennial celebration than just looking back at what has happened over the last 100 years. We can be proud of our accomplishments over that time, but we must also look to the future to see how the Bureau of Reclamation and its facilities can best be used to help meet the resource management challenges of the next 100 years in the West.

The Bureau of Reclamation will be good stewards of our valuable land and water resources. In some cases, that means guarding our remaining free flowing rivers and streams. In other cases that means using our multi-purpose reservoirs for all of their varied intended uses. We can manage the releases of water from our reservoirs to meet multiple uses throughout its flow to the end user. Water can be used for recreation while stored in the reservoir, then for hydro power generation when it is released, for instream flows, fish and wildlife, and additional recreation while in the river, for water quality control in the river, and in the end for irrigation, municipal and industrial needs, and domestic water supply. The challenge for all of us is to manage these flows in a manner that is best for the water users, the river, and its associated ecosystem.

The Bureau of Reclamation is, and will continue to be, an agency of the future. We will remember our heritage, but we will recognize that traditional project needs must be balanced with ever increasing and changing demands for water so that we can be the best stewards of our water resources in the future.

Some of the points raised in your letter are issues that we can work on with you and your organization. Some of the points have already been addressed, and we should get on with business with the decisions that have been made. The Bureau of Reclamation will meet all the rules, regulations and laws that Congress has passed to govern our work. We will meet our contracts for water deliveries, when at all possible. We will work closely with all water users to try to find new and innovative ways to meet their needs. We will work closely with the states to comply with the water rights they administer, and,

we will work with all of the Native American Tribes to fulfill the Department of the Interior's trust responsibility to them.

With all of that said, I believe that you will see a Bureau of Reclamation for the 21st century that is well versed in collaborative and cooperative approaches to complex and contentious water problems, a Bureau with the expertise to meet the technical challenges of making those water deliveries and generating the power needed by our country, a Bureau that is environmentally sensitive, and a Bureau that is responsive to the ever changing needs of our society.

Thanks again for your intriguing letter. I hope to see you in Moab sometime in the near future. Maybe you can buy me an ice cream cone.

Sincerely,

John W. Keys, III  
Commissioner

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07/15/01

### **Centennial Reform Proposal for the Bureau of Reclamation**

1) **RECOGNIZE FEDERAL PRIMACY OF A PUBLIC RESOURCE:** Reclamation must recognize that the rivers under its jurisdiction are not the property of water agencies under contract, the states, or even in some cases the United States alone, but are held in trust for the benefit of the public. Uniform leadership, authority and policy must come from the Bureau. Reclamation must begin working to overhaul antiquated laws such as the Colorado River Compact that no longer reflect current realities of the region's available water supplies or public demands for habitat preservation and social equity.

2) **BASINWIDE EIS ON RIVER MANAGEMENT:** Reclamation must conduct Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) on the operations and management of dams and diversions, on each river basin, for the purpose of restoring ecosystem function, to fully recover endangered native fish species throughout their historic ranges, and to address the cumulative impacts resulting from both subsidized water and hydropower development.

3) **BUILD NO NEW DIVERSION OR DAMS:** Reclamation must focus its attention on reversing the environmental damage and social inequities brought on by its projects. Building new infrastructure will only exacerbate existing problems and conflicts. Reclamation must support de-authorization of the proposed Animas-La Plata water project in southwestern Colorado, for which no need has been identified for the water that would be diverted from the Animas River, and which is estimated to cost federal taxpayers at least a half-billion dollars.

4) **REDUCE THE NUMBER OF DAMS AND DIVERSIONS:** Reclamation must conduct regular reviews in accordance with NEPA guidelines of the operations of Bureau dams,

as is required of private dams under FERC. Prepare decommissioning plans for all Bureau dams, so the public is aware of direct and indirect costs that will need to be incurred once decommissioning is technically, economically, or politically deemed necessary.

5) UPHOLD INDIAN RIGHTS: Reclamation must fully and fairly compensate Indian Nations for their water rights and offer attractive financial incentives for these Nations to dedicate a portion of their water for instream flows for habitat protection. Reclamation must ensure that all traditional fishing rights are restored and maintained, and that efforts are made to restore sacred sites impacted by Bureau infrastructure.

6) ASSURE INSTREAM FLOW RIGHTS: Reclamation must establish basinwide accounting systems that establish instream flows as beneficial uses and guarantee that water left in the rivers as a result of implementing conservation programs will not be available for appropriation by other users.

7) DELTA RESTORATION: Reclamation must allocate necessary water and sediment flows to restore and protect river deltas, with immediate action for the Colorado and Rio Grande Rivers.

8) MANDATORY WATER CONSERVATION & RECYCLING: Reclamation must mandate all users of federal water projects, regardless of water rights priority status, to meet mandated targeted reductions in water consumption, by implementing water conservation and recycling programs and promoting efficient technologies in municipal, industrial, and agricultural sectors. Reclamation must mandate shifts in cropping patterns by requiring irrigators to replace water-wasting, low-value alfalfa, hay, and other livestock feed crops grown on lands served by Reclamation irrigation contracts, with vegetable and other crops that use significantly less water per acre. Reclamation must work to revive the spirit of the Reclamation Act to support only family-owned farms with federal project water.

9) REFORM HYDROPOWER MARKETING: Reclamation must adjust subsidized rates for hydropower generated at federal dams to reflect current national-average wholesale price for electricity. Require retailers of federal power to meet mandated targeted reductions in customer consumption by implementing aggressive demand-side management and energy conservation programs, including providing low-cost loans to all ratepayers for installing their own renewable energy supply infrastructure.

10) ENFORCE ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS: Reclamation must assist in the aggressive enforcement of environmental laws including the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and other laws, to stop the point and nonpoint sources of pollution, and ensure clean-up of all known pollution sources by 2010, and recognize a right to clean drinking water for all people in the watershed.

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LR Testimony 07/09/01

**House Subcommittee on Water and Power**

Written testimony submitted for the Field Hearing of the United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Water and Power, held in Salt Lake City on Monday, July 9, 2001, on the subject of "Management of the Colorado River in the 21st Century, a Seven State Perspective"

**A CITIZENS' TEN-POINT AGENDA FOR MANAGEMENT OF THE COLORADO RIVER  
IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

JULY 9, 2001

Honorable Jim Hansen  
Chair, Resources Committee  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee on Water and Power:

We thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the subject of "Management of the Colorado River for the 21st Century." We respectfully submit the following remarks on behalf of the environmental groups Living Rivers and Utah Environmental Congress.

Living Rivers, based in Moab, Utah, and Scottsdale, Arizona, is the leading advocacy group dedicated to restoring the Colorado River's natural ecosystems throughout the basin. The Utah Environmental Congress has its headquarters in Salt Lake City and focuses its work primarily on protecting Utah's national forest lands and other federally owned public lands within the state. A major priority for both our organizations is in promoting public awareness of the value of healthy rivers and watersheds.

We submit these comments for the record to register our interest and concern that the Colorado River has been managed primarily for the purpose of promoting unsustainable growth and development in the Southwest, often with little apparent regard for the ecological constraints of the river's ecosystem.

Many citizens today have grave concerns about the Colorado River and its future. Scientists tell us that the river's ecosystem in many places is in trouble or in a state of collapse. Many millions, perhaps hundreds of millions, of taxpayer dollars have been spent to date, with decidedly mixed results, attempting to mitigate environmental damage caused by Reclamation-sponsored water project throughout the river basin.

Recently a proposal was approved by the House of Representatives to begin site preparation work on a particularly irrational water project known as Animas-La Plata. The A-LP, as it is known, may be the last big-spending Reclamation project, and appears to embody some of the worst economics of any project in the agency's history. Taxpayers may end up footing the bill for much for the entire project, for which no use or need has yet been demonstrated.

A number of other problems in the river basin are acute or soon will be so. Endangered species are threatened with extinction, toxic pollutants throughout the basin threaten water quality. High evaporation rates from reservoirs such as Lake Powell and Lake Mead account for losses several times what's needed to provide significant restoration benefits for the delta.

But along with crises, important opportunities often arise. The U.S. and Mexican governments in December last year signed a diplomatic agreement--Minute 306--committing the two nations to a binational dialogue on ways of addressing the pressing question of providing flows to the delta. We strongly support this process and look forward to participating in the dialogue, which is now scheduled to begin officially in mid-September in Mexicali, Mexico. It is our hope that the Congress will be supportive of this process. It is time to look for creative solutions

Next year, 2002, will mark the Centennial of the Reclamation Act and nearly 100 years of federal role in building and operating irrigation and other water projects across the West. Recently Living Rivers led a number of groups in sending a letter to Acting Commissioner of Reclamation, Mr. William McDonald, inviting him to join us in supporting a major restructuring of the agency, toward large-scale river restoration and away from water development. We suggested renaming the agency to the "Bureau of Restoration" to reflect a shift in bureaucratic priorities.

We believe the time has come for some important decisions about the future of the Colorado River. No longer can we continue taking water out without giving something back. For three-quarters of a century, the 1922 Colorado River Compact has overallocated the river and created a system of incentives that reward water users for taking as much water as possible--instead of finding ways to conserve. Today the Colorado River has no additional water to give; the river's limited waters can only be reallocated. Present and future management of the Colorado River turns on this important point.

We call upon the United States and all the seven basin states--Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming--to come together in support of reforming both the Bureau of Reclamation and the antiquated and increasingly unworkable system of water allocations under the Colorado River Compact. The interests of diverse, river-dependent communities of people--and wildlife--must be represented and given equal consideration with other users for access to water supplies. In particular, the federal and state governments must respect and give special priority to the interests of the indigenous peoples of the US and Mexico whose water rights in many cases predate the large industrial users.

A primary goal is to make the Colorado River of the 21st century function once again as a river. Governmental officials must acknowledge that the long-term interests of the region's inhabitants cannot be served so long as the river continues to be viewed and managed as a conveyance system.

We have identified the following issues that must be addressed in the context of reprioritizing and reallocating the river's limited water supplies:

- 1) ONE PERCENT FOR THE DELTA: Allocate, in concert with the Republic of Mexico, at least one percent of the river's annual flow to delta restoration.
- 2) BASINWIDE EIS ON RIVER MANAGEMENT: Conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the operations and management of the Colorado River, its dams and diversions, for the purpose of restoring ecosystem function, fully recovering endangered native fish species, and addressing cumulative impacts resulting from subsidized water and hydropower development.
- 3) REDUCE THE NUMBER OF DAMS AND DIVERSIONS: Build no new diversions or dams on the Colorado River or its tributary streams, and prepare decommissioning plans for all federal dams in the basin, including Glen Canyon Dam.
- 4) COMPENSATE INDIAN WATER RIGHTS: Fully and fairly compensate Indian Nations in the Colorado River basin for their water rights and offer attractive financial incentives for Nations to dedicate a portion of their water for instream flows to the Gulf of California.
- 5) ASSURE INSTREAM FLOW RIGHTS: Establish a basinwide accounting system, common to all states, that establishes instream flows as a beneficial use and guarantees that water left in the rivers as a result of implementing conservation programs will not be available for appropriation by other users, and can flow undiverted to the Gulf of California.
- 6) MANDATORY WATER CONSERVATION & RECYCLING: Require all users of river water in the basin, regardless of water rights priority status, to implement mandatory water conservation and recycling programs to reduce overall consumption, discourage waste, and promote efficient technologies in municipal, industrial, and agricultural sectors.
- 7) ENFORCE CLEAN WATER LAWS: Aggressively enforce the Clean Water Act basinwide, on both point and nonpoint sources of pollution, and ensure clean-up of all known s pollution sources by 2010, and recognize a right to clean drinking water for all people in the watershed, and provide state of the art water and sewer treatment facilities for all communities in the US and Mexican portions of the basin.
- 8) REFORM HYDROPOWER MARKETING: Adjust subsidized rates for hydropower generated at federal dams in the Colorado River basin and marketed by the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), to reflect current national-average wholesale price for electricity, and require retailers of WAPA power to establish aggressive demand-side management and energy conservation programs, including providing low-cost loans to all ratepayers for installing solar photovoltaic units on new and existing structures.
- 9) CANCEL ANIMAS-LA PLATA: Deauthorize the Animas-La Plata water project in southwestern Colorado, for which no need has been identified for the water that would be diverted from the Animas River, and which is estimated to cost federal taxpayers at least a half-billion dollars.

10) REFORM IRRIGATION PROJECTS: Shift cropping patterns on participating water projects, by requiring irrigators to replace water-wasting, low-value alfalfa, hay, and other livestock feed crops grown on lands served by Reclamation irrigation contracts, with vegetable and other crops that use significantly less water per acre.

These ten policy points are not intended to be an exhaustive list of the reforms needed in Colorado River management but constitute a brief summary and representation of the need for reform. We extend an invitation to the federal and state governments to work with members of nongovernmental organizations such as ours, and the indigenous communities on both sides of the international border, to devise a workable and just solution to the pressing problems, some of which we have discussed here in this brief paper.

What we suggest can be viewed as no less than a new compact for the river--an inclusive, multilateral agreement marking a significant break from tradition. It would require a commitment by the states and the federal government to cooperate with and negotiate with a set of partners in a manner unprecedented in the history of Western water law. A dramatic proposal, and one that we submit is desperately needed by the ailing river and the communities on its banks.

Change does not come without cost, and there are some significant costs involved in making any changes to current management priorities and cleaning-up the river's problems. But as with all economic decisions, it is important to ask what will be the cost of not taking action now. Waiting until some future date when the clean-up will only be more difficult--if not impossible. We may not have the luxury of putting off these decisions much longer if we are to preserve the biological diversity and cultural uniqueness that helps define the Colorado River watershed.

Through the previous century, regional leaders tended to look at the river principally as a source of water and hydroelectric power to support industrial and economic development. Federal subsidies for water and power infrastructure made possible a development boom in the Southwest that seems at least as robust today as at any time in the last century. Each day hundreds more people take up residence in Las Vegas and Phoenix. The phenomenal migration is the direct result, from a historic standpoint, of the construction of dams on the Colorado River. Pressure is building for change, as Nevada grapples with tight supplies yet the neighboring State of Utah remains nowhere near its allocation limit.

Colorado River water is fast becoming a valuable commodity, and many predict that basinwide water marketing will by necessity become a reality, while others resist the idea. The stakes are high. Inaction may not be an option much longer. The 21st century may well see a reversal of many of the outdated policies that have in part caused the current situation. With luck and leadership, the future will be much kinder to the Colorado River and the people living along it.

We leave this discussion, however, with a caveat and a request. Nongovernmental organizations such as Living Rivers and the Utah Environmental Congress are building networks of people who are increasingly well informed on river and watershed issues,

and whose values have more in common with protecting the natural world than exploiting it. A significant demographic shift is occurring in the Southwest, one that threatens the political supremacy of the ranching, logging, and mining industries. We respectfully submit that the economic, social and cultural future of the region depends on our leaders' ability to recognize and prepare for the inevitable changes that will accompany the changing priorities of the residents.

Our organizations are working to make possible the kind of management needed to salvage the Colorado River and begin the task of restoring its ecosystem to a functional semblance of its former glory.

If we may be of assistance to the Subcommittee by providing you with information and elaboration on the points we make in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact us at the address below. The solutions to the problems we have identified can only be reached by first engaging a constructive dialogue, both regionally and nationally, about the lands and waters that make up this amazing watershed.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, we ask that these remarks be inserted in the official record of this hearing. We are available to answer any questions the Subcommittee may have.

Sincerely,

David Orr  
Living Rivers  
Moab, Utah  
435.259.1063

Craig Axford  
Utah Environmental Congress  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
801.466.4055

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High Country News  
Writers on the Range

July 5, 2001

by Michelle Nijhuis

I step into the elevator, the doors close, and we start dropping ... and dropping ... and dropping. Our tour leader clears his throat. "My name is Mark," he announces, "and I'll be your dam" -- pause for emphasis -- "guide."

All 20 of us in the elevator laugh at the corny joke, probably because we're nervous. We're descending into Hoover Dam, the oldest concrete plug on the Colorado River and

the tallest dam in the Western hemisphere. From the inside, the thing does feel pretty dam enormous.

When we hit bottom, we extract ourselves from the elevator and tail obediently after Mark. We gape at the giant turbines, pushing back our Bureau of Reclamation-issue hardhats to get a better view. When we step outside, the dam looms above us, 726-and-a-half feet of impassive concrete. I feel about two inches tall.

The equipment is impressive, but it's the stories about the dam workers that stick in my head. The concrete, shoveled and smoothed by hand, could be stretched into a two-lane highway from San Francisco to New York. For four to five dollars a day, Mark tells us, men muscled the structure into shape, sweating their way through hundred-degree temperatures. Their wives and kids were equally tough, surviving in a scatter of shacks while they waited for company housing.

When the dam was dedicated in 1935, the dam workers and their families were national heroes. Their labors had given the nation something to be proud about, and national pride was in short supply in the 1930s. But even Mark, a dedicated dam-booster if there ever was one, hints that the story isn't as simple and heartwarming as it sounds. Though he doesn't tell the whole history, he makes it easy to piece together.

These days, the dam does provide electricity, and it stores water for sprawling Las Vegas. But neither was its primary reason for being. All that concrete was originally intended to keep the lower Colorado River from doing what it had done for eons: flood California's Imperial Valley.

Produce farmers had been thrilled to discover the valley's rich soil in the late 1800s, but the massive floods, they soon found, were inconvenient.

So they lobbied the federal government for an upstream dam, a bulwark against what they saw as the river's bad habits. Congress signed off on the Boulder Canyon Project Act and put up \$165 million -- big money in those lean days. The project eventually paid for itself through electricity sales, and the government thought it had gotten a great deal.

But the real winners were the Imperial Valley produce-barons. When the dam was completed, investors flocked south and business in the valley took off. California's desert basin still produces millions of dollars every year in artichokes, oranges and other goodies.

I am sure the men who built Hoover Dam worked hard and skillfully, and the monolith they built remains impressive. It's the dam's effects these days that I'm wondering about. When the tour ends, and I'm left standing by the highway on top of Hoover Dam, I look over the edge, fighting vertigo, and stare at the cold, clear water far below.

This dam isn't my idea of an icon. My generation didn't grow up during the Depression, and we didn't grow up desperate for a national morale boost. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see what the dam has accomplished.

There are a thousand books that tell us how Hoover spawned a plumbing system of river plugs, up and down the Colorado. There are dozens of river runners who remember how the dams destroyed magnificent canyons, and hundreds of tribal members who have seen their sacred sites disappear underwater. There are environmental activists -- lots and lots of 'em -- who can tell us about the wildlife and wild habitats that are no more. And there are the people who live downstream, in the river's delta in Mexico, who have a story to tell about a paradise wrecked.

So I'm hoping my generation can create an icon of its own. How about a Colorado River that acts in spring like a river? One that could spill floodwaters through these dams, gradually restoring native wildlife habitat from Wyoming to Mexico.

A group of young activists from the Glen Canyon Action Network want to make that kind of river real, so this spring they took their message on the road. They drove an empty water truck from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles, weaving along the course of the Colorado. They stopped in cities and towns along the way, preaching water conservation and talking about the river that could be.

They've got big dreams. But then, so did the people who built Hoover Dam.

Michelle Nijhuis is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News in Paonia, Colorado ([www.hcn.org](http://www.hcn.org)). She is a reporter and associate editor of High Country News.

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Media Advisory 07/05/01

### **Congressional hearing on Colorado River issues ignores citizens' input**

Congressional hearing on Monday will focus on Colorado River management issues; Governors invited to testify--but not citizens  
Environmental groups to offer alternative view

The US House of Representatives' Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power will hold a field hearing Monday in Salt Lake City on the topic of "Management of the Colorado River for the 21st Century: A Seven-State Perspective." Representative Jim Hansen of Utah, Chair of the House Resources Committee, is expected to preside. The hearing will be at the Utah Department of Natural Resources building, 1594 W. North Temple Avenue (corner of Redwood Road), at 9:30 AM July 9.

Subcommittee staff indicated on Thursday that the Chairman has invited the Governors of the seven Colorado River basin states to testify and give their views on Colorado

River management. The seven basin states are Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

Representatives of Indian Nations and citizens groups reportedly will not be permitted to testify at Monday's hearing.

Nevertheless, Living Rivers--Utah's leading advocacy group promoting Colorado River restoration--will be in attendance to offer an environmentally sound and socially equitable vision for the river. The Utah Environmental Congress and other Utah environmental organizations will be joining Living Rivers in support of healthy watersheds and river ecosystems.

"Throughout the 20th century, the government dammed, diverted, and developed the Colorado River into the world's most elaborate plumbing system," said David Orr, Field Program Director for Living Rivers. "In the 21st century, the people of Utah and the other basin states are calling for restoration of the river's ecosystem and rational allocation of the river's limited water supplies."

Current efforts to mitigate damage to the river and restore ecological function are considered to be inadequate, according to Orr. Despite the expenditure of tens of millions of federal tax dollars over more than a decade, endangered fish species recovery programs in the basin have little success to show. The Colorado River no longer reaches the sea because of diversions, and the once-productive delta is completely dry. Water allocations based on faulty, 80-year old data reward waste and inefficiency while discouraging conservation.

An environmental agenda for the Colorado River in the 21st century requires reforming the US Bureau of Reclamation, the agency most responsible for damming and diverting the rivers of the West.

"Reclamation's centennial will be celebrated in 2002," said Orr. "We call for a change of mission--from being the agency of big dams and dried-up rivers to the 'Bureau of Restoration.'"

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LR in the News 07/02/01

## **Environmental group riled up over rainbows**

By ROB BREEDING

Associate Editor

Arizona Daily Sun

The trout fishery at Lees Ferry is a freak, an anomaly caused by the construction of Glen Canyon Dam. No trout could survive the warm, silty water found in pre-dam Glen Canyon.

But since 1963 the dam has changed the river, releasing a steady current of cold, clear water that creates ideal conditions for trout. Rainbow trout stocked by the Arizona Game and Fish Department have taken hold, and Lees Ferry has developed into a blue-ribbon trout fishery with an international reputation. The Ferry has become a mecca for fly fishers, especially in the winter months when the spawning rainbows are most vulnerable to anglers.

For the last three decades, the trout fishery at Lees Ferry has generally been regarded as an asset -- an unexpected benefit of Glen Canyon Dam -- that provides recreational and economic opportunities for northern Arizona.

So it came as something of a surprise last week when Living Rivers, a Moab, Utah-based group that describes itself on its Web site as "A people's movement working to protect and restore riverine ecosystems," sent out a media advisory stating the group planned to protest the presence of rainbow trout at Lees Ferry at a pair of National Park Service scoping meetings in Flagstaff and Page.

Living Rivers would also like to see motorized boats banned from the Lees Ferry reach, and it wants public access to the tunnel near Page that provides access to the river at the base of the dam. Only Wilderness River Adventures, a commercial outfitter that runs tours down the Lees Ferry reach, now has access.

The Lees Ferry reach of the Colorado is part of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. Recent visitor surveys have revealed an increasing perception of conflicts between user groups. In addition, some visitors have reported concerns with crowding and a diminished quality of experience.

For these reasons, the Park Service has initiated a Recreation Management Plan for the river that will address visitors' perceptions of crowding, identify any resource conflicts, and evaluate the need for new management strategies. The overall study process is expected to extend over an 18-month period.

Stable flows in recent years have led to a boom in rainbow trout reproduction at Lees Ferry. In fact, Game and Fish hasn't stocked rainbows at Lees Ferry since 1999. Game and Fish now estimates a rainbow trout population of 250,000 to 300,000 adult fish in the 15-mile reach of Lees Ferry.

Living Rivers Field Program Director David Orr fears the trout are migrating downstream and eating juvenile humpback chub in their last Grand Canyon redoubt: at the confluence with the Little Colorado River, where the fish spawn in the warmer waters of the tributary stream, some 61 river miles downstream from Lees Ferry.

"It's likely (rainbow trout) are being pushed downstream," Orr said.

Bill Persons, a Game and Fish fisheries biologist, said past research hasn't indicated a downstream migration of rainbow trout.

From 1991 to 1997 Game and Fish stocked about 400,000 rainbow trout that were marked with wire tags at Lees Ferry. From 1992 to 1999, 2,021 downstream rainbow

trout were examined for tags and just three turned up positive. Actually, it's not even certain the three positives were Lees Ferry fish since the scanner only detected the presence of metal in the fish. The positive readings could have been broken-off fish hooks.

If the fish weren't Lees Ferry fish, then where are they coming from?

There are two trout strongholds in the Canyon closer to the Little Colorado than Lees Ferry. A concentration of rainbow trout is found near the mouth of Nankoweap Creek about 10 miles upstream from the Little Colorado River. And a population of brown trout, a more notorious fish eater, is concentrated near Bright Angel Creek about 27 miles downstream from the Little Colorado. The Bright Angel brown trout were originally stocked by the Park Service in 1923, and are now a self-sustaining population.

Last year, Game and Fish biologists collected stomach contents from 800 brown trout in the Canyon. The contents are being examined to see if they include humpback chub remains.

As for rainbow trout, the role of predation on native fish is unclear. Unlike brown trout, rainbows do not focus on eating other fish. Instead, aquatic insects and freshwater shrimp make up the bulk of their diet. But large rainbow trout will eat smaller fish.

Persons said Game and Fish might install a fish weir at the mouth of Bright Angel Creek. The weir would trap spawning trout as they move upstream. Persons said the data collected would help determine whether the Bright Angel population is spawning in the creek, or in the mainstem of the Colorado.

The results might ultimately lead to the construction of some type of fish barrier in Bright Angel that would cut off brown trout from spawning areas upstream, but that action would require an environmental analysis to be completed first, Persons said.

Humpback chub are native to the Colorado River system and are uniquely adapted to the pre-dam conditions of highly fluctuating flows in the Canyon before Glen Canyon Dam was built. In fact, some biologists speculate the unique hump of the chub is an adaptation that allows the fish to use the pressure of the current to hold its place on the bottom during high flows.

In the pre-dam Canyon, flows could range from 1,000 cubic feet per second during the winter months to torrents of 100,000 cfs or more of chocolate-colored, silt-laden runoff in the spring. Water temperatures pre-dam were just as variable, ranging from near freezing to the 80s during the summer.

Today, flows range from 5,000 cfs up to the high teens, with occasional spike flows of 30,000 cfs or more. The water pours from the dam at a steady 48 degrees.

The only remaining breeding population of chub in the canyon uses the warmer flows of the Little Colorado River to spawn. Orr fears that a major disruption of that river system, such as a chemical spill in the Little Colorado where Highway 89 crosses it near

Cameron, could wipe out the fish. Orr said that additional spawning sites for chubs were critical to the endangered fish's recovery.

Persons agreed, but said that was unlikely without significantly warming the river. And that solution comes with its own set of complications. For instance, striped bass -- native to the Atlantic Ocean and a voracious schooling predator that can reach 50 pounds or more -- are plentiful in Lake Mead below the Canyon. The frigid water in the Canyon keeps the fish downstream. Stripers are also found in Lake Powell, as are another introduced predator, smallmouth bass.

Losing the trout fishery at Lees Ferry would have an economic impact in small, northern Arizona communities like Marble Canyon. Dave Foster, whose family owns Marble Canyon Lodge, said anglers make up about 30 percent of their business. Most of the angler traffic comes during the winter, when regular tourist traffic slows down.

"Fishing picks up that slack and keeps us going through the winter months," said Foster, who also runs Marble Canyon Guides.

Foster and Lees Ferry Anglers co-owner Jeff English said they are converting their powerboats to four-stroke engines, instead of two strokes, which are noisier and create more air and water pollution. English said 13 of Lees Ferry's 15 guide boats are four strokes. Three of Foster's five guide boats run four strokes. Both recognize that two strokes will ultimately be phased out altogether.

In the absence of good evidence that Lees Ferry trout are preying on Grand Canyon humpback chub, Game and Fish will likely reject Living Rivers' call to eliminate any limits on trout at Lees Ferry (all limits for non-native fish have been lifted in the Grand Canyon) and continue its two-pronged management strategy in the Colorado River.

"We place great value, and the public places great value, on the trout fishery at Lees Ferry. We also place high value on the humpback chub in Grand Canyon. Our goal is to manage for both," said Larry Riley, Game and Fish fisheries branch chief. "I'm not sure they have to be mutually exclusive."

Rob Breeding can be reached at 556-2263, or by e-mail at [rbreeding@azdailysun.com](mailto:rbreeding@azdailysun.com).

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Regional News 06/27/01

## **Hopi and Navajo protest Peabody's coal slurry pipeline**

© 2001

Indian Country Today

June 27, 2001

By Brenda Norrell

Today staff

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. - Former Hopi Chairman Ferrell Secakuku joined Navajos from Big Mountain to protest the use of aquifer water for Black Mesa coal slurry and urge creation of new, sustainable forms of energy.

"We are not always on the same side of the fence, but today we are all trying to do something on the same side of the fence," Secakuku told a crowd of American Indians and other environmentalists that included longtime resisters of Navajo relocation at Big Mountain.

"We found out the water table is being depleted," Secakuku said, denying reports by the federal government and Peabody Western Coal Co. that claimed otherwise.

Secakuku entered the offices of Black Mesa Pipeline Inc. to urge officials to halt the slurry pipeline that annually depletes 1.3 billion gallons from the Navajo Aquifer. He said using water to transport coal threatens to leave the Hopi village of Moenkopi without water in the year 2011.

"Every time you breathe, Peabody is pumping 50 gallons," Secakuku had told the crowd.

Secakuku said even though he is a Republican, Bush's energy policy, pressing to increase electricity and oil production, causes him serious concern.

Further, he said there has been no response from Interior on a proposal to provide Lake Powell water to Hopi for drinking water. He said if no alternative water source is provided by the year 2004, he and Preston would march to the Hopi Tribal Council and demand that contracts be severed, ending the slurry and coal mining on Black Mesa.

"By the year 2004, we will stop the mining."

"Soon the aquifer will crumble and no longer take the recharge."

Minutes after Secakuku entered the office, one protester outside was handcuffed, arrested and charged with blocking the sidewalk.

As the group of about 25 peaceful protesters dispersed, Flagstaff police arrived in five police cars, a police panel truck and undercover officers in unmarked vehicles.

An hour earlier, during the peaceful kickoff of the "Just and Sustainable Energy Campaign," Roberta Blackgoat, held a sign proclaiming, "The Creator is the Only One who is Going to Relocate Me," and appealed for protection of Mother Earth.

"I'm traveling for the whole universe, and the people around the globe," said Blackgoat who has spent years opposing Navajo relocation. She said coal is the liver of Mother Earth and the gouging of her liver is making the Earth sick.

"Mother Earth is really suffering. She is having a lot of pain." Appealing for future generations, she said, "I am doing this for all these unborn."

Blackgoat said money and materialism possess the peoples' mind and hearts. "The money is the most important part of the government."

Her son, Danny Blackgoat, told protesters, "With one voice we can free the globe.

We are all in a common struggle." He said corporations are draining the resources of the world. "They have been taking, taking, taking. They have never been able to give anything in return."

Urging life in harmony with nature, he countered those who say life is harsh on Big Mountain and Black Mesa. "The environment is very nurturing, you just have to know how to live with it."

Hunter Red Dog, Diné/Dakota member of Casper's 602 Band, and Tohono O'odham Tim Toro and Mike Flores were among Hopi, Navajo, Tohono O'odham and Dakota opposing coal slurry and calling for creation of alternative energy sources.

David Orr, director of field programs for Living Rivers in Moab, Utah, urged solidarity between Indigenous groups fighting for protection of Mother Earth and environmentalists struggling for restoration of the Colorado River watershed and other ecosystems.

Paul Torrence, of Arizonans for the Arctic Refuge, said proposed oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge threatens caribou, grizzly bears, snow geese and owls. It also threatens the culture and way of life of Gwich'in Indians.

"It would destroy the caribou herd," he said of the 129,000-member Porcupine River caribou herd.

The protest focused on Black Mesa Pipeline, which carries coal slurry from Peabody's Black Mesa Mine. Enron Corp., a major contributor to the Bush campaign, owns the pipeline. Financial disclosures last month showed Bush's White House staff owned stock in Enron.

Bucky Preston, Hopi, encouraged traditional American Indians to share their ways with others to preserve the Earth and its resources. "We need to close the mines down wherever they may be. We need to teach the whole world what we know.

"We need to do this in order to be who we are."

Flagstaff Activist Networks organized the protest with Hopis, Navajos, Sierra Club, Black Mesa Trust, Glen Canyon Action Network, Living Rivers and others. The groups urged participation in a "Lights Out! On Cheney Bush Energy Policy," a rolling national electricity blackout, June 21 from 7 to 10 p.m.

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LR Press Release 06/18/01  
**Stop Animas-La Plata Project**

CONTACT: John Weisheit or David Orr 435-259-1063

Citing Animas-La Plata Project as a "Dinosaur," groups call for investigation of project's economic and environmental problems

Environmental groups call on Reclamation Commissioner to reform agency

DURANGO, COLORADO, June 18 -- On the 99th anniversary of the passage of the federal Reclamation Act, a coalition of fifteen regional grassroots environmental, agricultural and citizens organizations sent a letter to Acting Commissioner of Reclamation J. William McDonald, calling on him to lead the Bureau of Reclamation in a new, environmentally sound direction as the agency approaches its centennial celebration next year.

\*\*\* Full text of groups' letter attached below \*\*\*

The groups also called for an investigation by the agency of apparent economic improprieties and environmental damage caused by the recently authorized Animas-La Plata (A-LP) project in southwestern Colorado and northwestern New Mexico. The Bush Administration recently recommended a multimillion-dollar appropriation for the project that would divert large amounts of water from the Animas River into a proposed off-stream reservoir near Durango.

The letter is the first in a series that will highlight outdated and environmentally harmful programs and activities of the Bureau of Reclamation, the groups said.

"As we near the end of a century of Reclamation's public works, we look around us and see dams, ditches, and dewatered rivers across the West," said John Weisheit, Conservation Director of Living Rivers, based in Moab, Utah. "The agency has to turn around and begin restoring the natural beauty and ecological functioning of the rivers of the West."

Environmental groups from around the Four Corners region joining with Living Rivers in signing the letter to Acting Commissioner McDonald include: Animas River Agriculture Irrigators Association, Cedar Hill Clean Water Coalition, Citizens Progressive Alliance, Colorado Public Interest Research Group, electors Concerned about Animas Water, Forest Conservation Council, Forest Guardians, Four Corners Action Coalition, Friends of the Animas River, Glen Canyon Action Network, San Juan Audubon Society, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Sheep Mountain Alliance, and Taxpayers for the Animas River.

"The Animas-La Plata project is a dinosaur," said Philip Doe, chairman of the Citizens Progressive Alliance and a retired policy officer with the Bureau of Reclamation. "The bad planning, bad economics, and lack of concern for the environment that characterize this half-billion dollar boondoggle should move the Bureau and Congress to conduct a full investigation before a single yard of dirt is ever moved."

In their letter, the groups cited the apparent lack of uses or need for the Animas River water to be diverted by the proposed A-LP project. The withdrawal of significant amounts of water from the river will adversely affect recovery of endangered fish species in the San Juan River, downstream of the project. The Animas is one of the last free-flowing rivers in the region.

"The A-LP is just another big government pork-barrel, only worse," said Weisheit. "We hope the Commissioner will agree that Reclamation's reputation and future are on the line with this project."

The groups' letter represents the beginning of a grassroots movement to reform the Bureau of Reclamation.

# # #

For more information on the Animas-La Plata project:

electors Concerned about Animas Water's A-LP Central home page: <http://www.angelfire.com/al/alpcentral/>

Sierra Club A-LP home page: <http://www.colorado.sierraclub.org/alp/>

Bureau of Reclamation A-LP home page: <http://www.uc.usbr.gov/special/alp/>

Co-signing organizations' websites:

Living Rivers <http://www.livingrivers.net/> Colorado Public Interest Research Group <http://www.copirg.org/> Forest Conservation Council <http://www.forestconservation.org/> Forest Guardians <http://www.fguardians.org/> Glen Canyon Action Network <http://www.drainit.org/> San Juan Citizens Alliance <http://www.sanjuancitizens.org/> Sheep Mountain Alliance <http://telluride2.com/colorado/Sheep-Mountain-Alliance.htm>

----- - TEXT OF GROUPS' LETTER - -----

Mr. J. William McDonald Acting Commissioner US Bureau of Reclamation Department of Interior 1849 'C' Street, NW Washington, DC 20240-0001

sent via fax: 202-513-0314

June 18, 2001

Dear Commissioner McDonald:

This week marks the ninety-ninth anniversary of the passage of the federal Reclamation Act, and the creation of the Reclamation Service, later to become known as the Bureau of Reclamation. One year from now—June 17, 2002—will mark the centennial of the law that led to a dramatic transformation of the rivers and landscapes of the American West.

This letter is a request for action. The many pressing problems besetting the rivers of this region deserve the full attention of the Bureau of Reclamation. Our fifteen environmental, agricultural and citizens organizations, listed below, respectfully request your personal intervention and commitment to changing Reclamation's priorities to reflect the changing needs of our society, and the needs of the rivers themselves.

Today more than 450 Reclamation dams and diversions stand across our Western rivers in seventeen states, creating about 350 reservoirs that provide water for 180 irrigation projects and water supply for more than 30 million people. These structures and engineering achievements, some of which are among the largest in the world, store huge amounts of water and generate over forty thousand megawatts of electric power, combined. Over nine million acres of farmland are irrigated by Reclamation projects. The scope and magnitude of the public works undertaken by Reclamation is unsurpassed in terms of the effects these projects have had on the lives of the millions of people who depend in some way on the rivers of this arid region.

Certainly many associated with the Bureau of Reclamation will find cause for celebrating the upcoming centennial. But for those committed to the sound stewardship of the Colorado and other rivers of the West, the sentiment is reversed. This century of impounding and diverting has brought with it extensive environmental and social problems that continue to worsen. Western rivers are critical to the protection of biological diversity in this arid region. Scientists tell us that many Reclamation projects are at least partly to blame for the near-extinction of many native fish and other river-dependent species across the West. Pressure is building to take down Reclamation dams in some places, to restore rivers' ecological health, and recover populations of native fish and river-dependent wildlife.

The organizations listed below join together in marking the culmination of this "Reclamation Century," by calling on the Bureau of Reclamation to acknowledge the harm that its projects have often caused, and dedicate itself to making river restoration, not exploitation, the agency's focus in the years ahead.

A century later, the agency finds itself facing declining budgets, increasing pressure to reduce the subsidies to water users that have fueled the engine of political support for much of the Bureau's public works. Reclamation itself has said, "the arid West essentially has been reclaimed." Yet some politicians still look to Reclamation to fulfill the elusive dream of boundless resource use.

To that end, we come to the first point of grave concern to which we wish to draw your attention: the Animas-La Plata (A-LP) Project in southwestern Colorado. This environmentally destructive scheme is an economic boondoggle that will cost federal taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars with few benefits. Environmental advocates and others have been engaged for more than a decade in an effort to protect the Animas River from this dinosaur project.

A brief summary of the problems with the A-LP reveals an unsettling picture. If it were built, the project would:

- o Divert one of the region's last free-flowing rivers, and inundate a productive refuge for wildlife at a cost of \$340 million dollars or more;
- o Reduce flows in an already heavily depleted San Juan River system, placing additional pressure on the endangered native fish and other river-dependent species in the basin; and
- o Provide taxpayer-subsidized water for as-yet unidentified and unneeded development projects, only adding to the Bureau's "pork-barrel" legacy.

Therefore:

We the undersigned citizen groups call on you to recognize the seriousness of the Animas River's plight, and we ask you to seek funding from the Administration and the Congress to prepare a report investigating the environmental and economic concerns that have been raised by citizen groups about the project. We ask that you oppose appropriating any funding for project construction pending the outcome of these studies.

We also ask that you consider Reclamation's future direction, and the benefits of shifting the agency's mission from development to restoration. Return the agency to its roots as a supporter of small family farms, not a subsidizer of globalized corporate agribusiness. Add an essential component to Reclamation's mission--to become a protector and defender of the environmental quality and health of river ecosystems.

Over the coming year, our organizations will be communicating with you on a regular basis about a number of other issues and concerns that warrant corrective action by your agency.

The policies that govern Reclamation's actions, as well as those set by the Bureau itself, are out-of-step with the environmental constraints and social demands of this modern era. Too many dams have been built across the over-allocated rivers of the West, and too much water is being diverted from them. Outdated laws discourage water users from conserving, and stand in the way of restoring water flows to stressed streambeds. The dried-up Colorado River delta in Mexico bears silent testimony to Reclamation's failure to steward properly the rivers it has developed.

Our organizations look forward to working with you to bring about long-needed changes at the Bureau of Reclamation. In the coming year, we will be sharing more of our concerns with you in the spirit of a frank and open dialogue. Please feel free to call upon us for consultation at any time. But please also understand that the rivers of the West can't survive much longer the bureaucratic inertia and neglect that has characterized Reclamation's first century. If the agency is unwilling to change, then we will feel compelled to work in a more adversarial mode to impose change on the agency, for the sake of rivers and the people and other life that depends upon them.

Sincerely,

John Weisheit Conservation Director Living Rivers Moab, Utah

on behalf of the following organizations:

Orion Utton Animas River Agricultural Irrigators Assn. Aztec, New Mexico

Philip Doe, Chairman Citizens Progressive Alliance Denver, Colorado

Jacob Hottell, Chairman Cedar Hill Clean Water Coalition Aztec, New Mexico

Matt Baker, Executive Director Colorado Public Interest Research Group Denver, Colorado

Steve Cone, Director electors Concerned about Animas Water Farmington, New Mexico

John Talberth, Executive Director Forest Conservation Council Santa Fe, New Mexico

Susan Tixier, Executive Director Forest Guardians Santa Fe, New Mexico

Carl Weston, Vice-President Four Corners Action Coalition Bondad, Colorado

Nancy Jacques, President Friends of the Animas River Durango, Colorado

David Orr, Field Program Director Glen Canyon Action Network Moab, Utah

Jean Lyle, President San Juan Audubon Society Durango, Colorado

Mark Pearson, Executive Director San Juan Citizens Alliance Durango, Colorado

Joan May, Executive Director Sheep Mountain Alliance Telluride, Colorado

Michael Black, Spokesman Taxpayers for the Animas River Durango, Colorado

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LR in the News 06/03/01

## **Activists Want Uranium Plant Closed**

### **White Mesa mill near Blanding is compared to troublesome Atlas site**

The Salt Lake Tribune  
Sunday, June 3, 2001

By Lisa Church, Special to the Tribune

MOAB - Some environmentalist groups say the White Mesa uranium mill near Blanding should be closed before the state has another contaminated tailings site on its hands similar to the Atlas site north of Moab.

Representatives of the Utah Sierra Club Glen Canyon Group and Living Rivers, both based in Moab, made their remarks during a public comment period to the state's Radiation Control Board, the oversight board for the Division of Radiation Control, during a meeting in Moab on Friday.

The White Mesa Mill, in San Juan County, is owned by International Uranium Corp. It uses an acid-leach process to extract uranium and other valuable metals from radioactive waste shipped to the site from around the country. The remaining materials are disposed of in the mill's tailings site. A \$10 million bond is in place for reclamation, should the site close, but residents say that is not enough money to pay for cleaning the site.

On Friday, the environmentalists described the waste disposal area as being similar to the 13 million tons of tailings produced by Atlas Corp., which processed uranium as a site near the banks of the Colorado River and has been a source of headaches for the state and federal agencies since the company closed its plant in 1984 and filed for bankruptcy protection in 1998. After 10 years and millions of dollars in studies and stabilization work, the Atlas site will be turned over to the U.S. Department of Energy in September.

Environmentalists told Radiation Control Board members the White Mesa Mill is a toxic waste dump, accepting materials that will produce little uranium or valuable metals. They said the mill also could pollute the underground aquifer that is the water source for the Ute Reservation, and said the aquifer would then carry the toxins into the San Juan River which joins the Colorado River at Lake Powell.

"This is a huge watershed that feeds the entire West," said John Weisheit, chairman of the Glen Canyon Group of the Sierra Club. "I'm disappointed in the leadership of Utah. We don't want nuclear waste here."

Sierra Club member and longtime environmental activist Ken Sleight urged the board to close the White Mesa mill, which earlier this year applied to the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a license to transport and process radioactive lead waste from a site in California.

Owen Lammers, executive director of Living Rivers, told board members the International Uranium, which has operated the mill located on the Ute Reservation south of Blanding since 1980, is not financially stable. He cited figures from the company's 2000 annual report filed with the federal Securities Exchange Commission, which show that the company's assets have dropped from \$32 million in 1998, to \$6 million last year. "We have a situation where the company is declining. They're having trouble," Lammers said.

Urging the state to "investigate independently" how much reclamation of the White Mesa site will cost, Lammers cautioned board members to carefully review the financial disclosures in the company's annual report.

International Uranium president Ron Hochstein, who attended Friday's meeting, said the company is financially secure and stressed that White Mesa is a working mill, not a toxic dump.

He said the company's annual report shows lower assets because the value on mining properties the company owns had declined in recent years due to a drop in the price of uranium.

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River News 06/03/01

## **Barely a river**

Stories by Mitch Tobin and photos by Jeffry Scott

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

The "Cucapah" sits in the sun-baked flats of the Colorado River delta about 40-miles south of San Luis Rio Colorado, Mexico. The river that carved the Grand Canyon is barely a trickle this far south and what water there is here is primarily from the Sea of Cortez.

Pressure is on U.S. to help revive Mexico's Colorado Delta

Their dream is to pull endangered species back from the brink, stimulate marine life in the Gulf of California and rejuvenate a landscape that was once a tropical swamp prowled by jaguars and bears.

Today, the 3,000-square-mile delta offers only hints of its former self.

The upstream damming of the Colorado, and its diversion to places including Tucson, has caused stark and sterile salt flats to replace most of the marshes and forests. In dry years, a river once mighty enough to sculpt the Grand Canyon and flip a 36-ton steamboat doesn't even reach the sea.

Recent wet years, however, have let more fresh water reach the delta, spawning patches of new habitat and bumper harvests of fish and shrimp. It's proof that the delta could be revived if it could only get a little more water from upstream users such as Arizona, some advocates and University of Arizona researchers say, End of a River

'There's plenty of water. The thing is, we abuse it.' Lisa Force, director of Living Rivers

One month ago, Tucson became the latest city to tap the Colorado when it began using its allocation from the \$4 billion Central Arizona Project.

In total, the Tucson area has rights to about 1 percent of the Colorado's flow - the amount some conservation groups want to see dedicated to ecological purposes in Mexico.

If the delta's backers succeed, Tucson and the rest of the Colorado's users could be forced to give up some of their precious water supply.

But the campaign to send heavier flows down the river faces a steep, uphill climb. And the trickle that arrives in the delta today might not be there tomorrow.

Upriver from the delta, an era of civil engineering that rivaled Egypt's pyramid building has turned the Colorado into an elaborate plumbing system that provides drinking water for 25 million Americans and irrigation for some of the world's most productive farmland.

Every drop of the Southwest's biggest river is already accounted for. And in the nation's fastest-growing region, no one is rushing to give up his share.

"There's a shortage of water in the system already, and both California and Nevada need more," noted LeGrand Nielson, deputy director of the Bureau of Reclamation, which led the last century's dam-building crusade.

Environmentalists on both sides of the border have sued the Bureau of Reclamation several times in the past year, claiming the agency is violating the Endangered Species Act by depriving the delta of water. Federal officials respond that the U.S. law doesn't apply in Mexico.

Even so, the recent litigation marks an unprecedented focus of attention on an inhospitable region that has been a blind spot for most Americans.

With summer temperatures topping 120 degrees and 3 inches of rain falling in a good year, the delta remains one of North America's most forbidding places. Humidity from the sea and irrigated fields, mosquitoes from standing water and the abject poverty of farm workers' shantytowns hardly beckon visitors.

The delta may never become a hot spot for tourists. But even some of the Colorado's most prominent water users are starting to acknowledge its needs. When activists on a "One Percent for the Delta" road trip arrived in Las Vegas in March, the city's top water official, Patricia Mulroy, told them the delta is "an issue whose time has come."

Author Marc Reisner, in his 1986 book "Cadillac Desert," saw the Colorado's transformation as a metaphor for our time: "One could say that the age of great expectations was inaugurated at Hoover Dam - a fifty-year flowering of hopes when all things appeared possible. And one could say that amid the salt-encrusted sands of the river's dried-up delta, we began to founder on the Era of Limits."

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River News 06/03/01

### **Colorado River is farmer's lifeblood**

Stories by Mitch Tobin and photos by Jeffry Scott  
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Ramon Alvarado Garcia grows grass for cattle feed in a ditch beside the canal carrying the river's remnants.

For Evanisto Beltronas, 74, the damming and diversion of the Colorado has been a good thing. At high noon, in a cotton field 20 miles south of Yuma, with the temperature climbing toward 105 degrees, the Mexican farmer said an aqueduct from the Colorado has made his life easier.

"When the river was still here, there wasn't a road, there wasn't electricity, there wasn't anything," he said.

Beltronas makes 80 pesos for a six-hour shift on someone else's land - about \$1.25 an hour. At the end of his day he crosses a canal choked with algae and disappears into a village of crude shacks.

A 1944 treaty guarantees Mexico about 10 percent of the river's flow. Most of that water is diverted to farmland by a concrete river that starts at Morelos Dam west of Yuma; the rest goes to the booming border cities of Mexicali and Tijuana, which are growing at more than 3 percent annually.

For farmers north of the border, harnessing the Colorado's flow has allowed them to exist in the continent's driest region. The dams have also provided hydroelectric power and reduced the threat of deadly flooding. To some, river water that reaches the sea is still "wasted."

California's Imperial Irrigation District, which uses about 20 percent of the Colorado's flow, harvests a half-million acres and produces \$1 billion in crops each year. It is politically powerful enough to stand toe-to-toe with the cities of Southern California, which desperately want farmers' water for their growing populations.

Although cities in the Southwest are drawing an increasing amount from the Colorado, farms still account for 72 percent of the river's use. Some of that water grows produce and cotton; most irrigates cattle feed.

As a result, environmental groups argue that slight improvements in farms' water efficiency - using drip irrigation instead of flooding fields, for example - could create enough surplus water for the delta.

"There's plenty of water. The thing is, we abuse it," said Lisa Force, director of the Moab, Utah-based Living Rivers.

Because it takes 3,200 gallons of water to create enough feed for 1 pound of beef, Force says, if everyone dependent on the Colorado skipped just one half-pound burger per year, there would be enough for the delta. The same gains would result from each of those people conserving 3 gallons per day.

"We're not preaching vegetarianism or veganism," she said. "We just want to make little notches in the extreme extravagance with how we treat water."

But Imperial Irrigation District spokeswoman Susan Giller said the district has already lined nearly all of its canals to prevent seepage and has become one of California's most efficient agricultural areas.

"The more efficient you become, the more complicated and expensive it becomes to save water," she said.

Drip irrigation isn't practical for crops such as alfalfa because the plants are harvested several times a year and the tubes would be ripped up, she said.

The Imperial Valley also must frequently flush salts from the soil because the Colorado's naturally high mineral content gets even more salty by repeated irrigation upstream.

"If you cut production here," Giller said, "that means your food will cost more."

But even if U.S. water users agree to give up water for the delta, skeptics argue that Mexican farmers would intercept it as soon as it crosses the border.

That's why the delta's boosters say a binational pact would be essential. Such a deal would likely pass through the International Boundary and Water Commission, which regulates U.S.-Mexican water issues.

Tucsonan John Bernal was the commission's U.S. representative for the past six years, and one of his last acts in office in December was signing an agreement with Mexico to start working on solutions for the delta.

But with new leaders in both countries, it's unclear what will happen, Bernal said.

Others note that as the upstream user, the United States has absolute leverage to prevent Mexico from reneging on an agreement.

"We've got our hand on the faucet," said Stuart Hurlbert, a San Diego State University biologist who has led field trips to the delta since 1978.

### **Accidental marsh unveils past**

Dream vs. reality Once, much of the 3,000 square-mile Colorado River delta looked like this remnant, the 12,000-acre cattail marsh known as Cienega de Santa Clara.

Visitors can still glimpse the delta's pre-dam appearance at the Cienega de Santa Clara. Located 50 miles southwest of Yuma, the 12,000-acre cattail marsh is an oxymoron - the Sonoran Desert's largest wetland.

Nearly 300 bird species - including thousands of endangered Yuma clapper rails - visit or live in the cienega's hissing reeds. Its olive, brackish waters are also home to the endangered desert pupfish.

The cienega's existence is an accident. It was supposed to be the dumping grounds for brine coming from the Bureau of Reclamation's Yuma desalination plant. But that \$250 million facility, meant to reduce the salinity of Colorado River water the United States must deliver to Mexico, operated only for a few months in 1993 and is now in mothballs.

So, instead of the dregs of desalination, the canal from the plant now transports 325 billion gallons of agricultural runoff from Arizona's Wellton-Mohawk farming area each year.

"This water is too brackish for agriculture, so that's why it's here. Nobody wants it," said Jose Campoy, manager of the national preserve that includes the cienega.

The desalting plant's brine would have killed the cienega and made it as biologically poor as thousands of acres of dusty plains surrounding it - pampas cracked like sunbaked skin and coated with a frosting of salt.

Instead, the cienega resembles the green lagoons that ecologist Aldo Leopold wrote about - a poetic description of the delta's shifting landscape that advocates rarely fail to cite.

Leopold, whose blending of ethics and aesthetics has become the intellectual fountainhead for many American Greens, explored the delta by canoe with his brother in 1922, roasting quail over mesquite fires and climbing cottonwoods to scout the river's path.

"The river was nowhere and everywhere, for he could not decide which of a hundred green lagoons offered the most pleasant and least speedy path to the Gulf," Leopold wrote. "So he traveled them all, and so did we."

In the pre-dam days, Leopold recorded clouds of waterfowl, families of raccoons munching on water beetles and bobcats fishing for mullet. Though he never spotted a jaguar - el tigre - he said its "personality pervaded the wilderness."

The several million acres of wilderness that Leopold traveled through have shrunk to about 150,000 acres, according to UA scientist Ed Glenn, whose research on the delta has become exhibit A in environmentalists' case for sending more water there.

Glenn's study of the cienega and the sprouting of cottonwood-willow forests along the river's main stem after flooding in the 1980s and 1990s has led him to believe that a small, steady flow from the Colorado with surges every four or five years could do wonders for the area's ecology.

But before advocates see the delta's native vegetation spread, they might be fighting to preserve what little remains.

Flooding that has regenerated parts of the delta isn't guaranteed to continue. A drought in the Colorado's 244,000-square-mile basin could snatch back gains made in the past 20 years.

While the Yuma desalination plant is now dormant, it advertises "water for sale" on its Web site, [www.yao.lc.usbr.gov/ydp5.htm](http://www.yao.lc.usbr.gov/ydp5.htm).

Bureau of Reclamation Deputy Director LeGrand Nielson said the agency is "dead serious" about meeting its water obligations to Mexico without operating the plant. And the agency has begun the first "baby steps" in searching for other water sources for the delta, he said.

One idea is to "bank" river water in Arizona's aquifers during flood years. In droughts, Arizona would then use that stored water in exchange for giving up some of its Colorado allocation for the delta.

Another proposal would help Mexican farmers pump salty ground water that hurts their crops and send it to the delta.

"If people can just be patient and stay at the table, we can do something here," Nielson said.

### **Tribe suffers with delta**

The delta is a fickle place.

Erratic flows from the Colorado, and the ebb and flow of the gulf's tides change conditions from hour to hour, season to season and year to year.

The dynamic process is most obvious in the intertidal zone, the 30- to 40-mile stretch of the river's main channel where the coming and going of the sea creates shifting zones of salinity.

It is in these traditional fishing grounds of the Cucapá Indians where the delta's mighty "tidal bore" once reigned. The collision of the incoming sea water and the outgoing river would create a wall of water that sometimes topped 15 feet and migrated with the tides.

In 1922, not long after Aldo Leopold visited, the tidal bore - el burro to Mexicans - killed 86 peasants from Guaymas when it rolled the 36-ton steamer Topolobampo. Only 21 bodies were found, and just 39 passengers survived.

"Days later they were still being dragged out from the mud flats nude, half insane from thirst, blistered by the sun and raw from predatory swarms of insects," wrote Frank Waters in his 1944 book, "The Colorado."

Today, with el burro tamed by upstream dams, Cucapá fishermen worry more about the simple lack of fish. A tribe that once flourished now struggles to find enough to eat.

Like the Tohono O'odham near Tucson, the Cucapá are divided by the international border. Near Yuma they run a casino, but the benefits don't appear to have trickled down to tribal members in Mexico.

"The river here used to have lots of water. We could drink from it, not >from bottles," recalled Inocencia Gonzalez, 65, one of the tribe's leaders. "There also used to be lots of fish. Now there are hardly any."

The Cucapá have fishing rights to Laguna Salada, a brackish lake 30 miles southeast of Mexicali that was once so productive it was said to "boil" with fish. The Colorado used to feed Laguna Salada, but today the lake is mostly dry and devoid of life.

A century ago, the Cucapá numbered in the thousands, but the tribe has dwindled due to assimilation, intermarriage and the decline of a lifestyle dependent on the river.

"They used to be a thriving, dynamic community. Now it's just a few hundred people hanging on," said Mark Briggs, conservation director of the Tucson-based Sonoran Institute.

Javier Mosqueda, president of a 2-year-old advocacy group of delta residents, said Mexico continues to suffer from the unfair division of the Colorado.

"The laws seem to be working for the people up there in the U.S., but for the people down here, they aren't," he said.

He said the delta's situation won't improve without cross-border cooperation.

"The water doesn't belong to the people of the U.S. or Mexico," he said. "It belongs to the river."

### **Mud flats are gulf's nursery**

On islands north of San Felipe, shells are exposed as far as the eye can see. Erosion by gulf waters and lack of Colorado River sediment lay them bare.

For millions of years, the Colorado's surging spring snowmelt carved the Grand Canyon and countless other chasms. The river then transported 70 percent of that sediment hundreds of miles to the delta, where it fanned out in the northern Gulf of California.

Today, tides that vary as much as 25 feet in a day expose the delta's innards in mile-wide mud flats that are rippled with hallucinatory patterns from the receding and advancing sea. The spongy, chocolate-colored mud is literally crawling with snails, crabs and worms.

These invertebrate species near the bottom of the area's food chain nourish fish, stingrays and scores of bird species.

University of Arizona scientist Ed Glenn examined the records of shrimp fishermen from San Felipe, on the Baja California Peninsula, and concluded that the year following floods, their harvest doubled or tripled. Catches of corvina, once thought to be "fished out," rebounded tenfold after the delta got more water.

Some scientists suggest the Colorado supplies valuable nutrients to the upper gulf. Glenn, however, believes the river mainly helps marine life by discouraging predator fish from entering the Colorado's final stretch, which serves as a refuge for shrimp larvae and corvina fry.

Many biologists also think that healthier flows of fresh water to the gulf would have a cascading, positive effect on the gulf's other marine species, including the vaquita, an endangered porpoise.

San Felipe fishermen such as Arnaldo Espinoza Solano also thinks more river water would help.

"When there's more water in the river, it's more productive," said Solano, 35, who estimated unemployment in the area at 30 percent.

Born to the south in Sinaloa, Solano moved north to San Felipe six years ago to look for work. This summer, he'll be going north again, visiting a relative in Phoenix, working as a cook in a seafood restaurant and maybe staying in the United States.

"El agua es la vida," Solano said as he stared out at the sea.

Water is life.

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GLEN CANYON ACTION NETWORK  
PO Box 466 • Moab, UT 84532 • 435-259-1063  
[www.drainit.org](http://www.drainit.org)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL 13, 2001

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE BANS JET SKIS AT LAKE POWELL, LAKE MEAD, BY  
2002

GROUPS HAIL VICTORY, QUESTION NEED FOR ANTELOPE POINT MARINA

MOAB, UTAH -- On Thursday, a federal district court judge in Washington, DC, approved a settlement agreement between environmental groups and the National Park Service (NPS), requiring NPS to prohibit the use of personal watercraft (PWCs), also known as jet skis, on all federal park units nationwide by Fall 2002. The ban applies to the reservoirs at Glen Canyon (Lake Powell) National Recreation Area, near Page, Arizona, and Lake Mead National Recreation Area, near Las Vegas, Nevada.

Under terms of the settlement, the only exception would be in cases where the agency could prove that the machines do not cause harm to the environment on a given reservoir.

"This agreement is a victory for public safety and environmental protection," said David Orr, Director of Field Programs for Glen Canyon Action Network (GCAN), a plaintiff in the lawsuit. "Jet skis don't belong in our national parks, period."

The PWC ban should lead to a significant reduction in water pollution and unsafe recreational activities on the reservoirs. Concerns about public safety and environmental impacts of PWCs have never been higher.

On April 9, for example, a fatality occurred at Lake Mead Reservoir when two jetskiers collided head-on at high speeds.

PWCs are recognized by the US EPA as responsible for dumping large amounts of petroleum and other chemicals into waterbodies where the machines are used. The impact of PWC pollution on drinking water resources is well documented. The Lake Powell and Lake Mead reservoirs are part of the Colorado River plumbing system that provides drinking water for more than twenty million people.

At a time when NPS should be working to reduce the heavy impact of PWCs and other motorized watercraft, the agency is promoting increased use.

For example, environmental groups are questioning the proposed Antelope Point Marina project on Lake Powell Reservoir. GCAN is working in coalition with other leading environmental and Native American groups in the region, to contest the development. Concerns have been raised over increased watercraft usage, water quality degradation, and more damage to natural and cultural resources in the vicinity.

"We are working to save our sacred sites and protect our cultural heritage," said Thomas Morris, Jr., of Window Rock, Arizona, and President of the Diné Medicinemens Association, one of the groups protesting the marina. "The waters themselves are sacred."

While Native Americans and environmentalists celebrated their victory, PWC industry trade groups, the Personal Watercraft Industry Association and the American Watercraft Association, were not so happy. The court decision handed them a stunning defeat when their motion to intervene in the case was denied. In a strongly worded order, the judge ruled that the PWC industry's interests would not be injured by the terms of the settlement and therefore the industry had no standing to intervene in this matter. The nine page order also stated that some of the industry's claims bordered on the "frivolous."

For additional information on the lawsuit, or on two-stroke motors in general, please visit the website of Bluewater Network, a co-plaintiff in the case: [www.bluewaternetwork.org/](http://www.bluewaternetwork.org/)

For information on the Antelope Point Marina project, please visit GCAN's website: [www.drainit.org/](http://www.drainit.org/)

# # #

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03/16/01

## **Epilogue as Prologue...Sustainable Water Project Tour**

It was dark when we finally arrived at the point of the Colorado River's passage into Mexico, just below Morelos Dam amidst flat farmlands near Yuma, Arizona on March 15th. We'd traveled 2,800 miles along portions of the river's main stem as well as its primary tributaries: the Green, San Juan and Gila rivers.

Our craft was not a boat, as was used by John Wesley Powell and earlier explorers, but a 4,000-gallon water tanker truck. Nor was our mission one of natural discovery, but one of building social awareness for the watershed's restoration, especially its dying delta that begins just downstream. We had come to deliver back to the river the water that we had collected on our 11-day journey — water which under more natural conditions would flow down the river to replenish the delta and the Gulf of California.

Today however, the river's flow is diverted entirely through the Colorado's vast plumbing system of dams, reservoirs, pipelines and tunnels. Our truck's payload would represent less than one billionth the amount of water that historically flowed past this point each year. Yet, given the river's present state, our contribution felt more than symbolic. The night's darkness could not mask the river's pain: just a trickle meandered through the channel. Behind the thin veneer of vegetation, the river's shriveled self appeared little different from the hundreds of irrigation ditches we passed earlier that day. It was difficult to distinguish at first between nearby ditches and the river.

The large main canals near Yuma, in contrast, carry far more of the river's flow than the river itself. A collection of lawn hoses from a Las Vegas suburb seemed capable of dispensing more water than what flowed past us there on the banks of this once-mighty river. We stood at the international boundary, representing a coalition of 122 organizations and twelve million people from the United States and Mexico who want water to reach the delta once again. This tour marked the founding of the largest and broadest-based movement yet to call for Colorado River restoration. Just one percent of the river's average annual flow is all we ask of water agencies. We want them to agree to leave this tiny amount in the river so that the eight percent of the original delta that still remains can at least be kept on life support.

We held rallies, teach-ins and organizing meetings during our Sustainable Water Project Tour. We hand-delivered letters on behalf of the coalition to water agencies requesting their one percent contribution. We generated television, radio and newspaper coverage for the river and delta. Along the way, our truck rolled down the highways and through the communities of the Colorado River watershed, collecting water "donations" from reservoirs, municipal water systems, and irrigation ditches. But as our journal illustrates, it's not just the delta that's suffering.

Major stretches of the basin's rivers and riverine habitat are also in peril. Colorado River water misuse and abuse is needlessly killing one of North America's most geologically, biologically and culturally diverse river systems. Our delivery to the delta that night

carried with it the spirit of people living in towns, cities and rural communities across the region and beyond, who are united in their commitment to preserving and restoring the river and its watershed. The launching of the "1% for the Delta" campaign is the latest effort to make this happen.

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Media Advisory 03/13/01

### **Los Angeles Rally--International Day of Action for River Restoration**

"Sustainable Water Project Tour" Asks for Water for the Colorado River Delta  
CONTACT: Owen Lammers, mobile 435.260.2590, 260.2591; message 435.259.1063  
Lisa Force, mobile 602.321.1753

Tuesday, March 14, 2001 Noon-1:30 PM Olvera Street Plaza, downtown Los Angeles

Los Angeles environmental organizations will rally on Wednesday to welcome the "Sustainable Water Project Tour" when it rolls into the city on the tenth day of a roadshow across the Southwest. Representing more than 120 advocacy groups and twelve million people in the U.S. and Mexico, the tour will bring a water tanker truck to the headquarters of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), symbolically seeking donations of water for the Colorado River's dying delta.

A rally will be held at noon at the Old Pueblo Plaza on Olvera Street, sponsored by Southern California's leading environmental and river advocacy groups, including Action Resource Center-Los Angeles, Angeles Chapter of Sierra Club, California EarthCorps, Friends of the Los Angeles River, and Wetlands Action Network.

Following the Olvera Street rally, marchers will walk one mile to the Los Angeles River at the historic "Cornfields" on Main Street in Chinatown, the location of one of the earliest irrigated farms in California. The march will highlight efforts to save this site from development and protect it as parkland.

Wednesday, March 14, is the Fourth International Day of Action for Rivers and is being celebrated in over 50 actions in 28 countries around the world. The Sustainable Water Project Tour is one of the largest such actions and is promoting river restoration through water conservation in the Southwest. The tour is sponsored by Living Rivers of Phoenix, Arizona, and Glen Canyon Action Network of Moab, Utah.

Gathering at the Olvera Street bandstand, the groups will call on water agencies to take action to restore the river. They will deliver a letter to the MWD, the largest municipal user of Colorado River water, asking the agency to give back one percent of its current Colorado River usage for ecological restoration. Numerous endangered species, including the vaquita porpoise--the world's smallest and rarest marine mammal--depend on the river and its delta for survival.

"Over 90 percent of California's wetlands and the Colorado River delta's wetlands have been destroyed," said Marcia Hanscom, executive director of Wetlands Action Network. "It's time we start leaving water in the rivers to help get back these wetland systems--

which historically serve as critical stopover habitat for hundreds of species of birds navigating the Pacific Flyway,".

If one-third of the 15 million California residents who are plumbed into the Colorado River's water supply system were to bring their communities' water consumption down to the national average of 101 gallons per day, that alone would be enough water to begin the delta restoration process.

"We must work towards sustainable use of our rivers and watershed," said Zhetonia Tiluso, RiverWatch Coordinator for Friends of the Los Angeles River, the leading organization supporting restoration of the river throughout its length. "It's time to give back to the Earth the life force she gives to us."

Friends of the L.A. River is currently working to establish a park at the Cornfields, the termination point of Wednesday's rally and march.

Other Southern California groups cosponsoring the event include: Access for All, Christians Caring for Creation, Center for Biological Diversity, EcoLinks, El Dorado Audubon Society, Friends of the Santa Clara River, John Muir Project, Los Angeles & San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council, National Wildlife Federation Southwest Regional Office, San Diego Audubon Society, San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, Santa Clarita Organization for Planning & Environment, Sierra Club Tahquitz Group, and Spirit of the Sage Council.

The Sustainable Water Project Tour has visited Salt Lake City, Albuquerque, Phoenix, Las Vegas, and other cities along its route. Living Rivers and Glen Canyon Action Network are nonprofit advocacy groups dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Colorado River watershed.

# # #

"ONE PERCENT FOR THE DELTA" LETTER FOLLOWS.

March 14, 2001

Dear Water Agency/User:

On behalf of the 122 organizations and more than twelve million people they represent, we are writing to you to request your support for restoring the Colorado River delta.

As you know, the Colorado River is a limited source of water for millions of people in seven of the United States, Mexico and numerous Indian Nations. The river once supported a delta, marshland and estuary system of almost two million acres, but today has been reduced to less than ten percent of its original size because of near-total utilization of the river's flows, on both sides of the international border. It has been further compromised by land use changes in Mexico, the invasion of tamarisk (salt cedar), and the entrapment of sediment behind upstream dams, causing the delta to shrink rather than grow. The wetlands of the Colorado River delta have been designated

both a biosphere reserve and a Ramsar site (high-priority critical habitat area identified for protection and restoration under the international Convention on Wetlands).

Today the delta is in crisis; the birds and other wildlife, the fisheries, and the ecosystem are all in dramatic decline. Scientists have warned for years of the consequences of ignoring the lack of freshwater inflows. Some flood flows over the past twenty years have helped to keep the delta from drying up entirely, and even allowed for some modest improvement, but no mechanism is in place for the delta's long-term protection. Unless action is taken soon, we could lose what little still remains.

A significant obstacle to progress is the lack of agreement among the community of Colorado River water users to pursue a solution. We, the undersigned individuals and organizations, come to you with a request for acknowledgment of the seriousness of the problem, and a commitment to take action by voluntarily offering to leave in the river a very small portion of the water that your organization currently withdraws.

Scientists estimate that the restoration process can begin with a modest amount of water-less than one percent of the river's average annual flow. A guaranteed base flow of 32,000 acre-feet per year, augmented by a simulated flood flow of 260,000 acre-feet every three to four years would provide a minimal source of life-sustaining water for this once vast span of wetlands, riparian habitat, freshwater marshes and estuary.

We have an important responsibility to future generations to assure the preservation of this internationally acclaimed bioregion. Although such accommodations were not priorities when the Law of the River began to evolve, they have become a priority for society now. An average annual contribution of 106,000 acre-feet will help maintain what little remains along the river's main channel. This represents less than one percent of the 15 million acre-feet that the basin's water users divert on average each year. A modest amount indeed, but a major contribution toward preserving this endangered habitat and the many lives that it supports.

Therefore, we ask you to pledge "One Percent for the Delta"-a realistic goal that can readily be achieved by implementing additional water conservation measures. In addition, we ask that you pledge flows necessary to maintain the Cienega de Santa Clara at its current size and water quality. Finally, we ask that you support the delivery of additional water to the delta region when such water becomes available through purchase or voluntary agreement.

The United States and Mexico have agreed to meet, discuss and make recommendations for possible actions to implement a Colorado River delta restoration program. Your voluntary commitment will send an important signal to the governments of the two nations, amplifying the growing public support and consensus that the Colorado River, its delta wetlands, and the northern Gulf of California must once again become a place of life for humans and other living things.

We also request that you publicize to all your clients and customers the need for implementing these conservation measures in the context of delta restoration. All users should be made aware of the problems occurring in the delta and the simple steps we

can take to help remedy them. We are available to assist you and your organization in any way possible to put such a program in place.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your reply and pledge of support.

Sincerely,

John Weisheit President Living Rivers/Glen Canyon Action Network

On behalf of the 121 organizations listed below:

Access for All (CA); Action Resource Center-Los Angeles (CA); Alameda Creeks Alliance (CA); Algalita Marine Research Foundation (Mexico/US); Alliance for Sustainable Jobs & the Environment (national); Alliance for the Wild Rockies (northern Rockies); Ambience Project (MT); American Lands Alliance (national); American Whitewater (national); American Wildlands (MT); Arizona Green Party; Biodiversity Legal Foundation (national); Black Canyon Audubon Society (CO); Bluewater Network (CA); California EarthCorps; California Floaters Society; Center for Biological Diversity (AZ/CA/NM); Center for Environmental Equity (OR); Centro de Derecho Ambiental e Integración Económica del Sur (Mexico); Christians Caring for Creation (national); Citizens' Progressive Alliance (CO); Colorado Plateau River Guides (CO/NM/UT); Colorado Plateau Wildlands Defense Council (AZ); Colorado River Ward Valley Coordinating Committee (AZ/CA/NV); Colorado Rivers Alliance; Columbia Gorge Coalition (OR/WA); Desert Fishes Council (international); Ecological Association of Users of the Hardy & Colorado Rivers Civil Association (Mexico); El Dorado Audubon Society (CA); Electors Concerned about Animas Water (CO/NM); Endangered Species Coalition (national); Eyak Preservation Council (AK/CA); Flagstaff Activist Network (AZ); Forest Conservation Council (NM/FL); Forest Guardians (NM); Friends of Arizona Rivers; Friends of Cabeza Prieta (AZ); Friends of Nevada Wilderness; Friends of the Earth (international); Friends of the Los Angeles River (CA); Friends of the River (CA); Friends of Rough & Ready Creek (OR); Friends of the Santa Clara River (CA); Friends of Scherer Park (CA); Friends of Yosemite Valley (CA); Glen Canyon Action Network (southwest US); Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association (AZ); Great Salt Lake Audubon Society (UT) Green Party of Utah; Green Party of Nevada; Greenpeace USA; Grupo Ecologista Antares (Mexico); Heartwood (eastern US); Humane Society of the United States; Idaho Sporting Congress; Instituto de Investigaciones Oceanologicas de la Universidad Autonoma de Baja California (Mexico); International Marine Mammal Project (CA); International Rivers Network; John Muir Project (CA/WA, DC); Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Project (CA/OR); Living Rivers (AZ); Maricopa Audubon Society (AZ); Mining Impact Coalition (WI); Mosaic Outdoor Club (N.Y.); National Wildlife Federation; Native American Environmental Justice Advocacy Fund (CO); Native Cultures Institute of Baja California (Mexico); Native Forest Council (OR); Native Forest Network (international); Nevada Desert Experience; Northern Arizona Audubon Society; Northern Arizona Univ. Campus Greens; Northern Arizona Univ. Students Against Sweatshops; Oregon Natural Resources Council; Oregon Wildlife Federation; Palo Verde Valley Farmworkers Organization (CA); Payette Forest Watch (ID); Phoenix Zoo;

Pro Esteros (Mexico); Rainforest Information Center (Australia); RangeBiome (western US); Rio Grande Restoration (NM); Rocky Mountain Peace & Justice Center (CO); San Diego Audubon Society; San Fernando Valley Audubon Society (CA); San Juan Citizens Alliance (CO); San Pedro 100 (AZ); Santa Clarita Organization for Planning & Environment (CA); Santa Cruz Earth First! (CA); Save the West! (ID/OR/WA); Shundahai Network (CA/NV); Sierra Blanca Legal Defense Fund (TX); Sierra Club (international); Sonoran Desert National Park Friends (AZ); Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project (GA/NC/TN); Southern California Watershed Alliance; Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance; Southwest Environmental Center (NM); Spirit of the Sage Council (CA); Stop Taking Our Parks (CA); Superior Wilderness Action Network (MN/WI.); Surfrider Foundation (international); Sustainable Salt Lake (UT); Terra Firma (UT); The Brower Fund (CA); U.S. Public Interest Research Group; Utah Animal Rights Coalition; Utah Environmental Congress; Utah Rivers Council; West Texas Water Protection Fund; Western Land Exchange Project (Washington); Western Watersheds Project; Western Wildlife Conservancy (UT); Wetlands Action Network (CA); Wild Utah Project; Wild Wilderness; Wildfire Infoshop; WildLaw (eastern US); Wildlife Advocacy Project (national); Willow Creek Ecology (UT); Witness Against Lawless Logging (CA/OR/WA); and Wyoming Outdoor Council.

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LR Press Release 03/12/01

### **Activist Roadshow for the Colorado Delta Stops in Las Vegas**

Tour Groups Rally in Las Vegas for River Restoration through Water Conservation  
"Sustainable Water Project Tour" Asks for Water for the Colorado River Delta  
CONTACT: Owen Lammers, mobile 435.260.2590, 260.2591; message 435.259.1063  
Lisa Force, mobile 602.321.1753

Monday, March 12, 2001 Noon-1:00 PM Las Vegas Valley Water District Headquarters  
1001 South Valley View Blvd. (corner of Charleston)

Six Las Vegas-based organizations will rally on Monday to welcome the "Sustainable Water Project Tour" when it rolls into Las Vegas on the seventh day of a ten-day roadshow across the Southwest. The tour is promoting river restoration through water conservation, and is sponsored by Living Rivers of Phoenix, Arizona, and Glen Canyon Action Network of Moab, Utah.

Gathering at the headquarters of the Las Vegas Valley Water District, the groups will call on water-using agencies in the Colorado River basin to take action to restore the river's dying delta.

"We're only asking for one percent of the river's flows to reach the delta," said Lisa Force, Living Rivers' program director. "This is such a reasonable request to address an ecological emergency."

Citizen Alert, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Nevada Desert Experience, Nevada Green Party, Shundahai Network, and the Sierra Club Southern Nevada Group are joining 115

other organizations representing more than eight million people in the United States and Mexico, in delivering a letter to the water district, asking for conservation measures to be implemented to provide assured flows for ecological restoration south of the international boundary.

Recent U.S. government figures show Nevadans use twice the national average--more than 200 gallons of water per person per day. By reducing their consumption to a level par with the rest of the nation, Nevada's citizens could save more than enough water to keep the delta's endangered species from going extinct.

"We need some water for the river and not for sprawl," said John Weisheit, President of Glen Canyon Action Network. "There's no reason we can't meet human needs and the needs of fish and wildlife."

Weisheit and his crew are driving an empty water tanker truck from city to city, symbolizing the need for donations of water from the agencies that collectively consume 100 percent of the Colorado River's flow.

On Sunday, the Sustainable Water Project Tour visited Hoover Dam, where the police chief graciously provided an escort for the water tanker truck across the dam's crest, to obtain a donation of water directly from Lake Mead reservoir.

The tour is being organized in conjunction with the Fourth International Day of Action for Rivers, March 14, 2001. From Las Vegas, the tour will head to Blythe, California, for a rally on Tuesday, March 13, and then to Los Angeles on Wednesday, March 14.

Living Rivers and Glen Canyon Action Network are nonprofit advocacy groups dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Colorado River watershed.

"ONE PERCENT FOR THE DELTA" LETTER FOLLOWS...

March 5, 2001

Dear Water Agency/User:

On behalf of the 121 organizations and more than eight million people they represent, we are writing to you to request your support for restoring the Colorado River delta.

As you know, the Colorado River is a limited source of water for millions of people in seven of the United States, Mexico and numerous Indian Nations. The river once supported a delta, marshland and estuary system of almost two million acres, but today has been reduced to less than ten percent of its original size because of near-total utilization of the river's flows, on both sides of the international border. It has been further compromised by land use changes in Mexico, the invasion of tamarisk (salt cedar), and the entrapment of sediment behind upstream dams, causing the delta to shrink rather than grow. The wetlands of the Colorado River delta have been designated both a biosphere reserve and a Ramsar site (high-priority critical habitat area identified for protection and restoration under the international Convention on Wetlands).

Today the delta is in crisis; the birds and other wildlife, the fisheries, and the ecosystem are all in dramatic decline. Scientists have warned for years of the consequences of ignoring the lack of freshwater inflows. Some flood flows over the past twenty years have helped to keep the delta from drying up entirely, and even allowed for some modest improvement, but no mechanism is in place for the delta's long-term protection. Unless action is taken soon, we could lose what little still remains.

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Sincerely,

John Weisheit President Living Rivers/Glen Canyon Action Network

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Restoration (NM); Rocky Mountain Peace & Justice Center (CO); San Diego Audubon Society; San Fernando Valley Audubon Society (CA); San Juan Citizens Alliance (CO); San Pedro 100 (AZ); Santa Clarita Organization for Planning & Environment (CA); Santa Cruz Earth First! (CA); Save the West! (ID/OR/WA); Shundahai Network (CA/NV); Sierra Blanca Legal Defense Fund (TX); Sierra Club (international); Sonoran Desert National Park Friends (AZ); Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project (GA/NC/TN); Southern California Watershed Alliance; Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance; Southwest Environmental Center (NM); Spirit of the Sage Council (CA); Stop Taking Our Parks (CA); Superior Wilderness Action Network (MN/WI.); Surfrider Foundation (international); Sustainable Salt Lake (UT); Terra Firma (UT); The Brower Fund (CA); U.S. Public Interest Research Group; Utah Animal Rights Coalition; Utah Environmental Congress; Utah Rivers Council; West Texas Water Protection Fund; Western Land Exchange Project (Washington); Western Watersheds Project; Western Wildlife Conservancy (UT); Wetlands Action Network (CA); Wild Utah Project; Wild Wilderness; Wildfire Infoshop; WildLaw (eastern US); Wildlife Advocacy Project (national); Willow Creek Ecology (UT); Witness Against Lawless Logging (CA/OR/WA); and Wyoming Outdoor Council.

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LR in the News 03/10/01

### **Arizona Republic**

Truckin' for the environment Group pushing for Colorado River delta restoration  
By Kathleen Ingley

Environmentalists drove an empty water tanker into Phoenix on Friday, dramatizing their call to boost flows in the Colorado River and bring life back to its delta.

Their campaign, "One Percent for the Delta," is asking water users to give up 1 percent of their river allocations.

"Because of our greed, we've killed the delta," said Lisa Force, program director of Living Rivers, a Phoenix-based advocacy group.

Over the years, dams and canals have captured most of the Colorado River, leaving only a trickle - if any - to go all the way to the sea. The delta, where the river meets Mexico's Gulf of California, has lost more than 90 percent of its vegetation in recent decades, she said.

"It used to be 2million acres of lush wetlands," Force said, "and it's now mostly dried mudflats." The animals and fish that live there, such as jaguars, are disappearing.

The "One Percent" campaign is touring major cities in the Southwest. At Friday's rally outside the Arizona Department of Agriculture, about three dozen people waved signs and chanted, "Let it flow."

Agriculture uses 80 percent of the water in Arizona, and is the logical place to cut consumption, said Frank Welsh, author of *How To Create a Water Crisis*. He suggests more efficient irrigation, and reducing crops that use a lot of water but have low value, like alfalfa.

Jack Lavelle of the Arizona Department of Water Resources said, "Agriculture is pretty efficient as it is," and the department is reviewing irrigation.

Environmentalists also urged individuals to save water, from fixing leaks to planting less grass.

But Robert Barrett, spokesman for the Central Arizona Project, which manages the 336-mile canal carrying Colorado River water to Phoenix and Tucson, said there's no way to make sure the river benefits from conservation.

"If Arizona gives up 1 percent," he said, "I can guarantee that California will take it."

There's also the risk that Mexican farmers will tap any extra water flowing south. Force said Mexico has signed an agreement to prevent that.

Top officials from the Department of Water Resources visited the delta just last week. "We're vitally concerned about anything that has to do with the Colorado River," Lavelle said.

But with the complexities of water rights and foreign policy, he doubts that the "1 percent" solution is feasible.

Reach the reporter at [kathleen.ingley@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:kathleen.ingley@arizonarepublic.com) or (602) 444-8171.

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What's New

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[info@drainit.org](mailto:info@drainit.org)

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LR in the News 03/09/01

## **UNLV Rebel Yell**

Roadshow tours to revive delta

By Shervin Hess

Next time you drive over the Hoover Dam, stick your head out the window and take a good look down the deep end. That rushing, gushing 20,000-cubic foot per second flow known as the Colorado River supplies 30 million people with H<sub>2</sub>O.

After being thoroughly tapped by Lake Mead, it continues south, providing every shower, flushing every toilet and irrigating every crop it happens upon until the end of

the line, a dried-up delta in Mexico. By the time its 1,400-mile journey to the sea is completed, 100 percent of its annual flow will have been consumed, making this river one of the largest plumbing systems in North America.

The Glen Canyon Action Network (GCAN) wants to restore this remnant of what was once considered one of the most diverse ecosystems in the Western U.S. They will be coming to Las Vegas next Monday as part of the Sustainable Water Project Roadshow. GCAN is driving an empty water tanker, symbolizing the thirsty Colorado, through six major cities, asking citizens and water agencies to "give back 1 percent for the Delta." This is in reference to roughly 1 percent of the river's average annual flow, which scientists agree would be sufficient to keep the estuary and wetlands complex alive.

"If everybody flushed their toilets once less per day, it would give us the one percent we need to restore the delta," explained GCAN Executive Director Owen Lammers.

Seven states and Mexico have beneficial interests in the Colorado River Basin. The average water consumption in the U.S. is 101 gallons per person, per day. Nevadans devour nearly twice that, making us the largest per capita water consumers in the country. Rapidly evaporating fountains, golf courses and artificial canals are the main source of the problem, but Las Vegas can conserve by simply being careful not to waste.

The focus of GCAN's visit will be to rally at the Las Vegas Valley Water District at noon Monday on the corner of Valley View and Charleston. GCAN invites the community to participate at their meeting with District Director Patricia Mulroy.

According to Lammers, Las Vegas, the leader in nonessential water consumption, has the opportunity to show a lot of leadership by owning up to conserving that 1 percent for the Colorado.

"We're talking about a need for water conservation not for the benefit of additional development, but to put back in the river," Lammers added.

For more information on the Sustainable Water Project Tour visit GCAN's Web site, [www.drainit.org](http://www.drainit.org). @drainit.org

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Media Advisory 03/08/01

### **Activists Tour for the Colorado Delta Stops in Phoenix**

Tour March Rally a Call to Curb Water Over-Consumption March Rally a Call to Curb Water Over-Consumption

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Event: Rally to ask Arizona users of Colorado River water to share just 1% with the suffering people and species of the Delta

When: Friday, March 9, 2001 Time: 11 a.m - Noon (A light lunch will be served) Where: In front of the Department of Agriculture Bldg, 1688 W. Washington (Cattycorner from the Capitol Mall; Free parking at the Capitol Mall parking lot)

Speakers: Lisa Force; Robert Witzeman, M.D.; Frank Welsh, author of How to Create a Water Crisis; Owen Lammers, executive director of Glen Canyon Action Network in Moab, UT

Music By: Chemehuevi Indian Drummers, Peace and Dignity Journeys Visuals: 40-foot 'dancing' Chinese Dragon, representing rivers' energy Water 'donations' poured into empty water truck

Phoenix, Arizona (February 22, 2001) - Arizona depends heavily upon Colorado River water. Even as cities grow, ecosystems suffer and demand for water increases, trillions of gallons of water are wasted. Phoenix-based Living Rivers and a broad coalition of 120 organizations, representing 8 million people, will hold a rally and news conference where they will publicly call upon users and distributors of Colorado River water to conserve and leave just 1% in the river to restore the Delta in Mexico.

The Colorado River is the most dammed and diverted channel of water in the United States. Traveling through seven states and into Mexico, the Colorado ends at the Gulf of California. However, these days, the river rarely meets the sea. Living Rivers is touring cities of the Colorado River Basin, with an empty water truck, seeking 'donations' of water for the Delta. The Tour began in Salt Lake City on March 5.

"We have been getting terrific public support and response at these rallies," says Living Rivers program director, Lisa Force. "The 'One Percent for the Delta' campaign serves a very modest and attainable goal-the restoration of crucial ecological habitat that supports Native people and numerous species who depend on it for survival. The delta can be revived with an average of less than one percent of the river's total flow in most years. We are asking agencies to conserve a very modest amount of water towards restoring the once vast Colorado River Delta ecosystem," says Force.

In addition to this rally, a presentation will be held at ASU beginning at 2 p.m. in Room LSA163 in the Science Building at 2:00 p.m. to discuss the issues and potential restoration on the Colorado River, including Glen Canyon Dam and the Delta. The presentation is open to the public.

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03/08/01

#### **Day 4...Sustainable Water Project Tour**

This day was mostly a driving day, as we had to cover 550 miles and two watersheds! We pulled out of Albuquerque around noon, headed south on Interstate 25 for the town of Belen, an old farming community along the Rio Grande River. We passed by the University of New Mexico's Championship 18-hole golf course in south Abq, but we did not have time to stop for a photo op or a tee off. UNM promotes this golf course as a

site for national golf tournaments. The City of Albuquerque boasts of more than 15 courses in the city. Well-watered, no doubt.

The first community we pass through is the Isleta Pueblo Indian Reservation. The Rio Grande flows through the Isleta Nation. The tribe, for whom the river is sacred, successfully sued the City of Albuquerque several years ago for dumping partially treated sewage into the river upstream of the reservation. This established an important legal precedent for both environmental protection and tribal sovereignty, because the courts for the first time recognized that Indian nations have authority to enforce environmental laws on their lands and in their streams, even if the culprit is off the reservation.

We were heartened to see a healthy, dense riparian forest of cottonwoods, willows, and other native plants along the riverbanks as we crossed the river at Isleta. The local term for this riparian forest is "bosque," and the bosques are in real trouble because of lowered water tables caused by heavy agricultural water withdrawals and by clearing land for crops. In many areas of the Rio Grande, exotic tamarisk (salt cedar) has invaded and choked out native vegetation.

The Rio Grande south of Albuquerque is often two parallel streams--the river and one or more ditches. At certain times the ditches carry more water than the river.

Our first stop for the day was the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) in Belén, one of a string of communities along the river that have been inhabited for centuries. Some are called "pueblitos"--a term that evokes the rich Hispanic heritage of the region.

The MRGCD has its corporate headquarters in Albuquerque but we chose instead to visit the distribution arm of the Irrigation Division, a nondescript cinder block structure with no identifying signage. We drove the water truck into the parking lot for our photo op, then we walked inside. There we met the affable Manager, Mr. Richard Jaramillo. We presented him with a copy of our letter requesting one percent for the Colorado River delta, and asked for his consideration. He very politely responded by telling us that he would bring this issue to the attention of his board of directors. We thanked him for his time and headed back out on the road.

I-25 follows the river south. It's just another piece of industrial infrastructure on the landscape, but the freeway also reflects the determinative role the river has played in the cultural and economic geography of the southwest. Where for generations people walked, and later rode horseback, along the river, today a steady stream of autos, RVs, 18-wheelers, and yes, (full) water tankers flows by...

We pass by the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge near Socorro, and later the Bosque del Apache Refuge. These refuges are vital to the waterfowl populations that migrate along the Rio Grande. Sadly, however, agribusiness and hunters keep a tight rein on the management of these refuges. Parts of the refuge are open to hunting, where the trigger-happy can find joy in shooting ducks at the "refuge."

Alfalfa and other grain crops are grown for cattle feed and duck feed on these federal public lands, providing yet another subsidy to the livestock industry in a region whose economy was largely founded on such subsidies.

We rolled into Truth or Consequences, N.M. in late afternoon. This charming town, known for many years as "Hot Springs," made a deal with a TV game show back in the 1950s, in which the town changed its name to help promote the program. Today the town's name could well apply to the management of the river that flows by it.

We had water, not TV, on our minds however as we drove through downtown T or C, as it's known locally. We were headed to the far side of town, to a place known as Elephant Butte Dam on the Rio Grande. This was one of the first concrete dams constructed by the US Bureau of Reclamation in the early twentieth century. Rather ornately accented by a row of lights on concrete standards across the dam's crest, the dam is a sad sight. The reservoir has the dubious distinction of evaporating as much as 25% of the river's flow.

The water level in the reservoir was low, as usual. This reservoir is one of several in southern New Mexico that divert water for the state's agricultural sector. The town of Hatch, a few miles downstream from T or C, is the world-renowned center of the chile pepper industry. The peppers are a mainstay of the economy and the culture of the valley and are grown with Rio Grande water. But the biggest crop of the valley is cattle feed such as alfalfa, grown for the benefit of feedlots and dairy farms in the vicinity.

Our water truck was one ton over the weight limit so we were unable to drive across the dam. We did get a photo of the truck, though, with the dam in the background.

Back on the highway, we cruised across the stunningly beautiful landscape of the Chihuahuan Desert and over the Continental Divide, where we re-entered the Colorado River watershed. The Gila River, which rises in the Gila Wilderness country to the north, is a tributary of the Colorado. We'll be travelling through the Gila's watershed as we pass through Tucson and Phoenix.

As we pass into the Great State of Arizona, we are detained briefly at the Weigh Station where the authorities express skepticism at our story that we are driving this 11-ton truck around the Southwest for environmental education purposes. But they can't find anything to cite us for, so they let us go and we are off once again into the night.

The moon is almost full and we drive through southern Arizona in the soft lunar glow. Our destination tonight is Phoenix, and tomorrow we will rally downtown. Stay tuned for the next report!

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03/07/01

### **Day 3...Sustainable Water Project Tour**

#### Albuquerque Welcomes Sustainable Water Project Tour

Albuquerque, N. Mex., March 8 -- The tour continued in Albuquerque yesterday as we gathered at City Hall Plaza to call on the city to give back one percent of its contracted water from the San Juan River and assist in restoring the dying Colorado River Delta.

A light rain set in at noon as the program commenced with presentations by leaders of the Diné Medicinemens Association. Thomas Morris, Jr., and Phillip Bluehouse addressed the crowd both in the Navajo language and in English about the importance of water and about healing the damage that has been done to our rivers.

Bill Guerra Addington, a leader of the Albuquerque-based Water Information Network and a resident of the Rio Grande Valley in Sierra Blanca, Texas, spoke about the need for restoring the Rio Grande, where the river sometimes runs dry from upstream diversions. The cities of Albuquerque, Ciudad Juarez and El Paso and large farms in the valley take life-giving water out of the streambed, imperiling river-dependent species such as the endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow. Addington said that the river where he lives is a meager trickle compared to the healthy flows of many years past.

John Horning of Forest Guardians, based in Santa Fe, addressed the crowd on the current ecological crisis on the Rio Grande, where dewatering of the river in recent summers has pushed fish species to the brink of extinction. One of the prime culprits is the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD), which withdraws up to four times more water from the river than the next larger user. The MRGCD provides irrigation water primarily for growing alfalfa and other cattle feed crops. Horning said that because the MRGCD has never perfected its water rights with the State Engineer's Office, it is operating outside New Mexico state water law.

John Weisheit, President of GCAN, introduced our letter on behalf of 121 organizations in the US and Mexico, seeking donations of one percent of currently used water diversions to restore the Colorado River delta. John spoke about the diversion of water to the Rio Grande from the San Juan River basin through the San Juan-Chama Project tunnel in northern New Mexico. This tunnel takes water out of the Colorado River basin to be used for growing cattle feed in the Rio Grande valley. The City of Albuquerque has more than 50,000 acre-feet of San Juan-Chama (SJ-C) water under contract, and has expressed intention to build an expensive water treatment plant to use SJ-C water as the city's primary municipal supply.

Our letter, which we will present to Mayor Jim Baca, asks the city to join our "One Percent for the Delta" effort and reallocate some of the city's contracted water to restoration.

Musical entertainment was provided by Peter Neils, a local activist and singer who performed original music he wrote to commemorate the exquisite beauty as well as the environmental tragedy of the Rio Grande River today.

Our program was capped off by singing and drumming from the Peace & Dignity Spirit Runners, who performed traditional Native American music. The runners, Moe Gonzalez and Jesús Figueroa, are travelling with us the entire journey. They are helping us plan a Spirit Run that will celebrate the river.

Following our City Hall rally, we loaded up the trucks and drove out to the banks of the Rio Grande River along the old Route 66 east of downtown. There, we had a brief ceremony with Albuquerque activists and medicine people.

We saw a river lined with large, old cottonwood trees and some newly planted trees that are part of a restoration program in the community.

From the riverbanks, we drove a short distance to visit with new friends at the Southwest Network for Environmental & Economic Justice (SNEEJ), a group of community activists working primarily on environmental justice issues in and around the Albuquerque metropolitan area. SNEEJ has been particularly effective at raising awareness of the impact that the local Intel microchip plant has had on the local environment and social fabric of the community. Intel is one of the largest industrial water users in the Rio Grande valley.

We joined our friends from KP Vision Paper for a spicy New Mexican dinner. Tom and Lynn Rymsza are the founders of the kenaf paper industry in the United States, and have their headquarters here in Albuquerque. We discussed the promise of a growing shift to alternative fiber papers, and the prospects for developing a larger kenaf industry to relieve pressure on our forests. The production of kenaf paper uses no chlorine and half the amount of water of typical tree-based paper pulping. The conversation turned to the question of when U.S. environmental groups will abandon tree-fiber paper for the environmentally preferable kenaf fiber. Although it currently costs about twice as much as tree-fiber paper, kenaf is used by GCAN and a growing number of smaller groups to protect forests and create a viable market for the fiber. By building demand for kenaf, we help to bring the price down. We encourage all environmental groups to join with us in demonstrating that paper needs can be met without destroying forests and watersheds.

From Albuquerque today, we are heading south on Interstate 25, following the course of the Rio Grande River first to the town of Belén and home office of the MRGCD, where we will present our letter. Our next stop will be the Elephant Butte Reservoir near Truth or Consequences, NM. This reservoir is formed by one of the first concrete dams ever constructed by the US Bureau of Reclamation early in the twentieth century. As much as 25% of the river's flow evaporates from the reservoir annually into southern New Mexico's desert skies. Our next rally will be tomorrow morning in Phoenix, Arizona, at the State Department of Agriculture building downtown.

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## Day 2... Sustainable Water Project Tour

### MEDICINEMEN, ACTIVISTS PRAY FOR DECOMMISSIONING OF NAVAJO DAM NAVAJO DAM, N. MEX.,

March 6 -- An unusual alliance of environmentalists and Native American traditional and spiritual leaders gathered today at the crest of Navajo Dam on the San Juan River east of Farmington, New Mexico, to conduct a healing ceremony for the river and for the decommissioning of Navajo Dam.

This site was chosen as the second stop in our five-state "Sustainable Water Project Tour" of the Southwest sponsored by Glen Canyon Action Network, Living Rivers, the Diné Medicinemens Association, and 121 organizations in the U.S. and Mexico, to focus public attention on the need for restoration of the Colorado River watershed and its delta.

We were forced to delay our 3:00 PM damsite ceremony beyond its originally planned start time while we waited for uninvited law enforcement officials to leave the area, and provide for a calm environment in which to conduct the ceremony.

Activists joined leaders of the Diné Medicinemens Association (DMA) and the Peace & Dignity Spirit Runners to grieve the loss of a large number of sacred sites inundated by the waters of Navajo Reservoir, following construction of Navajo Dam in 1962.

Over the course of the day, DMA President Thomas Morris, Jr. of Window Rock, Arizona, conducted three ceremonies calling for the restoration of ecological and cultural resources along the San Juan River and throughout the Colorado River basin.

"I came here early in the morning today to pray for the river, Earth, and sky, and apologize for what has been done to harm them," said Mr. Morris who as a young man visited the sacred area now flooded beneath Navajo Reservoir with his grandfather, also a medicineman. "The costs we have been forced to pay for the convenience of storing all this water are only now being accounted for."

Ancient archeological and ceremonial sites, as well as the entire town of Santa Rosa, New Mexico, were submerged beneath the rising waters of the reservoir almost forty years ago.

Costs for the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project (NIIP) near Farmington, for example, are still rising, thirty years after the project was supposed to have brought prosperity to the Navajo people. Water from Navajo Reservoir is used by the Navajo Nation to grow mostly low-value crops, such as alfalfa and potatoes. Recently, the Tribal Council approved a \$10 million dollar bailout for the fiscally troubled program.

Once we had been notified that the damsite was occupied by law enforcement officers prior to our prearranged 1:00 PM ceremony, we chose instead to conduct a service at an undisclosed nearby site downstream of the dam. We met on the banks of the San Juan River to pray for the river's release to allow the San Juan to flow unimpeded to the sea.

"This river, once a vital tributary to the Colorado River, is sick and dying," said John Weisheit, President of GCAN. "Dams and diversions are now draining the river dry."

While the riverside ceremony was underway, law enforcement officers, thinking the event at the dam's crest had been cancelled, left the area. Once the natural calm had been restored, we caravanned to the dam where the last ceremony of the day was conducted.

After a series of traditional prayers, songs, and drumming, the ceremony concluded by pouring into the tour's water tanker truck a symbolic donation taken from Navajo Reservoir.

The truck, emblazoned with the slogan "An Ecosystem, Not a Plumbing System," accepted the water donation for later delivery downstream in a demonstration of the need for restoring water flows to the river's delta in Mexico.

We departed from Navajo Dam in high spirits, heading south for Albuquerque, New Mexico, the next stop on our tour, where we will rally at noon on Wednesday, March 7, at City Hall, calling on the City to give back one percent of its contracted water from the San Juan River diversion to help keep the Colorado River delta alive.

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LR in the News 03/06/01

**Salt Lake Tribune**

Tour Groups Want Water Left in Colorado River  
BY BRENT ISRAELSEN

There is a new rallying cry among environmentalists. "One percent for the delta!" No, it's not about giving another tax break to Utah's favorite airline. It's about keeping more water in the Colorado River -- water that would flow all the way to a dying delta at Mexico's Sea of Cortez. "Scientists say we need at least 1 percent [of the Colorado River's historic flow] just to keep the delta on life support," said David Orr, field director for the Moab-based Glen Canyon Action Network. Orr's is one of 120 environmental groups that on Monday launched a five-state "Sustainable Water Project Tour" to call attention to the delta's plight and to urge the U.S. government and Colorado River water users to leave water in the river.

For much of the year, the delta -- once a 2 million acre oasis to hundreds of species of birds and fish -- is a mudhole, shrunk by 60 years of dam-building and diversions on the Colorado River. The projects have provided water and electricity to Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and California, as well as Mexico.

Bring on another drought cycle and the delta will shrink even more, further endangering dozens of endangered species, not to mention the livelihoods of Mexicans and Indians who depend on the delta for survival.

Environmentalists -- who demonstrated Monday outside the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation downtown -- say it is time for states to reduce their water demand, leaving more of it in the river.

"We're talking just 1 percent. That's not a lot to ask," Orr said. One percent of the river's historic (pre-dam era) annual flows equals about 150,000 acre feet of water, or about 48 billion gallons.

In a good year, only 2 million acre feet of water finds its way to the delta, but much of it is salt-laden "return flows" from agricultural lands. The rest of the water comes in the cooler months, when it is not needed.

An additional 150,000 acre feet of fresh water would come as welcome relief to the over-stressed delta, said Mark Briggs, an ecosystem restoration researcher at the Tucson, Ariz.-based Sonoran Institute.

Ideally, most of the additional water would be delivered during May, June and July, when new plants are struggling to survive, Briggs said.

The simplicity of the environmentalists' 1 percent plan is overshadowed by the complexities of the river's politics and its overallocation in a region that is the fastest-growing in the nation.

Getting seven western states and Mexico -- along with all their agricultural and municipal water users -- to agree on giving up water for environmental purposes will require no small miracle.

The river users are focused on protecting their allocation (see box) and ensuring that California reduces its draw on the river. Though entitled to 4.4 million acre feet, California currently uses about 5.2 million.

There is cause for hope, however. In December at the annual meeting of the Colorado River Water Users Association, Patricia Mulroy, general manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority, told her fellow water users that they no longer can ignore the delta.

And for the first time in the 60 years of water development along the Colorado River, the Mexican government, powered by a new political party, is putting environmental concerns on its agenda.

The Sustainable Water Project Tour, which consists of an empty water truck decorated with environmental slogans, will run for 10 days with stops in Albuquerque, Phoenix, Las Vegas, the Imperial Valley of Southern California and Los Angeles.

How the water of the Colorado River is divvied up: California: 4.4 million acre-feet  
Colorado: 3.86 million acre-feet  
Arizona: 2.85 million acre-feet  
Utah: 1.71 million acre-feet  
Wyoming: 1.04 million acre-feet  
New Mexico: 838,000 acre-feet  
Nevada: 300,000 acre-feet

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03/05/01

## **Day One...Sustainable Water Project Tour**

Tour Launch at the Bureau of Reclamation

On a brisk Monday morning, our empty water-tank truck rolled to a stop in front of the Wallace Bennett Federal Building in Salt Lake City. The large, white water truck—weighing in at 23,000 pounds gross vehicle weight and normally used for dust control on construction sites—was emblazoned on both sides with large banners proclaiming the Colorado River “An Ecosystem, Not a Plumbing System.” The truck symbolized our urgent call to the US Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec) to encourage Colorado River water agencies to voluntarily give back at least one percent of the Colorado River water they currently use, in order to restore the river’s dying delta south of the border with Mexico.

A dozen Utah-based groups gathered on the downtown plaza, cheering as speakers, musicians and Native American drummers stepped up to the microphone, one after another, sharing their concerns about the Colorado River’s decline and their hopes for quick corrective action by the water agencies. The rallying cry was “1% for the Delta, 1% Now!” The program opened with traditional drumming and singing by the Peace and Dignity Spirit Runners, Native Americans who have made several trips from Alaska to Mexico on foot, while nine activists danced with a 50-foot Chinese Dragon named Glen, who made his debut a year ago at a rally calling for the decommissioning of Glen Canyon Dam, the second largest dam on the Colorado.

One of the hot-button issues raised by environmentalists at the rally is a proposed water pipeline that would pump water from Lake Powell reservoir on the Colorado River to faraway St. George, Utah. Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance attorney Steve Bloch said this project would threaten areas proposed by citizens groups for wilderness protection, and spur development sprawl in the environmentally sensitive Mohave Desert. Utah has the third-highest per capita water consumption of any state in the US, and St. George reportedly has the highest water consumption rates in Utah. Making more subsidized water available for a growing community would only stimulate more unbridled, unsustainable growth.

Denise Boggs of the Utah Environmental Congress, a group that fights timber sales and grazing on public lands, pointed out that the ecological integrity of the entire Colorado River watershed is threatened by resource extraction, and called for ending federally subsidized logging and grazing programs. By redirecting the huge subsidies that flow to these industries today, to worker retraining and ecological restoration public works projects, we could protect the Colorado River basin all the way from its headwaters downstream to the delta—the end of the “pipeline” of the Colorado River. Eric

Ward of the Utah Animal Rights Coalition brought along a friendly cow (okay, it was really a vegan in a cow costume) to graphically identify the primary consumer of crops grown with Colorado River water. Growing alfalfa, a crop that requires huge amounts of water, is a wasteful and inefficient use of irrigation water. Ward said that if we were to grow less feed for cattle, and more fruits and vegetables for humans, we could reduce

our consumption of Colorado River water while encouraging more people to eat a healthier diet. By eating less meat, or giving it up altogether, we could reduce our environmental impacts in many important ways.

At the rally's finale, John Weisheit, president of GCAN and Living Rivers, read the letter he would be presenting to the regional director of BuRec on behalf of 122 organizations calling on Colorado River basin water agencies to give their one percent for the delta. Weisheit and Living Rivers project director Lisa Force then ceremoniously dumped a bucket of Central Utah Project water into the empty tank of the water truck, symbolizing the need for water donations for the thirsty delta. The action exemplified the grassroots nature of the "1% for the Delta" campaign, and the effort that would be required in the coming

months to raise awareness and pressure the water agencies to do the right thing. The event was reported on by television, radio and print journalists. Following the Salt Lake City event, we drove southward to the Colorado Plateau, to GCAN's home in Moab for a good night's sleep, one of the last we'd have for some days to come.

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LR Press Release 03/02/01

**GCAN Launches the**

"Sustainable Water Project Tour"--Itinerary  
Groups Call for Restoring the Colorado River Delta

CONTACT: Owen Lammers, 435-259-1063

Moab, Utah--The Glen Canyon Action Network will launch our five-state, six-city tour of the Southwest on Monday, March 5, calling for restoring flows to the Colorado River delta. Working with over eighty groups in the U.S. and Mexico, GCAN and our sister organization in Phoenix, Living Rivers, are organizing a "Sustainable Water Project Tour" that will visit Salt Lake City, Albuquerque, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Blythe CA, and Los Angeles, carrying our message of River Restoration Through Water & Energy Conservation to the public.

These events coincide with the celebration in dozens of other countries of the Fourth International Day of Action For Rivers, Water and Life. Last year, many of you joined us in celebrating the Day of Action with our late cofounder David Brower at Glen Canyon Dam. This year, however, we're taking our show on the road, directly to the people!!!

We'll be driving an empty water tanker truck on our tour, symbolizing the dying delta's desperate need for water, and we'll be soliciting donations from the very water agencies responsible for draining the river dry. We will ask in a letter for these agencies to voluntarily contribute "One Percent for the Delta." This is in reference to an amount of water roughly equal to one percent of the river's average annual flow, that scientists agree is needed just to keep the once-vibrant estuary/wetlands complex alive--on life support.

Surely the agencies should agree to a plan that would help prevent the extinction of species dependent on restoring freshwater flows to the region that was, only fifty years ago, still considered to be one of the most significant biodiverse ecosystems in the Western U.S.!

This is the first broad-based organizing effort among the basin's environmental and social justice communities, of the need to transform this vast plumbing system back to an ecosystem.

We invite you to join us at one or more of our stops along the way (see schedule below) and have fun rallying with us for the rivers. Rallies will underscore the timeliness of the delta restoration effort, and provide water users an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and responsibility for repairing the damage caused by diversions so extensive that the river no longer reaches the ocean.

In addition to the advertised tour events listed on our website ([www.drainit.org](http://www.drainit.org)), we are planning some unscheduled events along the way that will further highlight the themes and issues that are important to the restoration of the watershed.

GCAN will be announcing these "extra" events throughout the tour, which begins noon Monday, March 5 at the Federal Building in Salt Lake City.

From the regional office of the Bureau of Reclamation, we will embark on our journey that will take us to a rendezvous on Tuesday the 6th at Navajo Dam on the San Juan River in northern New Mexico. There we will be joined by representatives from the Diné Medicinemens Association and the Native Environmental Justice Advocacy Fund and other San Juan River activists. We'll discuss actions we can take to address the many problems of the San Juan--including the pending construction of the Animas-La Plata reservoir project. Join us at 1:00 pm at the top of the dam, if you can make it!

We'll make our way south from Navajo Dam down to Albuquerque for a rally at noon on Wednesday, March 7, at the plaza across from City Hall. We'll be raising awareness of the city's plan to begin using Colorado River basin water from the San Juan-Chama Project to support more growth and development along the Rio Grande!

Following our event in "Duke City," we'll hit the road again and head to sunny Arizona. We'll meet our friends from Living Rivers in Phoenix for a downtown rally at 10:30 AM on Friday, March 9, at the State Department of Agriculture, to be followed by an afternoon teach-in at the Arizona State University campus (email us for location, time, etc.).

We're heading north to Flagstaff from Phoenix, where we will visit our friends at the Flagstaff Activist Network on Saturday. This is just a stopover on the way to our next event, to be held sometime Sunday afternoon at the legendary Hoover Dam on the Arizona-Nevada border. We invite you to join us for this unpublicized tour stop, where we'll enjoy the thrill of driving our tanker truck across the world's most famous dam!

Once we've had our fill of fun and frolic at Hoover Dam, we're off to that Den of Iniquity, La\$ Vega\$, where they gamble every day with the future of the Colorado River. Join us for an action-packed, fun-filled whirlwind tour of such memorable sights as the world-famous Bellagio Casino, home of one of the world's largest (computer-controlled!) fountains, shooting precious Colorado River water high into the desert skies, 24/7. We'll visit the steel-gated Desert Lakes subdivision, where opulent multimillion-dollar palaces line artificial canals. But the focus of our visit will be a rally at the Las Vegas Valley Water District at noon, Monday, March 12, at the corner of Valley View and Charleston. We invite you to participate as we seek a meeting with the District Director Patricia Mulroy.

From Vegas, we head south to Laughlin, home of the infamous Mohave Generating Station, that burns coal mined on the Hopi Reservation at Black Mesa. We'll drive the truck past the last set of casinos and across Davis Dam (that forms Lake Mohave) back into Arizona. We'll head south to visit the Central Arizona Project canal and stop for a photo op at the ORIGINAL London Bridge, one of the world's weirder tourist attractions on "beautiful" Lake Havasu.

Farther south, we'll cross over Parker Dam--the world's DEEPEST dam (it's not high, it's deep!) into the Golden State of California, and we'll stop near the intakes for the Colorado River Aqueduct, the second-largest volume water extraction system on the river. Following the river south, we'll travel through the Mojave Desert to see the Palo Verde Diversion Dam, then we'll pay our respects to the Giant Desert Figures, one of the largest rock art sites in North America and a sacred site for local Indian tribes.

The evening of March 13th, we'll meet up with farm workers in Blythe, CA, to rally in protest of the proposed Blythe Energy Project, a gas-fired power plant for which the Governor wants to fast-track the construction permits. The farm workers see their jobs going up in smoke if the plant is built, since the water that is proposed to cool the plant is currently used to irrigate high-value citrus crops. The orchards are to be sacrificed to sell peaking power at retail prices to far-away consumers.

That night, we'll drive by moonlight into Los Angeles and we'll rendezvous with activists from across Southern California for a noon rally at the Old Pueblo Plaza downtown on Olvera Street--across the street from the headquarters of the Metropolitan Water District! We'll enjoy music and traditional dancing, as we prepare for a March to the River--the L.A. River, that is. From Olvera Street, we'll walk a mile to the Cornfields, a site proposed for a mega-condo project that is also the site of the earliest Euro-American irrigation project in western North America. There near the banks of the concrete-lined channel that is the once and future Los Angeles River, traditional practitioners will conduct a planting ceremony to symbolize the beginnings of a social movement for watershed restoration.

We are grateful to all the many activists and organizations that have volunteered their time to help us make this tour a success, and we thank them in advance for all their assistance and cooperation.

Please check our website daily at [www.drainit.org](http://www.drainit.org) for details on the events as they unfold. We hope you will be able to meet up with us along the way, and for those of you who can't make it this time, we'll keep you posted and hope to see you at our next event!

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LR Press Release 03/02/01

### **Groups Launch**

Contact: Owen Lammers, 435-259-1063, cell 435-260-2590 Lisa Force, 480-990-7839, cell 602-321-1753

Environmental and community groups across the Southwestern United States and Northwest Mexico are calling for restoration of the Colorado River's delta. More than seventy-five NGOs are taking their concerns directly to the people with the "Sustainable Water Project Tour," set to begin in downtown Salt Lake City on Monday, March 5, at a rally at the Federal Building.

Led by Glen Canyon Action Network (GCAN) of Moab, Utah, and Living Rivers, of Phoenix, Arizona, the travelling roadshow will seek donations of Colorado River water to restore flows to the dried-up delta just south of the U.S.-Mexico border.

"It took millions of years to form the vast delta region of the Río Colorado, but it took only fifty years to destroy," said Ernesto Reynoso of the Centro Regional de Estudios Ambientales y Socioeconomicos, based in Mexicali, Mexico. Señor Reynoso will be participating in several of the tour events.

The groups will drive an empty water tanker truck, symbolizing the lack of water in the delta, to additional rallies in Albuquerque, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Blythe CA, and Los Angeles.

A letter will be sent to water users seeking voluntary contributions of "One Percent for the Delta"--of their currently used Colorado River water allocations. Rallies will underscore the timeliness of the delta restoration effort, and provide water users an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and responsibility for repairing the damage caused by diversions so extensive that the river no longer reaches the ocean.

"This is the first broad-based organizing effort among the basin's environmental and social justice communities, of the need to transform this vast plumbing system back to an ecosystem," said John Weisheit, President of GCAN.

The Colorado River basin today contains more than forty dams and diversions, and functions more as a system of regulated canals and reservoirs than a river. One of the Colorado's major tributaries (Gila River) typically runs dry for approximately 150 miles in Arizona.

Groups are targeting the delta now because the U.S. and Mexican governments recently agreed to explore legal and technical means of assuring restorative flows to the delta. The Sustainable Water Project Tour is encouraging the two nations to take seriously their responsibility to ensure the survival of the people and wildlife that depend on the delta.

"It's time for the water agencies to take responsibility for their practices," said Lisa Force of Living Rivers. "We hope they will agree to work with us to find long-term solutions that will meet both human and ecological needs."

Additional events will be held at the City Hall Plaza in downtown Albuquerque, Wednesday, March 7; the State Department of Agriculture Building in downtown Phoenix, Friday, March 9; Las Vegas Valley Water District in Las Vegas at the corner of Valley View & Charleston, Monday, March 11; Todd Park near City Hall in Blythe CA, Tuesday, March 12; and the Olvera Street Plaza in downtown Los Angeles, Wednesday, March 14.

For details on these events, please check the GCAN website, or call GCAN or Living Rivers at the phone numbers listed above. Glen Canyon Action Network is a nonprofit advocacy group dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Colorado River watershed. Living Rivers is an advocacy organization specializing in public education for river restoration and water conservation in the Southwestern United States.

These events are organized in support of the Fourth International Day of Action Against Dams and For Rivers, Water and Life, March 14, 2001. For additional information on Day of Action events elsewhere in the world, please contact International Rivers Network in Berkeley, CA. Phone: 510-848-1155; [www.irn.org](http://www.irn.org).

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LR Press Release 03/02/01

### **Sustainable Water Project Tour to Stop in Albuquerque**

CONTACT: Owen Lammers, 435-259-1063, mobile 435-260-2590 John Horning, 505-988-9126

Wednesday, March 7, 2001 Noon-1:00 PM Albuquerque City Hall (Civic Plaza)

Fresh from its kick-off event at the US Bureau of Reclamation Regional Offices in Salt Lake City and organizing meetings with river restoration advocates along the San Juan River, the Sustainable Water Project Tour will roll into Albuquerque on Wednesday, March 7 for a rally at City Hall.

Sponsored by more than ninety advocacy groups from throughout the Southwest, across the country and from Mexico, the tour is publicizing the need for water agencies using Colorado River water to give back one percent of their water to restore the Colorado River delta. The City of Albuquerque has rights to water that otherwise would flow to the Colorado River delta. It is diverted from the San Juan River of the Colorado watershed into the Chama River of the Rio Grande.

"These are ecosystems, not plumbing systems," says John Weisheit, President of Glen Canyon Action Network, one of the principle organizers of the six-city, ten-day tour. He and the others are traveling with an empty 4,000-gallon water tanker truck to symbolize the need for water donations to the dying Colorado River delta, and donations to parched rivers everywhere.

"We hope the City will help us keep some of the water in the San Juan, and let the water's life-giving forces reach all the way to the delta and the sea," says Thomas Morris, Jr., President of the Diné Medicinemens Association, who will be traveling with the Tour to Albuquerque. "We must learn to meet our needs without being so wasteful and disrespectful of our rivers and our mother earth."

According to the most recent US Geological Survey figures, New Mexico's domestic water use is more 86% higher than the national average of 101 gallons per person per day. That's an additional 7.8 water tank trucks per year for every person in New Mexico. Water conservation and recycling programs are available now that can could bring this consumption down considerably, saving more water annually than the combined amount being asked of all Colorado river water users to help restore the delta.

"If the City of Albuquerque, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District and other San Juan-Chama contractors did a better job of conserving water and devoting it to ecosystem purposes we wouldn't be in our current dire straits--in both the Rio Grande and Colorado river basins," says John Horning, with Forests Guardians of Santa Fe, a co-sponsor of Wednesday's rally.

"As we sit here upstream, it's easy to forget the damage our water use may be doing to critical environments hundreds or thousands of miles away. The Colorado River delta is dying, the Rio Grande's too. It's time to get serious about water conservation," adds Weisheit.

Among the others joining Morris, Horning and Weisheit at the rally will be Sage Remmington, of the Native American Environmental Justice Advocacy Fund, and Peace and Dignity Journey from the Chemehuevi Nation of the Lower Colorado who will perform traditional music.

The tour is being organized in conjunction with the 4th International Day of Action Against Dams and for River Water and Life, March 14, 2001. From Albuquerque, the tour will head to Phoenix, across Hoover Dam to Las Vegas, to Blythe California and concluding in Los Angeles on March 14.

Glen Canyon Action Network, based in Moab, Utah, is a nonprofit advocacy group dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Colorado River watershed.

Forest Guardians, based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, works to protect and restore the native biological diversity and watersheds of the American Southwest and Northern Mexico.

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LR Press Release 03/02/01

## **Utah Environmental Leaders Launch Roadshow for River Restoration**

CONTACT: Owen Lammers, 435-259-1063, mobile 435-260-2590 Denise Boggs  
801-466-4055

Monday, March 5, 2001, 12:00 Noon US Bureau of Reclamation Regional Office  
Federal Building 125 South State Street Salt Lake City

On the occasion of the 4th International Day of Action Against Dams and for River, Water and Life, Salt Lake City will host the kick-off event for the "Sustainable Water Project Tour," with a rally at the Regional Offices of the US Bureau of Reclamation at Noon.

Utah environmental leaders are inviting the public to join in calling on all federal, state and private agencies responsible for river management here in Utah to get serious about water conservation to enable river restoration. Water conservation donations will be sought for the Tour's empty tanker truck, which will then begin an 1,800-mile, restoration journey for dried-up rivers in the Southwest.

The Salt Lake rally is being sponsored by: Glen Canyon Action Network, Green Party of Utah, Sierra Club Glen Canyon Group, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, Sustainable Salt Lake, Terra Firma, Utah Animal Rights Coalition, Utah Environmental Congress, Utah Rivers Council, Western Wildlife Conservancy, Wild Utah Project and Willow Creek Ecology.

"We're starting at BuRec's regional headquarters because they, more than any other agency, dominate river destruction in the Southwest." says Glen Canyon Action Network President John Weisheit. "We and the ninety plus other environmental and social justice organizations from throughout the Southwest and Mexico supporting this tour want to see the Bureau of Reclamation transformed into the Bureau of Restoration."

Weisheit and his team will travel with their truck down the Colorado River watershed to a series of other events in New Mexico, Arizona and California. They will ultimately arrive at the US border with Mexico, where the drained-off Colorado River trickles into the sand. The environmental advocates will hold rallies at water agencies along the way. They will be presenting the agencies with letters asking them to voluntarily give back one percent of their Colorado River water, so that the river can once again replenish the dried-up delta.

Ken Sheehan, of the Utah Rivers Council says, "Whether it's the Colorado River Delta in Mexico, or the Bear River here in Utah, water needs to stay in our rivers. We don't need more dams, diversion or pipelines; a solid commitment toward water conservation will allow us to meet both human and environmental needs."

Utah is one of the most wasteful states when it comes to water consumption. According to the US Geological Survey, Utah uses 80% more water per capita than the national average. That's 7.5 more truck tankfulls of water per year for every Utahn above the

national average consumption rates. By implementing effective, mandatory water conservation and recycling programs, Utah households could not only cut their water consumption in half, but also free-up enough water to meet the immediate needs of the Colorado River delta.

"Many of Utah's watersheds are being rapidly degraded by logging and grazing practices that clearly are not sustainable," adds Denise Boggs, director of the Utah Environmental Congress, a co-sponsor of Monday's event. "We must also take care of the land, if we are to preserve our rivers."

The largest percentage of the water the Bureau of Reclamation gives away from western rivers is used to grow cattle feed. Cattle feed is the most water wasteful crop under cultivation. "This is nothing more than another subsidy to the livestock industry, at the expense of endangered species up and down our watersheds," says Eric Ward of the Utah Animal Rights Coalition. "We can grow 15 pounds of protein for human consumption with the same amount of water it takes to grow one pound of cow."

"Our rivers are ecosystems, not plumbing systems," concludes Weisheit. "It's time to revamp the mission of our water agencies from infrastructure developers that encourage more water waste, to conservation agencies that promote river and ecosystem health."

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LR in the News 03/01/01  
**Las Vegas CityLife**

Too much town, not enough river Groups urge a rethink of the Colorado  
By Heidi Walters

Uh oh, a little ice cream shop in Moab, Utah, is dishing out the dirt on us, telling people we're big fat water and power hogs.

Oh, that's not disturbing news?

Well, anyway, the Glen Canyon Action Network is a grassroots group who scoops out ice cream (it pays the rent) along with green propaganda to passing tourists (25,000 served last year), many who likely also visit Las Vegas. The Network formed a year ago to continue the decades-long fight to decommission Glen Canyon Dam, a "Bureau of Reclamation cash cow," the main useful function of which is lining the pockets of houseboat manufacturers, with minor functions of producing 3 percent of the Southwest's power and assisting a few private agribusinesses.

The Network also confronts the larger issue of the over-allocated Colorado River, which is diverted and dammed and polluted by the U.S. and only reaches its delta in Mexico, in the form of a toxic trickle, in flood years. So, the Network's spreading the news about greed- and growth-driven, river-sucking megaslops like us (and Phoenix and Tucson and Southern California etc.). They're telling the tourists that we've sent an ancient clam

in the Colorado River to possible extinction, that we drown rare birds, that we piss in our own drinking fountain, that we take water from small porpoises in Mexico, that we have huge evaporating fake lakes, subsidized water-wasting alfalfa fields, spouting fountains, lawns and gazillions of toilets and more, even though we're in a desert.

They're making us look bad, folks, evil. Oh, that's OK with you?

But here's the thing: They're not just sticking with the ice cream shop. They're bringing their act on the road. This month, the Sustainable Water Project Roadshow will haul an empty tanker truck, Native American drummers and environmentalists across the West, stopping along the way to enlighten citizens. They'll be in Las Vegas March 12, on the sidewalk by the Las Vegas Valley Water District at noon. (The district is not a sponsor of the tour.)

Oh, they'll keep it sweet, just like back home, but that's a sugar-sure tactic: People don't like to see dead porpoises and waterlogged wee birds, when it comes down to it. They'll sympathize. At least, that's the hope of the Action Network and the 37 other organizations in the United States and Mexico, representing eight million activists, who are sponsoring the tour.

"Politicians will ultimately react to what the public wants," says Action Network director, Owen Lammers. He notes, for example, that a number of Western politicians now agree that Glen Canyon Dam should come down.

Plus, the Network will tell people that to save these creatures is easy, a simple matter of water agencies in the Southwest donating 1 percent of the total Colorado River allocation, the minimal amount scientists say is needed to sustain the delta habitats.

It ain't much, says David Hogan of the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the groups involved. Hogan helped draft the groups' letter to river water users, which asks for a commitment to conserve enough water to send to the delta, and to forge a formal agreement with Mexico to assure that the water reaches the natural habitats (and is not, say, sucked up by agribusiness or municipalities across the border). The Center also is one of the litigants in a case in which they're seeking a ruling that the Endangered Species Act applies across the border in Mexico. Such a ruling, they hope, would result in mitigation that would entail an allocation of specific in-stream flows and flood flows for the delta. In the meantime, though, they've decided to try sweet talk to get the flows.

"I don't expect the water agencies will fall all over themselves to give the water," Hogan says. "But to ignore this reasonable plea would be at their expense. It makes them look like complete villains, to not commit to conservation."

Tracy Bower, of the Southern Nevada Water Authority which oversees local water districts, says her agency "has a pretty aggressive water conservation program" and does care about the environment. However, while the agency "recognizes [the delta is] an emerging issue," it won't commit to anything until the seven river basin states who rely on Colorado River water, and the Mexican governments, have sat down and talked about it. But what would actually prompt such a get together, she couldn't say.

The seven states have resisted recent attempts to help species in the Mexican delta, even trying to become interveners in the international ESA case (intervention was denied) and to stay the lawsuit (also denied, just a few weeks ago).

"Some of the river users are very nervous about any suggestion that they would relinquish a single drop of the water they're allocated," Orr says. "It goes against the tenet of Western water law: Use it or lose it. Western water law discourages conservation." What water they do conserve, he says, goes toward "fueling more development."

What the environmental groups are requesting—a change in the Law of the River—perhaps seems heretical to the states, who've had set (but mighty flexible) allocations since the 1922 Colorado River Compact, in which Arizona, California, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming and Colorado divvied up 15 million acre-feet (with Nevada, a small population back then, getting but 300,000 acre-feet). They tossed Mexico one-and-a-half MAF. The problem, which water users acknowledge today but treat as incidental, is that the total amount of water available was overestimated. The average annual flow is more like 13 MAF. That leaves 11 and-a-half MAF for the states, in reality, to divide. Subtract about two million more MAF of water that evaporates off Lake Mead and Lake Powell and seeps into reservoir sandstone, and the allocation is further reduced.

But that's just bad math on paper. On the ground, there's just lots of finagling. Some states have ended up using more than their allocation, and others have used only some. And they've been cutting deals to continue to move the water and imaginary water around. For instance, Nevada cut a deal where it can divert and store river water in aquifers in Arizona (long an under-user). The stored water becomes credit, which an entity can redeem later by using a portion of Arizona's river allocation while Arizona in turn feeds off the stored water. (One problem, Hogan says, is that Arizona doesn't store the water but instead pumps it, at taxpayers' expense, over 4,000-foot mountains to subsidize farmers...so will there be water to draw on later?) In another deal, last year seven states agreed to let California (long an over-user) reduce its river consumption by 1 MAF over 15 years, to bring it down to its allocation of 4.4 MAF. During this time, it can store water.

"The problem," says Orr, "is that they're going to draw down Lake Mead, which will allow them to catch floods. This is serious for the delta, because the only time water has gotten to the delta has been during floods. They call it 'administrative waste,' but there's been enough of it over the last 30 years that total ecological collapse has been avoided. And Bruce Babbitt just signed off on this, calling it a 'win-win' agreement, and the six states are just standing there with a lot of blue sky in their pockets."

The most egregious aspect of all of this water witchery, Orr says, is that the states pride themselves on conservation, but in fact they are only conserving water in order to fuel development, not to sustain ecosystems.

"Maybe we need to reexamine the whole Colorado River Compact," Orr says. "This is not a golden tablet. It's a law, and laws can be changed. Now it's a system that depends

on unsustainable growth and development" and agriculture (50 percent of the river water is used to grow alfalfa for cattle feed, even though these days much of our beef comes from South America).

Las Vegas, Orr says, ought to be concerned.

"At some point, growth and development in the Las Vegas Valley becomes similar to the biology of the cancer cell; you can only grow so far until you crater out." Las Vegas is particularly vulnerable, he says, because it "has really hitched its wagon to a global growth machine, and its fortunes will rise and fall based on the world's perception of Las Vegas...and also on whether people can afford to come stay there."

Although this tour is non-confrontational, Orr says the groups are considering "the possibility of taking the federal government to court" over the delta.

Who wants ice cream?

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03/01/01

### **The Sustainable Water Project Tour:**

March 5 - 14, 2001 Salt Lake City, Albuquerque, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Blythe, Los Angeles, and many stops in between.

\* Itinerary as of March 2, 2001 \* Letter to Bureau of Reclamation \* Tour Day 1 \* Tour Day 2 \* Tour Day 3 \* Tour Day 4 \* Tour Day 8 \* Tour Day 9 \* Tour Day 10 \* Tour Day 11 \* Salt Lake Tribune--3/6 \* Grist Magazine--3/5 \* ENN: Greens want Colorado River ecosystem restored--3/8 \* UNLV: Roadshow tours to revive delta \* AZ Rep: Truckin' for the Environment--3/10 \* LV CityLife: Too much town, not enough river--3/1 \* Tour Media Advisory \* Media Advisory for Salt Lake Launch--3/5 \* Media Advisory for Albuquerque Stop--3/7 \* Media Advisory for Phoenix Stop--3/8 \* Media Advisory for Las Vegas Stop--3/12 \* Media Advisory for Los Angeles Stop--3/14 \* Major Event schedule \* Map of the Colorado River Basin. Includes tributaries, reservoirs and diversions \* List of supporters

### **Festivals and Rallies for Water Conservation and River Restoration**

The mighty Colorado River no longer reaches the sea. Stretches of the Rio Grande are dry for months at a time; its terminus is a toxic soup. International treasures like the Grand Canyon National Park, Dinosaur National Monument and Colorado River delta are starving for natural river flows.

Politics and concrete are killing these rivers, and the agencies responsible want you to believe that there's no water to spare. Yet billions of gallons of subsidized water flow off industrial hay fields, tumble over desert fountains, or evaporate off water ski parks. Water agency policies of consumption and waste, revenue and profits, have perpetuated a mythical water crisis that must now come to end.

Much of this water can stay in our rivers. Dams can come down. Habitats can be revived. And still, human needs for water can be met now, and for generations to come. Water conservation leads to river restoration. Lend your voice to make this happen.

Rally in support of a living Colorado, Rio Grande and other rivers everywhere. Call for an end to polluting, wasteful and subsidized irrigation practices. Support calls for water efficient, organic farming. Demand municipal water and land use polices that mandate conservation, native landscaping and urban biodiversity. Tell these water agencies that their missions are to meet human needs by taking progressively less, not more, water from our rivers. Let the river flow to the sea!

Join Vaquita Rescue, the Tour's water truck, as it takes collections to deliver fresh water to the endangered vaquita porpoises in the Gulf of California, and to the endangered species of the Colorado River delta. This rolling water tank also symbolizes the hundreds of millions of similar-sized tanks of water wasted by municipal and agricultural water agencies; water that never reaches the Colorado's dry and dying delta, and estuary.

Join us as we stop at the headquarters of the major water abusers in the seven-state Basin and ask them to institute conservation programs and "Giveback Less than 1%" of their total allocation to restore the Colorado Delta.

Partial List of Events - Check regularly for updates

Monday, March 5, Salt Lake City, UT, 12:00 Noon Kick-off Rally for the Bureau of Restoration US Bureau of Reclamation Regional Office Federal Building, downtown Salt Lake City

\* Call for federally mandated conservation measures for Colorado River water agencies  
\* End water abuse by the Central Utah Project \* Protest the proposed St. George pipeline from Lake Powell

Wednesday, March 7, Albuquerque, NM, 12:00 Noon Re-water the Rio Grande & Colorado rivers Albuquerque City Hall

\* Demand that the City of Albuquerque protect instream flows of the Rio Grande River \* Demand a watershed study for radioactive contaminants from Los Alamos \* Save the silvery minnow

Friday, March 9, Phoenix, AZ, 10:30 a.m. Arizona State Department of Agriculture 1688 W. Washington (NE corner of Washington and 17th Ave.) Simple lunch fare will be provided

\* Ask Central Arizona Project to "Giveback Just 1%" of its water allocation to restore the Colorado Delta. \* Protest the needless diversion of Colorado River water for wasteful desert irrigation. \* Oppose proposed pipeline from Lake Powell to Flagstaff \* Tell CAP Tucson doesn't want its polluted sprawl-enabling water

Monday, March 12, Las Vegas, NV, 12:00 Noon Stop Gambling with the Colorado River Rally outside the Southern Nevada Water Authority & Las Vegas Valley Water District Headquarters

\* Mandate xeriscape gardening for Nevada \* No more fountains and artificial lakes in desert \* Ante-up for delta preservation

Tuesday, March 13, Blythe, CA, 4:30 p.m. Appropriate Agriculture and Energy Policy for the Colorado Todd Park, near City Hall

\* Protest corporate welfare and agricultural waste of the Colorado River \* Support farmworker rights, organic farmers and family farms \* Protest plans for the Palo Verde power plant Wednesday, March 14, Los Angeles, CA, 12:00 Noon 4th International Day of Action Against Dams and for Rivers Water and Life The Old Plaza across from Metropolitan Water District Headquarters

\* Demand conservation polices for the regions 17 million Colorado River water recipients \* Support natural flows for the restoration of the Colorado River delta and Gulf of California \* Stop the Eastside Reservoir boondoogle

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Living Rivers Currents 02/01/01

**Volume 1, Number 2**

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LR in the News 01/27/01

**Moab Times Independent**

Enthusiastic crowd supports group whose mission it is to drain lake Participants gear toward March 14 rally

By Kathryn Wilder, Guest Writer

The Glen Canyon Action Network, which officially came into being on Jan.1, hosted its first public event on Monday, Jan. 24: River Revival Night and Hot Fudge Monday Feed.

Despite being a sleepy little town in the depths of the winter lull, Moab and Castle Valley turned out nearly 150 residents to pack the hall. They were joined by visitors from the Salt Lake area; Monticello; Durango, Colo.; and as far away as Prescott, Ariz.

Susette Weisheit, campaign committee chair for the group, was master of ceremonies. She introduced the Glen Canyon Action Network to the Moab community, talked about the upcoming Day of Action rally at Glen Canyon Dam March 14, and introduced each of the evening's speakers.

GCAN's executive director Owen Lammers spoke of the efforts and accomplishments of the international river advocacy movement, highlighted by the annual world-wide Day of Action Against Dams and for Rivers, Water, and Life. The March Restoration Celebration and Rendezvous at Glen Canyon Dam will be a leader in this 3rd annual event. Lammers' slide presentation pictured other dams in other countries where people are fighting to free the rivers.

The featured speaker of the night, longtime river runner and outfitter Ken Sleight, told tales of the Glen Canyon that he and other early river runners knew so well. He spoke of watching side canyons fill and tributaries fall mute, of watching lizards float by on pieces of driftwood, as the water level rose with the closing of the gates of Glen Canyon Dam in 1963.

"It made an environmentalist out of me," Sleight said.

He told numerous stories of his protests against the dam and the varieties of resistance he met from law officers and park officials. Despite the many obstacles thrown in his path, for nearly 40 years Sleight has persevered in his efforts to restore Glen Canyon.

Another old-time river runner made an appearance at GCAN's River Revival Night. Kent Frost, who first floated the Colorado River through Glen Canyon in the 1930s, donated a box of his books, *My Canyonlands*, and was available to sign them. Back of Beyond Bookstore also came out to support GCAN's efforts through book sales.

When asked by a member of the standing-room-only crowd what activists for the cause can do now, Sleight mentioned other organizations that are working to restore Glen Canyon, such as the Sierra Club and Glen Canyon Institute. "Hop on," Sleight said, "and, most importantly, show up at the Dam on March 14th!"

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Media Advisory 01/24/01

**17th annual Fordham Debate considers Glen Canyon Dam decommissioning**

- M E D I A A D V I S O R Y -  
GLEN CANYON ACTION NETWORK

January 24, 2001

CONTACT: David Orr 435-259-1063 Owen Lammers 435-259-1063

17th Annual Fordham Debate considers Glen Canyon Dam Decommissioning

The prestigious 17th Annual Jefferson B. Fordham Debate at the University of Utah Law School will be the setting for a debate over the proposal to restore a free-flowing river through Glen Canyon on the Colorado.

River restoration advocates from Glen Canyon Action Network in Moab, and Glen Canyon Institute in Flagstaff, Arizona, will debate representatives from the United States

Bureau of Reclamation and the Upper Colorado River Basin Commission. The event will take place at 6:30 PM, Thursday, January 25, in the Law School's Moot Courtroom.

"It's not a matter of if Lake Powell will be drained, but when," said David Orr, Director of Field Programs at Glen Canyon Action Network (GCAN) in Moab, and a participant in Thursday's debate. "It's sheer economics: do we pay to clean up the mess now or pay more to do it later?"

Glen Canyon Action Network is challenging the Bureau of Reclamation over its Colorado River management practices. GCAN will launch its "Sustainable Water Project" tour of the Southwest from Salt Lake City on March 5, to call attention to the desperate need for water to restore the Colorado River's dying delta in Mexico. [For further information, consult GCAN's website at [www.drainit.org](http://www.drainit.org).]

In recent months, GCAN has called for a dam decommissioning study to be conducted at Flaming Gorge Dam to address endangered species concerns there.

In concert with Native Americans and other environmental groups, GCAN is challenging on environmental and cultural grounds a proposal by the National Park Service to construct a major new marina project on Lake Powell reservoir at Antelope Point.

GCAN and other groups are demonstrating that sediment problems at the reservoir are already impacting recreational boating, a problem that will only worsen until the dam is eventually decommissioned.

On its tour in March, GCAN will be visiting major users of Colorado River water, asking for voluntary donations of "One Percent for the Delta," a reference to scientists' calls for assured flows to the river's parched estuarine region, where several species are currently threatened with extinction. GCAN and other groups are supporting proposals for binational talks between the US and Mexico to reach agreement on delta restoration.

Orr noted that draining Lake Powell and restoring a free-flowing river through Glen Canyon, will save huge amounts of water--enough to supply the City of Los Angeles for a year--water that currently evaporate into the desert skies over southern Utah.

"A gallon saved from Lake Powell is a gallon earned for the delta downstream," said Orr. "Ignoring the problems we are seeing--sediment, endangered species, water pollution, and evaporation--will not make them go away; the remedy just becomes more expensive the longer we wait."

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