

LR Press Release

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**Federal Government Notified of Intent to Sue
Grand Canyon Fish v. Glen Canyon Dam**

For immediate release

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Living Rivers and the Center for Biological Diversity today notified the Bureau of Reclamation and Fish and Wildlife Service of their intent to sue over violations of the Endangered Species Act resulting in the demise of endangered native fish in Grand Canyon National Park.

For more than a decade the Bureau of Reclamation has been required to modify the operations of Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River to reverse the dam's downstream impacts on Grand Canyon's famed river ecosystem. However, as outlined in a letter sent to Department of Interior officials today, these efforts have failed.

"Since the Fish and Wildlife Service issued its Biological Opinion on the dam's operations in 1994, the Bureau of Reclamation's actions have merely made things worse," says Living Rivers Conservation Director John Weisheit. "One more fish species is effectively extinct in the Canyon, and another is on the verge."

Just eight native fish species once lived in Grand Canyon's desert river corridor, six of which could not survive anywhere else in the Colorado River. Now only four species remain, one of which, the Humpback Chub, has declined to just a few thousand fishes. In 1992 Congress passed the Grand Canyon Protection Act to reverse this decline.

Following the completion of an Environmental Impact Statement, three years later, the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program was established to guide the Bureau of Reclamation in implementing recovery guidelines set forth by of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Now, some 13 years later, the United States Geological Survey has evaluated this program and has confirmed what many scientists have been saying for years, that recovery is not being achieved. Released on October 25, their 220 page "The State of the Colorado River Ecosystem in Grand Canyon" report states:

- "...it is clear that the restrictions on dam operations since 1991 have not produced the hoped for restoration and maintenance of this endangered species."
- "Overall, about 15% - 20% of the adult humpback chub are dying each year. If this mortality rate and the dramatically reduced recruitment rate of young chub experienced since the early 1990s remain unchanged, there will be a decline in the adult population of humpback chub from the present 3,000 - 5,000 fish to a level of 1,500 - 2,000 adult fish over the next 10 - 15 yr."
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- "...the MLFF [Modified Low Fluctuating Flow] operating alternative has not effectively mitigated the influence of regulation with respect to either the thermal and hydrologic changes or the fine-sediment supply limitation of the downstream ecosystem."

"It's outrageous that the public has invested more than \$200 million to help the Bureau of Reclamation restore the river habitat in Grand Canyon, and all they have to show for it is fewer fish." says Dr. Robin Silver, Board Chair of the Tucson-based Center for Biological Diversity. "It's time they re-tool their strategy before Grand Canyon's river ecosystem is lost forever."

The groups are demanding that in light of the mounting evidence of no progress, the Fish & Wildlife Service is compelled by law to immediately reinstate consultation and devise a new strategy to ensure recovery of Grand Canyon native fish, particularly the Humpback Chub. Key issues that must be addressed are:

- Restoring a water temperature regime that once fluctuated seasonally from near freezing to 80 degrees Fahrenheit, but now is a constant 47 degrees year-round.
- Restoring river flows that fluctuated seasonally from 3,000 to 100,000 CFS (cubic feet per second), but now can fluctuate daily from 8,000 to 20,000 CFS.
- Restoring the sediment and nutrients that nourished Grand Canyon's aquatic habitat, 95 percent of which is now trapped by the dam annually.
- Controlling non-native fish which have flourished in this new environment, competing with, and preying on, the native fish.

"The Colorado River through Grand Canyon is one of this planet's most precious gifts, but the Bureau of Reclamation remains hell-bent on destroying it," adds Weisheit. "This ecosystem may not survive much longer with that dam in operation, but we could certainly survive were that dam not there."

More than 200 groups from across the country now advocate the decommissioning of Glen Canyon Dam as the best alternative for restoring the river ecosystem in Grand Canyon National Park.

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For More Information

- [60-day notice letter](#) [57k PDF File]
http://www.livingrivers2.org/pdfs/CBD_LR_Notice.pdf
- [Biological Opinion: Glen Canyon Dam](#) [3700k PDF File]
<http://www.livingrivers2.org/pdfs/BOgcd.pdf>
- USGS SCORE Report, released on October 25, 2005
[The State of Natural and Cultural Resources in the Colorado River Ecosystem](#)
http://www.riversimulator.org/Resources/USGS/score_2005.pdf
- LR Press Release, October 24, 2005
[Grand Canyon Restoration Program, a Failing Grade](#)
<http://www.livingrivers2.org/archives/article.cfm?NewsID=690>
- [Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program](#)
<https://www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/amp/index.html>
- [Living Rivers](#)
<http://www.livingrivers.org/>
- [Center for Biological Diversity](#)
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