OpEd 01/13/12

Dammed If We Don't

Environmentalism: Essay
Dammed If We Don't
Yvon Chouinard
Mountain 2012

Click here to read the One-Dam Solution

http://livingrivers2.org/pdfs/TheOne-DamSolution.pdf

Environmentalist David Brower was once asked, "Why are you conservationists always against things?" He replied, "If you are against something, you are always for something. If you are against a dam, you are for a river."

I'm also a lover of wild rivers. That's why our company has been involved in trying to take out obsolete and damaging dams since 1993. We've had some success helping take down the Edwards Dam on Maine's Kennebec River in 1999, and the Savage Rapids Dam on Oregon's Rogue River in 2009. As I write this, three large dams are slated to come down on Washington's Elwha and White Salmon Rivers. The United States has more than 82,000 dams in its inventory and researchers estimate there may be at least two million dams of various sizes. So far, at least 836 dams have come down, but 26,000 "hazardous" dams (according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) remain. Many of these dams were built by local irrigation districts, private power companies and local, state and federal governments. When they become obsolete safety hazards, like mines, the owners just walk away and leave the cleanup and restoration to the taxpayers.

When I was 18, I used to go down to the Sea of Cortez to spearfish. Within 15 or 20 minutes, I would spot a 30- to 40-pound grouper. It was like a fishbowl. And now, many of the bottom fish are gone, the shrimp are almost gone, and fishermen are left to eke out a living fishing for low-value skate wings in the winter. This is largely due to overfishing and destructive fishing practices like bottom trawling, but it's also because the mighty Colorado River no longer flows to the Gulf of California. Fewer nutrients support the biota of the gulf because the river and its tributaries are impoverished by more than 100 dams. The Mediterranean is on its way to becoming a dead sea, with the Aswan Dam on the Nile being the last indignity. It's projected that there won't be a single undammed river reaching the sea in China by 2025, only thirteen years from now.

The estuaries and coastal lagoons at the mouths of our planet's rivers are often referred to as the 'nurseries' of our world's fisheries, and many ocean fish need brackish or fresh water to spawn and rear. Four crucial dams to take out if we wish to restore wild Pacific salmon are on the lower Snake River – a tributary to the Columbia River and one of our planet's mightiest salmon producers. Every fisheries biologist not in the pocket of the

Bonneville Power Administration agrees that the dams must come down. But the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and state and local governments in the area lack backbone and refuse to act on good science. The U.S. taxpayer continues to bleed billions of dollars on a failed policy of hatcheries and barging salmon around dams, when President Obama should add basic economics to overwhelming scientific fact and direct federal agencies to remove the lower Snake River dams.

The best chance of restoring wild Atlantic salmon to the United States is taking out two of the three dams (and breaching the third) on the Penobscot River in Maine (scheduled for 2012). The best chance of restoring wild Atlantic salmon in France is to remove the Poutès Dam, built in 1941 on the upper Allier River, the main tributary of the Loire River. (The French government announced the removal of the Poutès Dam as this catalog went to press.)

But if I chose one dam to fall, for me, it is the Matilija Dam, just up the road from Patagonia headquarters, near Ojai, California. In 2000, I watched then U.S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt stand on the top of the dam and swear it was going to come down. It's still there.

It was built in 1948 by a few local irrigators and was almost silted up after only 18 years. The dam is an impassable barrier to endangered sea-run steelhead trout migrating home to the Ventura River and prevents much needed sand from nourishing the coastline of Ventura County and beyond. One reason it hasn't come down is a lack of sound planning and leadership on the part of local politicians, water districts and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The question of how to take down the dam was given to some local grammar school children, and one little girl raised her hand and asked, "Why don't they take a little bitty bite out of the dam every year?" If we had started doing that back in 2000, the Matilija Dam would be gone by now and steelhead would be spawning in Matilija Creek.

According to Bruce Babbitt, we've been building at least one dam a day since the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. Building dams is old technology that doesn't fit with 21st century innovation, yet dams are still going up. Brazil is building the Belo Monte Dam, the third largest in the world, that will inundate a large part of the Xingu River basin and force tens of thousands of local people from their land. Argentina is going to dam the Santa Cruz River. The five proposed dams in Patagonia, Chile, would require the longest transmission line in the world to go through most of their national parks. If those dams and transmission lines are built, every other Chilean river to the north can be dammed and plugged into those transmission lines.

When are we going to stop? After we dam every single river in the world?

We are now on the cusp of a multitude of good options for clean energy, like solar, wind, tidal power, wave power, geothermal and energy efficiency. Rather than storing water in on-stream reservoirs, water is best stored in underground aquifers, off-stream reservoirs and restored floodplain basins that also provide flood protection and water quality benefits. Water conservation and efficiency measures alone eliminate the need for new

storage dams, and existing railroads are a viable alternative to shipping produce on barges. I wonder why we are so impatient to destroy our rivers with this outdated technology and why we have to wait so long to tear down these obsolete behemoths.

OpEd 01/14/12

Even Lake Mead, the biggest reservoir in the U.S., will eventually run dry if its outgo consistently exceeds income

By William deBuys

January 13, 2012, 6:23 p.m.

Southern Californians are used to turning on the tap, or the sprinklers, and getting the water they want. Their ability to do so depends, in large part, on the Colorado River and the reservoir it feeds, Lake Mead.

In 2008, Tim Barnett and David Pierce, scientists at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, wrote that the lake — a lifeline not just for Southern California but for much of the desert Southwest — would soon teeter at the brink of failure. The Review-Journal in Las Vegas, a city especially dependent on that lifeline, responded with predictable bluster: "We'd love to buy some action on the odds provided by Mr. Barnett and Mr. Pierce. They can name the amount at stake. Are they willing to put their money where their mouths are?"

As far as I know, the Scripps scientists didn't take advantage of the Review-Journal's rash offer. Maybe they should have. They knew the odds. So should everyone. There are plenty of reasons the water-happy habits of the modern Southwest are a bad bet:

First, the Lower Basin states of the Colorado River are living beyond their means. The Colorado River Compact of 1922 allocates 7.5 million acre-feet to be divided among California, Arizona and Nevada. Today tens of millions of people from L.A. and San Diego to Las Vegas, Phoenix and Tucson, not to mention agriculture worth billions of dollars, depend on those flows. Trouble is, those Lower Basin states don't budget for evaporative losses, for their proportionate share of the U.S. treaty obligation to Mexico or for other water losses associated with the plumbing of the river. As a result, they consistently overdraft their account by 1.2 million to 1.3 million acre-feet per year. That's an annual deficit of about 17%.

For decades the Lower Basin (mainly California) got away with its profligate habits because the Upper Basin — the states upstream of Arizona — developed more slowly; they didn't have the means to withdraw their share of the river water (theoretically, an additional 7.5 million acre-feet). Not anymore. The Upper Basin now sucks the life out of the river with gusto. No more leftovers.

More bad news for Lake Mead is that the Colorado River Compact incorporates a nettlesome flaw: Its authors divided up more water than the river can provide. Drawing on a small, skewed set of measurements (all that were available in 1922), they thought the river's average flow was about 17 million acre-feet annually. Now the relevant data set is a lot bigger. The most extensive (and most generous) reconstruction of "paleo" flows, going back more than 1,200 years, points to an average annual flow of only 14.7 million acre-feet. Even Lake Mead, the biggest reservoir in the country, will eventually run dry if its outgo consistently exceeds income.

Water managers have known about these problems for a long time, but they consoled themselves that "augmentation" would provide a solution. Diverting the Yukon River in Alaska and Canada to flow to the Southwest is a good example of augmentation, and once upon a time, people gave this flaky idea serious consideration. Desalination on a massive scale constitutes another form of augmentation, but although desalination is politically more palatable than hijacking rivers, it is similarly costly, as well as gluttonous in its consumption of energy. Augmentation at a scale to bail out the sweltering Sun Belt has been a nonstarter.

As if overuse, over-allocation and a dearth of rivers available for theft weren't enough to persuade you to make book on Lake Mead's vulnerability, the climate is changing. OK, so maybe 82 degrees in Los Angeles on New Year's Day is a fluke. And nearly snowless Sierra Nevada and the Rockies are just weird, and last year's shoe-melting temperatures and holocaust fires in Arizona, New Mexico and Texas could have happened any time. But really, the Southwest is getting hotter. And hotter means drier even if precipitation stays steady (but don't bet your house on that) because more heat causes more evaporation. A respected 2005 study predicts that stream flow in the Southwest will probably decline 10% to 30% by mid-century.

Add all of this together and you can see why Barnett and Pierce might have concluded Lake Mead risked failure, which in this context means the lake level drops below Hoover Dam's lowest outlets. Which means no water goes downstream. All you get is seepage.

The Scripps scientists missed some things in the original study. But eventually they, and a second respected team at the University of Colorado, came to pretty much the same conclusion: After 2026, the risk of failure of Lake Mead, in the words of a member of the second team, "just skyrockets."

But that is not what is scary.

What's really scary, according to Jonathan Overpeck, a climatologist at the University of Arizona, "is the possibility that we could trip across a transition into a megadrought." A megadrought lasts multiple decades. It is the kind of drought that caused Ancestral Puebloan civilizations at New Mexico's Chaco Canyon and Colorado's Mesa Verde to collapse and triggered a chain of events that helped do in the Hohokam in central Arizona.

Such droughts, it turns out, are characteristic of semiarid regions around the world, but we've not yet seen one in the Southwest during the American era. The droughts of the

Dust Bowl days in the 1930s, and the even drier 1950s, were comparative child's play. The paleo-climatic record tells us our land can get a whole lot drier than anything we've ever known.

If/when Lake Mead fails, Phoenix will still drink from the Salt River, but the city is now too big to get by on the Salt alone, and besides, whatever causes the Colorado to shrink will surely shrivel the Salt. So groundwater will have to save the day, but only for as long as it holds out. Los Angeles' situation is similar. If the Colorado River Aqueduct goes dry, the California Aqueduct and the Los Angeles Aqueduct, which deliver snowmelt from the Sierra, are unlikely to do much better.

Las Vegas, at least, is taking action. Among other desperation plays, it is building Intake No. 3, a kind of bathtub drain at the bottom of Lake Mead, at a cost of $800 million. When the lake level falls below Hoover Dam's lowest outlets, Las Vegas will still sip the warm tea of the "dead pool." Las Vegas has put its money where its future is. Although betting on the weather may be akin to playing the lottery, the people responsible for Sin City's water supply know that a wager on a warming climate is, well, not so much of a gamble.

William deBuys is the author of the newly released "A Great Aridness: Climate Change and the Future of the American Southwest."

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Phoenix in the Climate Crosshairs: We Are Long Past Coal Mine Canaries

By William deBuys

If cities were stocks, you'd want to short Phoenix. Of course, it's an easy city to pick on. The nation's 13th largest metropolitan area (nudging out Detroit) crams 4.3 million people into a low bowl in a hot desert, where horrific heat waves and windstorms visit it regularly. It snuggles next to the nation's largest nuclear plant and, having exhausted local sources, it depends on an improbable infrastructure to suck water from the distant (and dwindling) Colorado River.

In Phoenix, you don't ask: What could go wrong? You ask: What couldn't?

And that's the point, really. Phoenix's multiple vulnerabilities, which are plenty daunting taken one by one, have the capacity to magnify one another, like compounding illnesses. In this regard, it's a quintessentially modern city, a pyramid of complexities requiring large energy inputs to keep the whole apparatus humming. The urban disasters of our time -- New Orleans hit by Katrina, New York City swamped by Sandy -- may arise from single storms, but the damage they do is the result of a chain reaction of failures -- grids going down, levees failing, back-up systems not backing up. As you might expect, academics have come up with a name for such breakdowns: infrastructure failure interdependencies. You wouldn't want to use it in a poem, but it does catch an emerging theme of our time.

Phoenix's pyramid of complexities looks shakier than most because it stands squarely in the crosshairs of climate change. The area, like much of the rest of the American Southwest, is already hot and dry; it's getting ever hotter and drier, and is increasingly battered by powerful storms. Sandy and Katrina previewed how coastal cities can expect to fare as seas rise and storms strengthen. Phoenix pulls back the curtain on the future of inland empires. If you want a taste of the brutal new climate to come, the place to look is where that climate is already harsh, and growing more so -- the aptly named Valley of the Sun.

In Phoenix, it's the convergence of heat, drought, and violent winds, interacting and amplifying each other that you worry about. Generally speaking, in contemporary society, nothing that matters happens for just one reason, and in Phoenix there are all too many "reasons" primed to collaborate and produce big problems, with climate change foremost among them, juicing up the heat, the drought, and the wind to ever greater extremes, like so many sluggers on steroids. Notably, each of these nemeses, in its own way, has the potential to undermine the sine qua non of modern urban life, the electrical grid, which in Phoenix merits special attention.

If, in summer, the grid there fails on a large scale and for a significant period of time, the fallout will make the consequences of Superstorm Sandy look mild. Sure, people will hunt madly for power outlets to charge their cellphones and struggle to keep their milk fresh, but communications and food refrigeration will not top their list of priorities. Phoenix is an air-conditioned city. If the power goes out, people fry.

In the summer of 2003, a heat wave swept Europe and killed 70,000 people. The temperature in London touched 100 degrees Fahrenheit for the first time since records had been kept, and in portions of France the mercury climbed as high as 104°F. Those temperatures, however, are child's play in Phoenix, where readings commonly exceed 100°F for more than 100 days a year. In 2011, the city set a new record for days over 110°F: there were 33 of them, more than a month of spectacularly superheated days ushering in a new era.

In Flight From the Sun

It goes without saying that Phoenix's desert setting is hot by nature, but we've made it hotter. The city is a masonry world, with asphalt and concrete everywhere. The hard, heavy materials of its buildings and roads absorb heat efficiently and give it back more slowly than the naked land. In a sense, the whole city is really a thermal battery, soaking up energy by day and releasing it at night. The result is an "urban heat island," which, in turn, prevents the cool of the desert night from providing much relief.

Sixty years ago, when Phoenix was just embarking on its career of manic growth, nighttime lows never crept above 90°F. Today such temperatures are a commonplace, and the vigil has begun for the first night that doesn't dip below 100°F. Studies indicate that Phoenix's urban-heat-island effect may boost nighttime temperatures by as much as 10°F. It's as though the city has doubled down on climate change, finding a way to magnify its most unwanted effects even before it hits the rest of us full blast.

Predictably, the poor suffer most from the heat. They live in the hottest neighborhoods with the least greenery to mitigate the heat-island effect, and they possess the least resources for combatting high temperatures. For most Phoenicians, however, none of this is more than an inconvenience as long as the AC keeps humming and the utility bill gets paid. When the heat intensifies, they learn to scurry from building to car and into the next building, essentially holding their breaths. In those cars, the second thing they touch after the ignition is the fan control for the AC. The steering wheel comes later.

In the blazing brilliance of July and August, you venture out undefended to walk or run only in the half-light of dawn or dusk. The idea for residents of the Valley of the Sun is to learn to dodge the heat, not challenge it.

Heat, however, is a tricky adversary. It stresses everything, including electrical equipment. Transformers, when they get too hot, can fail. Likewise, thermoelectric generating stations, whether fired by coal, gas, or neutrons, become less efficient as the mercury soars. And the great hydroelectric dams of the Colorado River, including Glen Canyon, which serves greater Phoenix, won't be able to supply the "peaking power" they do now if the reservoirs behind them are fatally shrunken by drought, as multiple studies forecast they will be. Much of this can be mitigated with upgraded equipment, smart grid technologies, and redundant systems. But then along comes the haboob.

A haboob is a dust/sand/windstorm, usually caused by the collapse of a thunderstorm cell. The plunging air hits the ground and roils outward, picking up debris across the open desert. As the Arabic name suggests, such storms are native to arid regions, but -- although Phoenix is no stranger to storm-driven dust -- the term haboob has only lately entered the local lexicon. It seems to have been imported to describe a new class of storms, spectacular in their vehemence, which bring visibility to zero and life to a standstill. They sandblast cars, close the airport, and occasionally cause the lights -- and AC -- to go out. Not to worry, say the two major utilities serving the Phoenix metroplex, Arizona Public Service and the Salt River Project. And the outages have indeed been brief. So far.

Before Katrina hit, the Army Corps of Engineers was similarly reassuring to the people of New Orleans. And until Superstorm Sandy landed, almost no one worried about storm surges filling the subway tunnels of New York. Every system, like every city, has its vulnerabilities. Climate change, in almost every instance, will worsen them. The beefed-up, juiced-up, greenhouse-gassed, overheated weather of the future will give us haboobs of a sort we can't yet imagine, packed with ever greater amounts of energy.

In all likelihood, the emergence of such storms as a feature of Phoenix life results from an overheating environment, abetted by the loose sand and dust of abandoned farmland (which dried up when water was diverted to the city's growing subdivisions).

Water, Water, Everywhere (But Not for Long)

In dystopic portraits of Phoenix's unsustainable future, water -- or rather the lack of it -- is usually painted as the agent of collapse. Indeed, the metropolitan area, a jumble of jurisdictions that includes Scottsdale, Glendale, Tempe, Mesa, Sun City, Chandler, and

15 other municipalities, long ago made full use of such local rivers as the Salt, Verde, and Gila. Next, people sank wells and mined enough groundwater to lower the water table by 400 feet.

Sometimes the land sank, too. Near some wells it subsided by 10 feet or more. All along, everyone knew that the furious extraction of groundwater couldn't last, so they fixed their hopes on a new bonanza called the Central Arizona Project (CAP), a river-sized, open-air canal supported by an elaborate array of pumps, siphons, and tunnels that would bring Colorado River water across the breadth of Arizona to Phoenix and Tucson.

The CAP came on line in the early 1990s and today is the engine of Arizona's growth. Unfortunately, in order to win authorization and funding to build it, state officials had to make a bargain with the devil, which in this case turned out to be California. Arizona's delegation in the House of Representatives was tiny, California's was huge, and its representatives jealously protected their longstanding stranglehold on the Colorado River. The concession California forced on Arizona was simple: it had to agree that its CAP water rights would take second place to California's claims.

This means one thing: once the inevitable day comes when there isn't enough water to go around, the CAP will absorb the shortage down to the last drop before California even begins to turn off its faucets.

A raw deal for Arizona? You bet, but not exactly the end of the line. Arizona has other "more senior" rights to the Colorado, and when the CAP begins to run dry, you may be sure that the masters of the CAP will pay whatever is necessary to lease those older rights and keep the 330-mile canal flowing. Among their targets will be water rights belonging to Indian tribes at the western edge of the state along the lower reaches of the river. The cost of buying tribal water will drive the rates consumers pay for water in Phoenix sky-high, but they'll pay it because they'll have to.

Longer term, the Colorado River poses issues that no amount of tribal water can resolve. Beset by climate change, overuse, and drought, the river and its reservoirs, according to various researchers, may decline to the point that water fails to pass Hoover Dam. In that case, the CAP would dry up, but so would the Colorado Aqueduct which serves greater Los Angeles and San Diego, as well as the All-American Canal, on which the factory farms of California's Imperial and Coachella valleys depend.

Irrigators and municipalities downstream in Mexico would also go dry. If nothing changes in the current order of things, it is expected that the possibility of such a debacle could loom in little more than a decade.

The preferred solution to this crisis among the water mavens of the lower Colorado is augmentation, which means importing more water into the Colorado system to boost native supplies. A recently discussed grandiose scheme to bail out the Colorado's users with a pipeline from the Mississippi River failed to pass the straight-face test and was shot down by then-Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.

Meanwhile, the obvious expedient of cutting back on water consumption finds little support in thirsty California, which will watch the CAP go dry before it gets serious about meaningful system-wide conservation.

Burning Uplands

Phoenicians who want to escape water worries, heat waves, and haboobs have traditionally sought refuge in the cool green forests of Arizona's uplands, or at least they did until recently. In 2002, the Rodeo-Chediski fire consumed 469,000 acres of pine and mixed conifer on the Mogollon Rim, not far from Phoenix. It was an ecological holocaust that no one expected to see surpassed. Only nine years later, in 2011, the Wallow fire picked up the torch, so to speak, and burned across the Rim all the way to the New Mexico border and beyond, topping out at 538,000 charred acres.

Now, nobody thinks such fires are one-off flukes. Diligent modeling of forest response to rising temperatures and increased moisture stress suggests, in fact, that these two fires were harbingers of worse to come. By mid-century, according to a paper by an A-team of Southwestern forest ecologists, the "normal" stress on trees will equal that of the worst megadroughts in the region's distant paleo-history, when most of the trees in the area simply died.

Compared to Phoenix's other heat and water woes, the demise of Arizona's forests may seem like a side issue, whose effects would be noticeable mainly in the siltation of reservoirs and the destabilization of the watersheds on which the city depends. But it could well prove a regional disaster. Consider, then, heat, drought, windstorms, and fire as the four horsemen of Phoenix's Apocalypse. As it happens, though, this potential apocalypse has a fifth horseman as well.

Rebecca Solnit has written eloquently of the way a sudden catastrophe -- an earthquake, hurricane, or tornado -- can dissolve social divisions and cause a community to cohere, bringing out the best in its citizenry. Drought and heat waves are different. You don't know that they have taken hold until you are already in them, and you never know when they will end. The unpleasantness eats away at you. It corrodes your state of mind. You have lots of time to meditate on the deficiencies of your neighbors, which loom larger the longer the crisis goes on.

Drought divides people, and Phoenix is already a divided place -- notoriously so, thanks to the brutal antics of Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio. In Bird on Fire: Lessons from the World's Least Sustainable City, Andrew Ross offers a dismal portrait of contemporary Phoenix -- of a city threatened by its particular brand of local politics and economic domination, shaped by more than the usual quotient of prejudice, greed, class insularity, and devotion to raw power.

It is a truism that communities that do not pull together fail to surmount their challenges. Phoenix's are as daunting as any faced by an American city in the new age of climate change, but its winner-take-all politics (out of which has come Arizona's flagrantly repressive anti-immigration law), combined with the fragmentation of the metro-area into nearly two dozen competing jurisdictions, essentially guarantee that, when the worst of

times hit, common action and shared sacrifice will remain as insubstantial as a desert mirage. When one day the U-Haul vans all point away from town and the people of the Valley of the Sun clog the interstates heading for greener, wetter pastures, more than the brutal heat of a new climate paradigm will be driving them away. The breakdown of cooperation and connectedness will spur them along, too.

One day, some of them may look back and think of the real estate crash of 2007-2008 and the recession that followed with fond nostalgia. The city's economy was in the tank, growth had stalled, and for a while business-as-usual had nothing usual about it. But there was a rare kind of potential. That recession might have been the last best chance for Phoenix and other go-go Sunbelt cities to reassess their lamentably unsustainable habits and re-organize themselves, politically and economically, to get ready for life on the front burner of climate change. Land use, transportation, water policies, building codes, growth management -- you name it -- might all have experienced a healthy overhaul. It was a chance no one took. Instead, one or several decades from now, people will bet on a surer thing: they'll take the road out of town.

William deBuys, a Tom Dispatch regular, is the author of seven books, most recently A Great Aridness: Climate Change and the Future of the American Southwest. He has long been involved in environmental affairs in the Southwest, including service as founding chairman of the Valles Caldera Trust, which administers the 87,000-acre Valles Caldera National Preserve in New Mexico.

LR in the News 01/21/12

Utah gives green light to nuclear power plant

Click here to read this story by Judy Fahys of the Salt Lake Tribune.

Click here to read press release by Utah State Engineer

Click here to read the decision of Kane County water transfer

Click here to read decision of San Juan County water transfer

Breaking news of alleged corruption

Click here to read this story by Judy Fahys and Steven Oberbeck in the Salt Lake Tribune about a fraud case involving a financial partner of Blue Castle Holdings called LeadDog Capital.

Click here for the press release of Blue Castle Holdings' partnership agreement with LeadDog Capital that has since been removed from the BCH web page after the story of fraud by LeadDog Capital broke.

LR in the News 01/23/12

Finding the Cinematic Fire in Environmentalism

Click here to read this story by Judy Fahys of The Salt Lake Tribune

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OpEd 01/23/12
Addiction to Growth has Left Water Authority in Financial Straits

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LR in the News 01/24/12

Water deal big win for nuke plant: Opponents say they'll fight decision over Green River

By Gary Harmon Grand Junction Sentinel
With the state's approval of plans for water to operate a proposed nuclear plant just outside Green River, Utah, the developer cleared a major hurdle.

Opponents of the plant, however, said they would move quickly to reverse the decision by the Utah State Engineer's Office on Friday to approve a request by two counties downstream from Green River to change their points of diversion to accommodate the power plant.

The significance of the approval of the plans by Blue Castle LLC, named for the rock formation on the Book Cliffs that overlooks the site of the proposed plant west of Green River, can hardly be understated, Blue Castle President and CEO Aaron Tilton said.

If the company had to prioritize its assets, "Water would be number one," Tilton said.

Blue Castle faces four more years of regulatory work before it begins construction on the two-generator plant, which is estimated to cost about $18 billion to construct. Backers of the plan said the plant will mean about 2,000 high-paying jobs.

John Weisheit of LivingRivers.org in Moab, Utah, downstream on the Colorado River, called the state engineer's decision "a tragic mistake" that will force the recognition that there is no water left in the river for the plant.

The decision is "not helping" to quell controversy among the states on the question of how much water remains in the Upper Colorado River Basin and is making issues more contentious, Weisheit said.

Conservation organizations are lining up to ask the state engineer's office to reverse the decision, the first step before it can be appealed to the courts, Weisheit said, noting he is confident of the opposition case.

"I'm going to enjoy this one," Weisheit said.

The 53,600 acre-feet of water expected to be used annually by the nuclear plant already have been set aside for use by coal-fired plants, but the projects never were built. Blue Castle is leasing the rights from San Juan and Kane counties.

The plant will pull water from the Green River and use it to cool the reactors. There are no plans to return the water to the river.

Backers maintain that even in drought conditions the effect of the plant on the level of the Green River will be minimal.

The economies of Emery and Grand counties both stand to be improved by the plant, said Mike McCandless, economic-development director for Emery County, population 1,100, which would be home to the plant. Neighboring Grand County and the town of Moab have served as a wellspring of opposition to the plant, with dozens of residents turning out last year to voice opposition in a public hearing.

Grand County, however, stands to be a "big winner" if the plant moves forward because 30 percent to 40 percent of the employees will come from there, McCandless said.

"I am having more folks from Moab reach out to me in support" of the nuclear plant, McCandless said.

While the nuclear plant is moving toward approval by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, another proposal to use Green River water to supply the burgeoning Colorado Front Range also is under study.

Fort Collins businessman Aaron Million, a Green River, Utah, native, said the Blue Castle proposal was "interesting."

It's unlikely that his project will conflict with the nuclear plant, Million said, because he is proposing to use only Colorado's share of water from the Green River, which dips into the northwest corner of Colorado after leaving Wyoming and flowing into Utah.

http://www.gjsentinel.com/news/articles/water-deal-big-win-for-nuke-plant

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LR in the News 01/24/12

U of U Professor Warns Tar Sands Process Could Taint Water

Click here to read this story by Brandon Loomis in the Salt Lake Tribune

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Regional News 01/24/12

Low Snowpack Signals Water Crisis at Lake Mead

Click here to read this story in the Las Vegas Review Journal by Henry Brean

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Regional News 01/27/12

Feds: Company Backing Utah Nuclear Plant is a Fraud

Click here to read this story by Judy Fahys and Steven Oberbeck in the Salt Lake Tribune

Click here for the press release of Blue Castle Holdings that has been removed from their web page after this story broke.

LR Letter 01/30/12

Paradox Valley Salinity Control Coalition Comments

Click here to read the comments by Sheep Mountain Alliance and their partners.

Click here for detailed information on the Paradox Valley Salinity Control EA.

LR Letter 01/31/12

Scoping Comments: LTEMP EIS on operations of Glen Canyon Dam

Click here to read the comments by Living Rivers, Colorado Riverkeeper, Center for Biological Diversity and River Runners for Wilderness. The letter is 25 pages.

We have offered two alternatives:

1: Mimic the natural hydrograph and other natural processes.

2: Dam removal and a management plan based on the precautionary principle.

There are seven tables:

Table No. 1: Two alternatives in brief for consideration of the LTEMP EIS

Table No. 2: Academic reviews of GCD AMP

Table No. 3: Key public interventions on management of Glen Canyon Dam, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Grand Canyon National Park.

Table No. 4: References of Table No. 3

Table No. 5: Administrative History of NEPA (1970) compliance below the forebay of Glen Canyon Dam.

Table No. 6: References for Table No. 5.

Table No. 7: Administrative history of Glen Canyon Dam and its features.

CONCLUSION

After four decades of Interior's attempts to address the declining habitat conditions in Grand Canyon National Park's river corridor resulting from Glen Canyon Dam operations, it's critical now to treat this EIS opportunity as the major step forward in what must be a remedy to the ongoing failure of Interior's past ambivalence.

The management process is faulty from both the bottom-up and the top-down. From the bottom lies an AMP process that is guided by the whims of special interest, while the resource itself continues to suffer. From the top there is no clear mandate of what the real objectives are or should be, especially over the medium- and long-term. The ecosystem in Grand Canyon National Park is not WAPA's, trout fishermen's or river runner's playground to do with as they please. Nor is it Glen Canyon Monitoring and Research Center's scientific playground to tinker with trivial actions from a body dominated by these special interests. This is a world renowned riverine resource for which Interior, guided by the most rigorous interpretation of the sprit of those acts governing the National Park System, must step forward and act in the public's interest. If these special interest groups become frustrated with Interior's actions, they can challenge them in the courts and the court of public opinion. There is no substitute for Grand Canyon, and it should be managed in accordance with that principle, now and in the future.

As such, there must be new leadership, and new avenues for administering the will and mandate of this leadership. The GCD AMP has and will continue to be a failure, so the EIS must address how this will be remedied.

Unfortunately, the complexity of water issues in the basin have effectively taken the common citizen out of the process. The issues, policy, laws and science have become too burdensome, too one-sided, and has created a situation of bewilderment or malaise. It has been suggested by many authors and oversight agencies that an independent commission for the Colorado River basin should be established. These issues have arrived to a point in history where it is quite possible that Interior is not the best choice in providing a long-term management proposal for the Colorado River basin, as evidenced by decades of time under its watch having failed to provide the leadership necessary to provide effective change toward greater sustainability on several fronts.

The EIS should therefore evaluate the constraints impairing Interior's ability to address the complex challenges facing the Grand Canyon River ecosystem and Colorado River management as a whole. A key component of any alternative must therefore be mechanisms to give all the funding and authority to an independent commission that

can provide basin-wide and comprehensive analysis of what must be accomplished and in a reasonable time-frame for the benefit of Grand Canyon and the basin as a whole.

The EIS must also address Glen Canyon Dam's operations and impacts, in the full spectrum of its lifespan. All reasonably supported hydrologic and catastrophic scenarios over a century time-window must be explored in conjunction with evaluating alternatives. If climate change has taught us anything, it's that such long-range planning is critical now, something that Reclamation has been slow to recognize. If Glen Canyon Dam fails in a flood, or fails to provide water during a severe and sustained drought, then everybody will lose and this EIS will have been nothing more than stepping stone in that process.

Alternatives must also address specific strategies for habitat restoration in Grand Canyon's river corridor including: natural flow regime with associated temperature changes and sediment transport along with non-native species eradication. Most of these issues and the recommendations surrounding them have been on the table for decades, but it's time they are fully explored consistent with the present and long-term needs of a healthy, natural, Grand Canyon river ecosystem. And in exploring alternatives that can deliver these alternatives, a decommissioned Glen Canyon Dam must be included. As the past decade of inflows has illustrated, the likelihood of a naturally drained reservoir is no longer something water and energy planners can ignore, especially in light of the long-term environmental damage Glen Canyon Dam continues to impose.

Most importantly, it's time for Interior to have some real vision for what can be and should be done when it comes to water management through Grand Canyon. Interior must once and for all abandon its policy of tinkering with knobs and switches and then defend these actions in court explaining how the public should not expect them to achieve a better result.

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For more information please visit On The Colorado

LR in the News 02/03/12

Herbert Fumes as BLM Reins In Oil Shale Development

Click here to read this story by Brandon Loomis in the Salt Lake Tribune.

Click here to read this story in the Moab Times-Independent by Charli Englehorn.

Regional News 02/03/12

BLM Issues Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Oil Shale and Tar Sands

Click here to read the press release from the Bureau of Land Management

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LR in the News 02/10/12

Groups to Protest State Engineer's Decision on Water for Green River Nuke

Click here to read this story by Lisa Church in the TImes-Independent

Click here to read this story by Judy Fahys of the Salt Lake Tribune

Click here to read the protest by Uranium Watch et al.

Click here to read the protest by HEAL et al.

OpEd 02/14/12

Where The Colorado River Runs Dry

Click here to read this Op Ed by Jonathan Waterman in the New York Times

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LR in the News 02/15/12

DeChristopher's Group (Peaceful Uprising) Is Broke

Click here to read this story by Brandon Loomis of the Salt Lake Tribune

Click here to listen to the NPR version of this story

Peaceful Uprising website

Additional information

Click here to read the article in The Nation

Click here to read this story in the LA Times.

Click here to read this story in the Deseret News

LR in the News 02/16/12

Utah Tar Sands Still Seeking Investors Despite Questions

Click here to read this story by Brandon Loomis of the Salt Lake Tribune

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Regional News 02/16/12

Proposal Would Make Users Pay For Water

Click here to read this story by Robert Gehrke in the Salt Lake Tribune

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Regional News 02/20/12

Earth First! to Protest Proposed Tar Sands Mining at SITLA Salt Lake City office

Click here to read this press release from Earth First! and Utah Tar Sands Resistance.
Click here to read about the protest in the Deseret News by Amy Joi O'Donoghue.

Regional News 02/24/12

Flaming Gorge Pipeline hits a snag

FERC has dismissed (2/23/12) the application by WYCO on grounds that the application is premature and project coordinator Aaron Million vows to reapply.

Click here to read the order.

PRESS COVERAGE

- The Coloradoan
- Deseret News
- The Republic
- The Denver Post
- Salt Lake Tribune
- The Pueblo Chieftain

CLICK HERE to read press release and motion to intervene by coalition of environmental groups

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Regional News 02/27/12

Real Money? Blue Castle Holdings Defends Utah Reactor Financing

Click here to read this story by Judy Fahys and Steven Oberbeck in the Salt Lake Tribune, which includes the administrative record of the State Engineer's review.

Regional News 02/29/12

Utah Refuses to Block Plans for Nuke Plant Near Green River

Click here to read this story by Judy Fahys of the Salt Lake Tribune.

Regional News 03/15/12

Metropolitan Water District Wages Costly War with Nature and Age

Click here to read this story by Michael Hiltzik of the Los Angeles Times

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Regional News 03/16/12

Watershed invasion of Desolation Canyon

News from Greenwire

Waiting Period Ends April 16, 2012

Following conclusion of the waiting period, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be prepared and signed to disclose the BLM's final decision and any project Conditions of Approval.

- BLM web site for the GASCO Project
- The alternatives

- ARCHIVED HERE

Under Alternative F, the Agency Preferred Alternative, up to 1,298 new gas wells would be drilled from 575 well pads over a period of 15 years, resulting in approximately 3,604 acres of disturbance (about 2 percent of the total project area). Water evaporation facilities were reduced to 78 acres. This is adequate for the first 5 years of the project while other disposal options are developed and implemented. The BLM also incorporated the measures to minimize impacts to resources, while allowing for the development of valid existing rights. No surface disturbance would occur below the rim

of Nine Mile Canyon, within one-half mile of the Green River, in 100-year floodplains, or endangered fish critical habitat.

Under the Proposed Action (Alternative A), Gasco Energy Inc. would develop their existing oil and gas leases by drilling 1,491 wells from the same number of well pads over a period of 15 years, and by constructing 143 acres of evaporative ponds to dispose of produced water. The Proposed Action would result in approximately 7,584 acres of surface disturbance.

This Final EIS is not a decision document. Following conclusion of the 30-day availability period, a ROD will be signed to disclose the BLM's final decision and any project Conditions of Approval. Availability of the ROD will be announced through local media, the Vernal BLM Web site, and Utah BLM's Environmental Notification Bulletin Board.

Copies of the Final EIS are available for public inspection at the BLM Vernal Field Office, 170 South 500 East, Vernal, Utah, and at the following Web site:

http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/vernal/planning/nepa_.html

Contact information:

Stephanie Howard
Environmental Coordinator
435-781-4400
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah, 84078
email: BLM_UT_Vernal_Comments@blm.gov

Regional News 03/18/12

Uinta Basin Mystery: Ozone Pollution in the Winter

Click here to read this story by Judy Fahys of the Salt Lake Tribune

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Regional News 03/19/12

LTEMP EIS Upcoming Public Meeting to Discuss Alternatives

The public is invited to participate in a two-day meeting on alternatives being considered for inclusion in the Glen Canyon Dam Long Term Experimental and Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement (LTEMP EIS) being prepared by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the National Park Service (NPS).

The meeting will be held on April 4 and 5 at the High Country Conference Center located at 201 West Butler Avenue, Flagstaff, AZ 86001. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days.

The preliminary draft alternatives being considered for evaluation will be presented and discussed at this meeting hosted by Reclamation and the NPS. Stakeholders and other attendees who have alternatives to propose should bring those ideas to the meeting.

PowerPoint slides and posters are welcome. To be added to the agenda, register for the meeting as explained below, provide your email address, and indicate that you will be presenting an alternative.

Those wishing to attend the meeting are encouraged to register through the LTEMP EIS Web site at http://ltempeis.anl.gov/involve/pubschedule/, but registration is not required.

Alternatives to be considered in the EIS must meet the purpose and need of the LTEMP. The EIS will document and evaluate the impacts of the alternatives carried forward for analysis.

Regional News 03/21/12

Cedar City and Iron County pull out of Lake Powell Pipeline Project

Click here to read about Cedar City's decision in the Salt Lake Tribune. Story by Mark Havnes.

Click here to read about Iron County's decision on the Salt Lake Tribune. Story by Mark Havnes.

For more information go to On The Colorado HERE

Regional News 03/23/12

Right to Pump Nevada Ground Water to Vegas Gets Nod

Click here to read this story by Brandon Loomis of the Salt Lake Tribune

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Regional News 03/23/12

Aaron Million requests reconsideration for Flaming Gorge Pipeline

Click here to read this story in the Colorado Independent.

Click here to read Million's request for agency action with FERC

Regional News 03/27/12

Utah Critics Take Nuclear Power Plant Fight To Court

Click here to read this story by Judy Fahys of the Salt Lake Tribune

Click here to read the complaint to Kane County Water Conservancy District. The complaint to San Juan County Water Conservancy District was also filed in court today and identical in its content.

Would you like to donate funds to the legal defense in support of the litigation? CLICK HERE

Click here to read this OpEd by Jen Jackson in the Times-Independent

Click here to view the full-page ad in the Times-Independent

Click here to read the article by Living Rivers in CounterPunch.

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Group battles water rights for Utah nuke plant

State failed to adequately assess impact on river, complaint alleges

Grand Junction Sentinel By Matthew Berger

Thursday, March 29, 2012

A proposal for Utah's first nuclear power plant will face a legal challenge from environmental groups questioning the state review process that resulted in the proposed plant's water rights.

The facility would be located about five miles northwest of the city of Green River, and the water, used to cool the plant's reactors, would be pulled from the city's namesake river.

But HEAL Utah and Uranium Watch say State Engineer Kent Jones did not adequately ensure the company behind the proposal, Blue Castle Holdings, has the necessary funding to complete the project nor sufficiently review the impacts the water withdrawal might have on the river ecosystem and on others with water rights. "We just think that

the state engineer did a really bad job of ensuring this isn't a speculative project," said Matt Pacenza, policy director at HEAL Utah. The case was filed late Tuesday in Emery County district court.

Jones approved requests Jan. 20 by Kane and San Juan counties to lease a portion of their water allotments to the nuclear project. He reaffirmed that decision at the end of last month after opponents requested he reconsider it.

"We assumed and expected this was something they would choose to do," said Blue Castle CEO Aaron Tilton, a former Utah state representative.

He said the plant is necessary because of rising energy needs over the next decade. His company expects the plant to increase the electricity generated with the state by 50 percent.

Contentions that Blue Castle, founded in 2006, has shaky financial backing are "inaccurate," Tilton said, though he declined to elaborate on the privately held firm's revenue other than to say it derives from two segments — this nuclear licensing work and Grand Junction-based Willow Creek Companies, a pipeline business that builds and repairs gas and oil pipelines and facilities.

When Blue Castle acquired Willow Creek in 2010, it said their combined cash flow was anticipated to be enough to complete the Nuclear Regulatory Commission licensing process for the Green River nuclear plant, a process which is expected to take about five years and cost approximately $100 million.

Willow Creek's financial records are not publicly available, but Pacenza, who has been trying to determine how much money Blue Castle has and where it might be coming from, said all his research has turned up so far is Willow Creek had a gross revenue of only $5.6 million in 2010.

Tilton emphasized Blue Castle has said all along its finances are sufficient to cover the licensing process. HEAL Utah and the 17 other plaintiffs in the case hope the court challenge will force the 6-year-old company to disclose more about its finances. If approved, the plant is expected to require another five to seven years to build.

LR in the News 03/28/12

Company Gets Approval for Big Oil Shale Project in Eastern Utah

Click here to read this story by Amy Joi O'Donoghue in the Deseret News

Click here to read more about the activities of Red Leaf Resources

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Regional News 03/28/12

Agencies Weigh Competing Suggestions For New Glen Canyon Dam Plan

Click here to read this story by April Reese in Greenwire

LR in the News 03/29/12

US Oil Sands Inc Announces Discovered Resource

Click here to read this story in the Canada News Wire

Click here to follow the litigation against US Oil Sands (formerly Earth Energy Resources)

Regional News 04/03/12

Warm Dry March Creates Early Snowmelt Runoff

Click here to read this story by Jason Blevins of the Denver Post

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Reference 04/04/12

Presentation: Living Rivers' Dam Decommissioning Alternative

Click here to download the presentation given today in Flagstaff during the public meeting to discuss the alternatives for the LTEMP EIS.

Click here to download a letter from Living Rivers and presented to Secretary Salazar on Monday April 2, demanding his immediate intervention on the handling of the LTEMP EIS.

Click here to download Salazar's response to Living Rivers letter of Monday April 2, demanding his immediate intervention on the handling of the LTEMP EIS.

Click here to download the LRs' response to Salazar on May 27. 2012, demanding again his immediate intervention on the handling of the LTEMP EIS.

Visit ON THE COLORADO for more information on the LTEMP EIS.

LR in the News 04/06/12

Grand County Hydroproject Proposed Once Again

Click here to read this story by Charli Engelhorn in the Moab Times-Independent

Click here to read this story by Amy Joi O'Donoghue in the Deseret News

Click here to visit FARCOUNTRY for more information

Regional News 04/14/12

Lawmakers Join Quest To Protect Desolation Canyon

Click here to read this story by Brandon Loomis in the Salt Lake Tribune.
For more information visit On The Colorado

LR letter to Secretary Salazar

LR in the News 04/17/12

Nuclear Power Proposal In Utah Reignites Century Old Water War

Click here to read Dave Hasemyer's article in Inside Climate News.

LR in the News 04/19/12

Energy, Real Estate Interests Fuel Herbert's Campaign

Click here to read this story by Robert Gehrke in the Salt Lake Tribune

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Regional News 04/24/12

Enviros Protest at Utah Trust Lands Office

Click here to read this story by Brandon Loomis in the Salt Lake Tribune

Click here to read this story by Margaret Kriz Hobson of E&E Publishing Service.

LR in the News 04/26/12

Construction of Utah Tar Sands Plant Possible By Years End

Click here to read this story by Margaret Kriz Hobson of E&E Publishing Service

Click here to read this story by Brandon Loomis in the Salt Lake Tribune

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LR Event 05/02/12

Protest: No Green River Nuke

Saturday, May 19 at 6:00pm at Green River, UT, just south of I-70 Exit 164
March to Celebrate and Protect the Green River and the Colorado Plateau!

Bring your most colorful street art, banners, costumes, puppets, decorated bicycles, goat-drawn chariots, and enthusiasm for singing and dancing. We'll parade high over the desert in front of the proposed construction site, smile pretty for the cameras, and show potential investors that they don't want to be a part of this bad project. We're specially requesting that people bring a brightly colored umbrella--the sun will backlight it and make our march more beautiful.

For those coming to Moab--a bunch of people will be meeting up at Swanny City Park at 3:30. We'll combine rides to carpool, arrange our costumes, etc., and then motorcade through Main Street on our way to Green River.

For more information, go to www.nogreenrivernuke.org

Media Advisory

Click here to view the POSTER for this event.

LR in the News 05/04/12

Oil Sands Company Raising Money For Utah Tar Sands Project

Click here to read today's story about a proposed tar sands strip mining project in Utah by The Associated Press.

Oil Shale Development isn't Worth the Time, Money & Waste

LR Letter 05/04/12

Comments on Draft PEIS for oil shale and tar sands exploitation

Click here to read our comments for the PEIS on oil shale & tar sands exploitation in the Colorado River basin.

Click here to read the comments by a coalition of 16 conservation groups who submitted comments for the PEIS on oil shale & tar sands exploitation in the Colorado River basin.

Click here to read today's story about a proposed tar sands strip mining project in Utah by The Associated Press.

Oil Shale Development isn't Worth the Time, Money & Waste

LR Letter 05/07/12

Scoping comments for Moab BLM Master Leasing Plan for leasing parcels to corporations for oil, gas and potash exploitation

Letter: Canyonlands Watershed Council et al

Letter: Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance et al

LR in the News 05/13/12

The Fight For Water Can The Mighty Mississippi Save The West

Click here to read this story by Amy Joi O'Donoghue of the Desert News

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LR in the News 05/13/12

State Wants To Keep Public Press Away From Tar Sands Hearing

Click here to read this story by Judy Fahys in the Salt Lake Tribune

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LR in the News 05/14/12

The Fight for Water (Special to Deseret News)

Click here to read these 3 stories by Amy Joi O'Donoghue of Deseret News

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LR in the News 05/17/12

Nuke Plant Foes Converging On Tiny Utah Town

Click here to read this story by David Hasemyer in Inside Climate

LOCATION OF THE PROTEST HAS BEEN CHANGED TO THE INTERSECTION OF INTERSTATE 70 AND HIGHWAY 6 WEST OF GREEN RIVER UTAH.

HIGHWAY 6 IS THE ROAD TO PRICE AND SALT LAKE CITY.

Click here to read the Media Advisory of No Green River Nuke

Click here to go to the web site of No Green River Nuke

LR in the News 05/17/12

Nations First Tar Sands Mine Plan Dispute Hinges On Water

Click here to read this story by Paul Foy of Associated Press

Click here to read this story by Brandon Loomis in the Salt Lake Tribune

Click here to read this story by Margaret Hobson of EnergyWire

Click here to read "Activists Try Mainstream Route To Raise Climate Change Awareness" in this story by Judy Fahys of the Salt Lake Tribune

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LR in the News 05/18/12

Federal Regulators Reject Green River Pipeline Again

Click here to read this story by Brandon Loomis of the Salt Lake Tribune

Click here to read the press release by Earth Justice

Click here to visit the web page of Earth Justice about this victory

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OpEd 05/19/12

University of Utah complicit in ignoring climate change

By Hans G Ehrbar
Last Tuesday I attended the "unconventional fuels" conference at the Institute of Clean and Secure Energy of the University of Utah. Unconventional fuels are shale gas, tar sands and oil shale.

The business people, scientists and state employees participating in this conference know that the carbon trapped in Utah oil shale, if released to the atmosphere, will make the planet unlivable for humans. I tried to understand how they can sleep at night. At least seven denial strategies were evident:

(1) It is not necessary to mention climate change because Utah regulators will only look for "criteria pollutants" and water. Federal CO2 regulation was a concern, not the CO2 itself.

(2) Downplay the potential of renewables so that it seems there are no alternatives. One presenter called solar panels a "niche market."

(3) Confuse local pollution with global greenhouse gas impacts. Professor David Pershing, a member of the institute who just recently became the university's president, said the environment was one of the ICSE's core concerns, namely contamination of aquifers and seismic issues. If you manage to get the CO2 into the atmosphere without earthquakes, smog and dirty water, you can call yourself "clean."

(4) Play one fossil fuel against another. When asked about global warming, Pershing said that natural gas has a lower carbon footprint than coal. A producer of oil from oil shale can call himself "ecological" if he uses less water than other processes.

(5) Pretend that baby steps are enough. Fuel switching from coal to natural gas is the mildest thing imaginable. Renewables require a re-engineering of the entire energy infrastructure.

(6) Claim that Utah is too small. Utah tar sands are only 1 percent of the extent of the Alberta tar sands. Don't mention that the energy content of Utah oil shale is about 100 times that of Utah tar sands.

(7) The conference itself was part of their denial strategy. It had the purpose of opening the work of the ICSE to public discussion. Comments from the audience concerned about future generations were welcome. In this way they can congratulate themselves for being open to debate, as if global warming were still debatable.

These are the thought processes by which decent people justify making big sums of money or accepting grants for doing something destructive of our future. It is difficult to say "no" when such an "opportunity" arises. They all think and say pretty much the same thing, having learned from each other how to navigate this dilemma.

When someone at the conference came up with an especially eloquent excuse, there was general applause.

The ICSE receives much more grant money than the Sustainability Institute or others at the U. trying to research and mitigate climate change.

Atmospheric sciences are running their climate models on the leftover cycles of ICSE's supercomputer purchased from grant money for modeling combustion processes, a sad commentary on how our society addresses humanity's greatest ever problem.

When I mentioned this in a conversation, an ICSE scientist replied that all the good researchers were going into renewable energy, and a good researcher was worth much more than money.

Pershing showed a new advertising movie, "This is not your father's Oldsmobile," about how modern the University of Utah has become. Apparently he did not realize how damning it is for the university that the biggest challenge to humankind ever, global warming, was completely absent in this clip.

For the students it is a warning about how seriously deficient their education will be.

Hans G Ehrbar is an associate professor of economics at the University of Utah. He lives in Salt Lake City. His views are his own and do not represent the university's.

LR in the News 05/19/12

Protesters Gather To Thwart Green River Nuclear Plans

Click here to read this story by Brandon Loomis of the Salt Lake Tribune

PHOTO GALLERY

See also the video on Moab21.com of the pre-assembly at Swanny Park in Moab.

LR in the News 05/22/12

Utah Paves The Way For Oil Sands Explosion

Click here to read this story by Margaret Hobson of EnergyWire

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LR Letter 05/22/12

Long Canyon Pump Storage Project: Living Rivers files motion to intervene

Click here to read and study this proposed hydropower project at Long Canyon along the Potash Highway and below the town of Moab, UT.

Reference 05/25/12

The Glen Canyon Dam Declaration of 3/14/2000

Today people from across the country joined more than 50 organizations and businesses to celebrate and inaugurate "The Century of River Restoration" at Carl Hayden Visitors Center at Glen Canyon Dam, Arizona. Led by longtime Colorado River advocate and environmental leader David Brower, the event was highlighted by a signing ceremony of the "Glen Canyon Declaration," calling for restoration of the Colorado River and Glen Canyon.

David Brower, who has led the fight to save Glen Canyon for 40 years, addressed the festive crowd with his concerns about dam safety, water evaporation, seepage, and sustainable economics. He described Glen Canyon as a rich and beautiful landscape that should have become a national park as early as the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration.

Brower was joined by Thomas Morris, president of the Diné Medicine Men's Association, whose organization unanimously voted to drain "Lake" Powell on Saturday, March 11th, and who gave the invocation at the river rendezvous and celebration. Morris said, "'Lake' Powell Reservoir has submerged our sacred sites and destroyed our ability to communicate with sacred gods. These sites must be restored for our children and grandchildren."

Yvon Chouinard, owner of Patagonia, Inc., the world's leading manufacturer of quality outdoor clothing, stated in a letter read at the celebration, "The construction of Glen Canyon Dam more than any other dam in the United States represented the most blatant disrespect for the planet's sacred landscape -- all for a facility that we know was not needed."

Significant parts of the declaration--presented by John Weisheit of the Moab-based Glen Canyon Action Network, primary sponsor of the celebration, and Phil Williams of International Rivers Network--include:

• The Bureau of Reclamation should begin the process of developing and then implementing a decommissioning plan for Glen Canyon Dam.

• The Bureau of Reclamation should establish a federal laboratory to serve as the nation's primary research facility for river and riverine habitat restoration, and give strong consideration to locating this facility in the town of Page, Arizona.

• All new management plans affecting the Colorado River watershed should undergo rigorous analysis of basinwide impacts.

• No new dams within the Colorado River watershed should be constructed, nor should existing dams be reconstructed in the event of their failure.

• Operating licenses should be required for all federal dams, as has long been the case with all non-federal dams. Federal dams must be subject to periodic relicensing reviews to ensure compliance with all environmental laws and safety standards.

• The Bureau of Reclamation should provide funding to support scientific research on the biological and habitat requirements of the endangered native fish of the Colorado River.

• The National Park Service should implement a program to quantify, monitor, and evaluate the presence of a wide range of pollutants including toxic and radioactive metals, petroleum compounds, bacteria, and other contaminants in Lake Powell Reservoir.

"We're thrilled by the outpouring of support we're seeing from all across the country for restoring Glen Canyon," said John Weisheit, President of Glen Canyon Action Network. "We are on our way to Glen Canyon, a movement of people seeking to restore the world's most beautiful canyons and a world-class river."

The celebration was one of 65 actions taking place in twenty other countries today on this, the Third Annual International Day of Action Against Dams, and For Rivers, Water and Life. "There is a rapidly growing global movement for 'Living Rivers,'" said Juliette Majot, Executive Director of the California-based International Rivers Network. "We're excited to be part of the leadership for restoration. The Colorado, long a symbol of the development of rivers, is now becoming a symbol of society's growing commitment to heal them."

Among the organizations and businesses endorsing the declaration are: Alaska Action Center, American Lands Alliance, Arizona Green Party, Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project, Blue Water Network, Californians For Utah Wilderness, Center for Biological Diversity, Coast Range Association, Colorado Plateau River Guides, Columbia Gorge Audubon Society, Committee for Idaho's High Desert, Diné Medicine Men's Association, Earth First! Journal, Earth Island Institute, Environmental Law Society (Univ. of AZ), Environmental Resource Center (Evergreen Coll.), Escalante Wilderness Project, European Rivers Network, Eyak Preservation Council, Flagstaff Activist Network, Forest Conservation Council, Four Corners School of Outdoor Education, Free The Planet! (N.A.U.), Friends of the Earth, Friends of the Eel River, Friends of the River, Grassroots Environmental Effectiveness Network, Great Basin Mine Watch, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, GreenAction, Green Party Of Utah, Hells Canyon Preservation Council, International Rivers Network, John Muir Project, Living Arts Center For Ecology, National Forest Protection Alliance, Native Environmental Justice Advocacy Fund, Oregon Wildlife Federation, Oregonians for Utah Wilderness, Round River Conservation Studies, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, Sky Island Watch, Solar Energy

International, Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project, Terra Firma (Univ. of UT), Utah Environmental Congress, Virginians for Wilderness, Western Land Exchange Project, Wetlands Action Network, Wild Angels, Canyon Voyages & Adventure Company, Back of Beyond Books, Moab Man Construction, Knave of Hearts Bakery, Fry Canyon Lodge, Tag-A-Long Expeditions, The Rio Colorado Restaurant, Wildland Scapes, and North American River Expeditions/O.A.R.S.

Click here to read the declaration.

Click here to read the Declaration for the Restoration of the Colorado River through Grand Canyon.

LR in the News 05/25/12

Oil Sands Company Raises $11M for Utah Project

Click here to read this story by Paul Foy of Associated Press.

LR in the News 05/28/12

Ken Sleight: Capturing the stories of legendary river-running pioneer

Click here to read this story by Stephen Speckman of the Salt Lake Tribune.
Note: the film about Ken Sleight by Sageland Media is a project of Living Rivers.

DIRECT LINK to Salt Lake Tribune

Regional News 06/25/12

Utah Oil Shale Company in the news and in the court

Secret meeting among promoters of oil shale development in Vernal was illegal

Click here to read this story in the Salt Lake Tribune by Brandon Loomis

Click here to read this story in the Post Independent by John Stroud

On Wednesday June 27 at 9 am the citizen Board of Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining will conduct a formal hearing in the matter of Red Leaf Resources strip mining oil shale (kerogen) in the Uinta Basin. The challenge was brought forward by Living Rivers and attorneys from Western Resource Advocates.

Living Rivers v Red Leaf Resources

The address is:

Department of Natural Resources
Division of Oil, Gas and Mining
1594 West North Temple, Suite 1210
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD

- Living Rivers v Red Leaf Resources
- Final Memo in Opposition Motion in Limine
- Final MSJ Response
- Final Response to DOGM's Pre-Hearing Brief
- Final Response to DOGM's Reply
- DOGM Pre-Hearing Brief
- RED LEAF'S PRE-HEARING BRIEF
- RLR PRE-HEARING REPLY BRIEF
- RLR'S MEMO IN SUPPORT OF MOTION FOR PARTIAL SUMMARY DECISION
- RLR'S MEMO IN SUPPORT OF MOTION IN LIMINE
- RLR'S MOTION FOR PARTIAL SUMMARY DECISION
- RLR'S MOTION IN LIMINE
- DEQ comments Red Leaf 2012 Feb
- DOGM Red Leaf Hearing Notice Feb 2012
- DWR comments Red Leaf 2012 Feb
- LivingRivers RAA Red Leaf
- Red Leaf Informal Hearing Transcript 2012 March
- Red Leaf NOI protest
- Weisheit Declaration

LR in the News 06/26/12

Nation's Only Oil Shale Project Put Off

Click here to read this story in Colorado Energy News

Click here to read this story by Brandon Loomis of the Salt Lake Tribune

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PRESS RELEASE FROM WESTERN RESOURCE ADVOCATES

CONTACT: Jason Bane (720) 763-3721
jason.bane@westernresources.org

Nation's Only Oil Shale Project Hits a Wall

Red Leaf Resources Agrees to Conduct More Research on Water Quality Issues Just Before Scheduled Hearing in Utah

SALT LAKE CITY (June 27, 2012) — The only commercial oil shale project in the United States is now facing a lengthy delay after the company bowed to concerns raised by Western Resource Advocates on behalf of the conservation organization Living Rivers.

Living Rivers, Red Leaf Resources, Inc., and the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining came to an agreement on Tuesday to postpone development plans while more research is done on potential impacts to water quality. Red Leaf agreed to compile more information on potential water contamination for the Utah Division of Water Quality, something that Western Resource Advocates and Living Rivers have pushed for months.

“Everybody agrees that Red Leaf and the State of Utah were trying to do too much, too quickly, and without enough information,” said Rob Dubuc, Staff Attorney for Western Resource Advocates. “This project should not move forward until the company can prove that there are no risks of contaminating groundwater.”

Red Leaf’s EcoShale In-Capsule oil shale proposal theorizes that the company can extract kerogen from shale rock by heating it to extreme temperatures inside massive, 10-acre clay structures (136 feet tall) that would be impermeable to leaking. A mining expert for Western Resource Advocates was prepared to testify in front of the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining that Red Leaf’s proposal is not technologically feasible.

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Western Resource Advocates is a regional nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to protecting the West's land, air, and water. Offices or staff are located in Boulder (CO), Phoenix and Tucson (AZ), Pocatello (ID), Santa Fe (NM), Carson City (NV) and Salt Lake City (UT). Visit www.WesternResourceAdvocates.org.

LR in the News 08/03/12

Eastern Utah may be poised for major tar sands development

Click here to read this story in High Country News by Jeremy Miller

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Regional News 08/06/12

Groups Challenge Weak Regulations to Clean Up Haze in National Parks & Uintah Basin

National Park Air Quality: Click here to read this story by Earth Justice

Uintah Basin Air Quality: Click here to read this story by Amy Joi O'Donoghue in Deseret News

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Regional News 08/12/12

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Click here to read this story in the New York Times written by three scientists

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Regional News 08/14/12

9th Circuit rules against Recovery of Endangered Species

Click here to read this story by Howard Fischer of East Valley Tribune

Click here to read the court's decision

LR in the News 08/16/12

Nations First Tar Sands Mine Stirs Water Environmental Fears Out West

Click here to read this story by Dave Hasemyer of Inside Climate News

Click here to view the slideshow of photos

LR in the News 08/29/12

Judge Recommends Approving Utah Tar Sands Mine

Opposition Mounts As First Tar Sands Mine In US Gets Green Light (Indy Press)

THE DECISION: Administrative Judge Sandra Allen's Recommendation for PR Springs tar sands mining operation proposal

Judge Recommends Approving Utah Tar Sands Mine (Salt Lake Tribune)

Oil Sands Mining In Utah Clear Major Hurdle (Inside Climate News

Proposed Oil Sands Mine In Utah Survives Judicial Scrutiny (Deseret News)

Fight To Continue Over US Oil Sands Project (Bloomberg)

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FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Oil and water: Tar mine needs more oversight

A Utah administrative law judge has bought the argument of a tar sands mining company that there's no need to protect or monitor the water that might be affected by a proposed operation in the Book Cliffs area of the state because, well, there isn't any.

Water, that is.

It is a frighteningly shortsighted decision.

There are few places on Earth where there is no water. (We're not even completely sure yet that there isn't any on Mars, for goodness' sake.) And even if the amount of water to be found most of the time in the area targeted by a Canadian-based company that is still called U.S. Oil Sands is minuscule, the admitted fact of the matter is that the miners are going to bring some.

A selling point of the method that U.S. Oil Sands brags about is that, rather than using a witch's brew of scary-sounding chemicals to free the petroleum precursor from the rocks and sand between Moab and Vernal, the company uses a much more benign process that it describes as "citrus based." Lemon juice on steroids.

But that's a liquid. And that liquid, and the substances it liberates from the mineral base, are likely to find their way into the ground, into the (usually dry) creeks and, eventually, into the watershed that leads to the Colorado River. And that river is the source of water — and thus of life — for most of the American Southwest, all the way to California.

The intent of the corporation that is seeking the permit may very well be to capture all the distillate that is produced, if for no other reason than to make sure none of the precious tar is lost. After all, the site, on land to be leased from the Utah School & Institutional Trust Lands Administration, is only expected to produce some 2,000 barrels of oil a day. And that's such a small amount that allowing any of it to seep away would not be in the mine's best interest.

But, then, it wasn't in BP's best interest for the Deepwater Horizon to blow up, either.

Even if Administrative Law Judge Sandra Allen is correct in her view that water is extremely scarce in the area of the proposed mine, the fact that the company isn't even being required to place monitoring equipment in areas where water could be, and satisfy itself and state regulators that no pollution is seeping away from the site, is far too trusting.

There are other administrative hoops that the miners must jump through before they can start production on the site, and environmental advocates are mulling a lawsuit. Somebody, somewhere, needs to give this project a lot more thought. And require a lot more precautions.

LR in the News 10/09/12

Democracy Now interviews Living Rivers about strip mining tar sands in Utah

Click here to watch the program

TRANSCRIPT:

AMY GOODMAN: We're on the road in Durango, Colorado. With less than 30 days before the election, we turn to look at tar sands oil, the subject of promises by both major presidential campaigns, even as they avoid the issue of climate change.

On Monday, Republican vice-presidential candidate Paul Ryan vowed to approve the Keystone XL pipeline that would run the thick crude oil from Canada to the U.S. refineries in Texas. Addressing supporters in Ohio, he said, if elected, Romney would approve the pipeline on his first day in office, and blamed President Obama for standing in the way of jobs the project could bring.

Obama has delayed a final decision on the pipeline until after the November election. But TransCanada is already clearing the way for its southern leg in Texas, drawing protests from activists who say spills along its path could poison communities. They call the pipeline the fuse to the largest carbon bomb on the planet. For more than two weeks, they've held a tree-sit to block its path near Winnsboro, Texas. Meanwhile, on Thursday, actress Daryl Hannah and a 78-year-old East Texas farmer were arrested while protesting the clearance [of] her land seized by eminent domain. This is Eleanor Fairchild speaking as she stared down one of the TransCanada bulldozers.

ELEANOR FAIRCHILD: I am mad. This land is my land, and it's been our land since '83. Our home is on it. They're going to destroy the woods, and also they could destroy the springs. It's just devastating, but it also is not very good to have the tar sands anywhere in the United States. This is not just about my land; it's about all of our country.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, as the tar sands blockade continues in Texas, we look now at what could be the first actual tar sands and oil shale strip-mining operation in the United States. Not far from where we were yesterday in Moab, Utah, the state has already released land to a Canadian energy development company that recently changed its name to U.S. Oil Sands. The company plans to mine nearly 6,000 acres in an area of unspoiled wilderness that's also the watershed of the Colorado River, which provides water to more than 30 million people. The mine itself would be water-intensive in what's already the second-driest state in the country, and activists say chemicals used in the mine could pollute the water that's left.

For more, we're joined here in Durango, Colorado, just a few hours from the proposed site, from two Moab activists working to block the project. John Weisheit is the longtime conservation director of Living Rivers & Colorado Riverkeeper. And Ashley Anderson is founder and director of Before It Starts, which is leading the fight to stop tar sands drilling in Utah. He's the former director of Peaceful Uprisings, a group he founded with

activist Tim DeChristopher, who I understand is listening to this program on KDUR, the station that broadcasts where he is imprisoned.

But I want to start with John Weisheit. John, explain—when people hear "tar sands," they think Canada, Alberta. They may think dirty oil, or if they're Paul Ryan, they think jobs. But talk about why you're talking about it in Moab.

JOHN WEISHEIT: Well, we're concerned because this particular locality is in a high-elevation place called the Tavaputs Plateau, and it's one of the last wild places in Utah. It's a huge refuge for elk and deer. It's also a beautiful watershed. It not only would affect the Colorado River, but it also—at this particular site, it's at the top of the drainage, so it would also affect the White River and the Green River. And so, this is an inappropriate activity. People probably aren't aware that Utah has a lot of tar sands. It's exposed at the surface. It's easy to get to. This would be a strip-mining project. It would completely deforest this high plateau. It would completely annihilate the vegetation for these animals. And it would actually—once they're done, it would never have any kind of beneficial use whatsoever, besides destroying the watershed.

AMY GOODMAN: So, where did these tar sands come from?

JOHN WEISHEIT: There used to be a lake here. The Colorado River actually was a river system that didn't make it to the ocean. It drained interiorly, and there were these big, huge lake deposits with algae and leaf litter, and these are the organic material that provided these hydrocarbons.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to turn to a clip from the CBC's report on the Utah tar sands. This is a report on the Utah Tar Sands Project. According to Earth Energy Resources—since renamed U.S. Oil Sands—there's now a revolutionary clean technology involving, of all things, oranges.

CBC REPORTER: If you can get all this bitumen out of the ground, separate the oil from the sand, and then put all the land back where it came from—cleanly—that's exactly what the Calgary company behind this project says it can do, with a secret formula, incredibly, involving something you can find at any grocery store: these. That's right, oranges! It's a recipe concocted by the upstart Albertans, who say they can keep Utah beautiful while mining for oil.

GLEN SNARR: That's actually about almost two million barrels a day of—or a year of production using three units out of that pit.

CBC REPORTER: Company president Glen Snarr says his patent-pending process with, yes, citrus extract does the unthinkable: it takes oil from the sand, leaving no pools of toxic waste, and will not permanently scar the land.

GLEN SNARR: Our long-term environmental footprint is almost nil, and I can say that with a high degree of confidence.

CBC REPORTER: This company video shows a test run. The only byproduct: the sand itself, later used to relandscape the pits they dig. Snarr calls it "beach clean."

GLEN SNARR: If we can't do it, then we'll fold up our tent and go back to Canada.

AMY GOODMAN: John Weisheit, can you talk about the citrus solution?

JOHN WEISHEIT: Well, yes. It's called D-limonene. It's a terpene. It's kind of like pine needles make turpentine. And this is the solvent that they want to mix in with hot water to liberate the bitumen in the materials that they strip-mine from the plateau. And what our concern is, is that once this chemical liberates the hydrocarbons, it also liberates all the nasty chemicals and cancer-producing things within the processing system, which are going into the waste sand, which is going into unlined pits. And with all the broken-up sand and rubble and the very intense cloudbursts that are in the area, what happens is, is the rainwater will percolate into these, releasing and picking up the chemicals and putting them into the local aquifers near the surface, and it would also put it into the streams that would carry them to the Green, Colorado or White River, depending on where they're locating their mining operation.

AMY GOODMAN: Are tar sands activists working on the Keystone XL aware of what's going on in Moab? And what do you make of what Paul Ryan says, when he says he will jump-start the Keystone XL pipeline if he were vice president?

JOHN WEISHEIT: Well, I think people are aware of what's going on in Utah, but it is a mining operation that hasn't begun yet. And there are activists working on it, and it is in litigation. But I would like the country to know that we aren't prevailing in the court system, and it is highly likely that this operation will begin in either 2013 or 2014.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to talk about uranium now and uranium mining and uranium milling. Please lay out the story.

JOHN WEISHEIT: Well, Moab used to be called the uranium capital of the world. And in the '50s and '60s, it was our main economic force in Moab. We also have the second-largest uranium waste pile in the United States, and it's right next to the Colorado River. There was a time when the Department of Energy was going to cap this mining activity in place near the Colorado River, but thanks to California water managers, such as the Metropolitan Water District, we were able to convince the Department of Energy to move the pile away from the Colorado River floodplain. But, in 1984, the uranium industry fell, and—but its prices dropped. The government refused to subsidize the industry any further. But there's been a resurgence due to an increase in uranium prices. So there are two companies, Denison and Energy Fuels—they've actually merged. They're currently using a milling facility about 100 miles south of Moab. It's the only uranium-processing facility in the United States, and so whatever uranium mining is happening is happening here in southeastern Utah.

AMY GOODMAN: As Democracy Now! travels on this 100-city tour, we follow the uranium trail from one proposed mine in Virginia, amazingly, to another one near Green River, Utah. Later this week we'll be in Los Alamos, the birthplace of the Nuclear Age, the atomic bombs used in World War II developed there. I want to play a comment from Dan Chancellor, who is running for a seat on the local San Miguel County Commission.

I met him when I was in Telluride, and he was talking about a proposed uranium mill in Paradox, Utah.

DAN CHANCELLOR: Well, we've got some development on the valley floor here that's an issue. And we have the Piñon Ridge mill, the uranium mill. And I've come out very strongly—

AMY GOODMAN: What is it?

DAN CHANCELLOR: The Piñon Ridge uranium mill.

DENIS MOYNIHAN: Piñon.

AMY GOODMAN: Piñon Ridge.

DAN CHANCELLOR: Piñon Ridge.

AMY GOODMAN: What's the uranium mill?

DAN CHANCELLOR: Well, they're getting ready to put a uranium mill near Paradox.

AMY GOODMAN: Why are you against it?

DAN CHANCELLOR: Well, I'm—couple of things. One, I think it's bad for the economy, because typically what happens is they bring—they bring people in from other places. And then, when the mill closes down, we've got that many more unemployed people with no sense of community. But also, the prevailing winds come straight from there to Telluride, and it's less than 60 miles away. Their high-tech solution to keeping those particles from blowing into our lungs is spraying water on them. They're using our water to—you know, they're basically taking our water to do it. My father grew up in a house in Grand Junction that was built on uranium tailings, and he died when he was 58 years old of a type of cancer that's typically associated.

AMY GOODMAN: What kind of cancer?

DAN CHANCELLOR: It was a lung cancer, but it's typically—I mean, that particular type of cancer is typically associated with radiation. I mean, the doctor asked him—his oncologist asked him if he had worked in the uranium industry.

AMY GOODMAN: Wow.

DAN CHANCELLOR: And he hadn't. But I think we need to protect people's health and safety, and save the environment.

JOHN WEISHEIT: Yeah.

AMY GOODMAN: That was Dan Chancellor, running for a seat on the local San Miguel County Commission, speaking about this uranium mill in Paradox, Colorado. He was speaking to us in Telluride. John, the significance of this?

JOHN WEISHEIT: Well, it's on the Dolores River, and it's going to require Colorado River water. It's also a very sensitive area. The Dolores River is basically a river that doesn't flow anymore because of McPhee Reservoir. We're partnering with a group in Telluride called the Sheep Mountain Alliance. We've actually been able to have this under review again. And so, it's—we really don't want to see this. We have a legacy of uranium waste and carnage, and we want—our communities want this out of the way. We want it to be part of the history, not the future.

AMY GOODMAN: Ashley Anderson, the activism you're involved with, from uranium to tar sands? And if you could quickly mention—we have less than a minute—Tim DeChristopher and what's happening with him.

ASHLEY ANDERSON: Sure. Well, I'd just like to say that what we're trying to do is stop the fossil fuel industry in its tracks from spreading the way it's done damage in Canada. There's a great group called Utah Tar Sands Resistance that's working on it in Utah. But nationally, we need a big movement to come in and help in the way that we did with the Keystone XL pipeline. We also need to make it obsolete. So that's how we're going to kind of preserve our future.

And if you want me to mention Tim, he's probably listening, and he'll be getting out on October 24th and serving the rest of his sentence from a halfway house. So, we'll be able to see him.

AMY GOODMAN: And he was sentenced for two years for?

JOHN WEISHEIT: By the Obama administration, basically, for disrupting a BLM oil and gas lease auction.

AMY GOODMAN: A Bureau of Land Management.

JOHN WEISHEIT: Yeah, gas lease auction to sell off our public lands for oil and gas exploration. So, when you talked about the presidential candidates, I don't think we're looking at a good choice when it comes to either candidate preserving a livable future for ourselves.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, Ashley Anderson and John Weisheit, I want to thank you very much for being with us. That does it for our broadcast. We are on our 100-city tour. Tonight we'll be in Taos. Tomorrow we'll be in Santa Fe. And then we'll be in Los Alamos, and we're moving on to Arizona.

LR in the News 10/17/12

Tar Sands Battle

Click here to read this story in the Salt Lake Weekly by Eric Peterson.

Reference 10/23/12

Utah Supreme Court issues opinion on Cloudrock Development near Moab

Click here to read the decision against concerned citizens who are protecting pristine groundwater supplies from inappropriate development in Moab and Spanish Valley

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LR in the News 10/24/12

Utah Board OKs The Nation's First Commercial Tar Sands Project

Click here to read this story by Dave Hasemyer from Inside Climate News

Click here to read this story by Judy Fahys in the Salt Lake Tribune

Click here to read this story by AP Reporter Paul Foy

CLick here to read the feature in Common Dreams

LR in the News 11/09/12

Court Ordered Uranium Mill Hearing Under Way

Click here to read this story by Heather Sackett in the Telluride Daily Planet

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Regional News 11/25/12

Colorado Drought To Hurt Lakes Powell and Mead

Click here to read this story by Scott Willoughby of the Denver Post

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LR Letter 11/26/12

Letter to Bureau of Reclamation on Salinity Control in the Paradox Valley

Click here to read the letter

Click here to visit On The Colorado, to get more specific information and read the many documents related to salinity control in the Colorado River basin

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

November 27, 2012

The Bureau of Reclamation misses the target for controlling salinity
Salinity Control in the Paradox Valley of western Colorado

Contact: John Weisheit at 435-259-1063 or 435-260-2590 (cell) or john@livingrivers.org

Moab, UT - On November 26th, Living Rivers submitted a scoping letter to the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) regarding a salinity control project along the Dolores River in the Paradox Valley of western Colorado in Montrose County; the project is called the Paradox Valley Unit. The Dolores River joins the Colorado River in Grand County, Utah upstream of Moab City.

Below the Paradox Valley lies a huge natural deposit of ocean salt that formed nearly 300 million years ago. Natural groundwater flowing through the Paradox Valley dissolves the salt underneath the alluvium and the heavy brine enters the Dolores River through a series of saline springs.

The Salinity Control Act of 1974 mandates that the Bureau of Reclamation (and other federal agencies) reduce salinity levels in the Colorado River basin to honor a treaty with Mexico (1944) to provide useable irrigation water for their growing fields. The program is also intended to reduce corrosion of infrastructure to other end users of the Colorado River water delivery system, such as the municipalities of Tucson, San Diego and Tijuana.

Most of the salinity problem in the Colorado River basin is derived from human activities, which includes diverting pristine water from the headwaters into the Mississippi River basin (diminishing the benefits of natural dilution), applying irrigation water to fields with salty soils on the Colorado Plateau, and surface evaporation that occurs on nearly 50 water storage reservoirs built by the federal government in the Colorado River basin.

Instead of addressing the human causes of salinity that have occurred in the last 100-years, in this instance Reclamation is targeting an input of salt that will be a problem for millions of years, and with a solution that will only provide benefits that can be measured in decades.

At present, Reclamation is intercepting saline groundwater in the Paradox Valley with nine water pumps, and then injects the treated brine into the earth's crust at a depth of nearly 16,000 feet. Of the 205,000 tons of salt that enter the Dolores River every year in the Paradox Valley, Reclamation removes about 110,000 tons (54%) at the Paradox Valley Unit.

Though the permitted facility became fully operational in 1996, Reclamation has informed the public that the lifespan of the facility is projected to end in about 5-years. Reclamation is proposing to develop a pilot program to investigate the potential of evaporating the collected brine in huge surface ponds. If the pilot program is deemed successful, up to 800 acres (1.25 square miles) of solar ponds would be constructed in this beautiful valley, and at great cost and with cumulative impacts to the environment.

The letter by Living Rivers points attention to the Department of Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation for applying more and more Band-aids to a broken water management system, instead of developing a holistic watershed plan that would secure clean and abundant water supplies for the entire basin and it's future. The letter also explains how in the process of controlling salinity in the Dolores River basin, increases of salinity occur in the San Juan basin.

The Dolores River was dammed in 1984 near Dolores, Colorado (The Dolores Project and McPhee Dam) and the river water is actually diverted across a divide and into the San Juan River basin. The soils of the San Juan river basin are high in salt and selenium. The San Juan River basin transports more sediment into Lake Powell, than the Colorado and Green rivers combined. Had McPhee Dam never been built, the salinity would have been controlled naturally by the dilution factor that occurs after every annual snow melt (817,000 acre-feet on average). This illustrates how typical quid quo pro practices in the Colorado River basin transfers a solution for one basin, to become a problem for another.

Living Rivers is asking the Department of Interior and Reclamation to stop implementing redundant management protocols and instead initiate a basin-wide programmatic Environmental Impact Statement that would initiate watershed resiliency planning throughout the Colorado River basin. Otherwise the Colorado River basin will turn into a train wreck of crisis management and endless litigation.

LR in the News 12/01/12

US Oil Sands Bets Big On Utah

Click here to read this story by Darren Campbell in Alberta Oil Magazine

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LR in the News 12/11/12

Environmental Groups Protest BLM Oil Shale (tar sands) Plan.pdf

Click here to read this story from the Salt Lake Tribune

Click here to read this story by Berwyn of Summit County Citizens Voice

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Regional News 12/12/12

Final Report of Imbalances of Supply and Demand in the Colorado River Basin

Click here to read the documents of the final report issued at the annual convention of the Colorado River Water Users Association meeting at Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas.
