

Drain Lake Powell?

03/20/2000

By Amie Rose

St. George, Color Country Spectrum

GLEN CANYON DAM -- Two groups of people gathered on opposite sides of Glen Canyon Dam Tuesday.

The crystal blue waters separated a gathering organized by the Glen Canyon Action Network from another gathering organized by the Friends of Lake Powell. And although both groups gathered to talk about the lake, one group wants to drain it while the other group wants to save it.

Friends of Lake Powell gathered on the east side of the lake, across the dam from the Carl Hayden Visitor Center, where the Glen Canyon Action Network gathered.

Although most people at the event stand firmly on one side of the issue, at least two Page residents wanted to hear both sides.

Katrina Reid said neither side swayed her and her husband one way or the other, although she said she was interested in the difference between the two gatherings. She said the Glen Canyon Action Network's event was intellectual while the Friends of Lake Powell event was emotional.

"It's interesting to see what both sides are," Reid said.

Her husband, Kyle, added that they're trying to create some harmony between the two sides.

Law enforcement, though, worked hard to keep the two sides apart.

Joe Richards, Coconino County sheriff, said his office, the Arizona Department of Public Safety, the National Park Service, Page Police Department and the Bureau of Land Management have been working for more than a month to ensure a peaceful day for everyone.

He said between 70 and 80 officers worked as security along the dam and at both events.

"A strong law enforcement presence helped prevent problems," Richards said.

Officers aborted easy access from one event to the other by making each event accessible from only one direction. Neither group was allowed to protest at the other group's gathering.

When a bus, carrying members of the Global Peace Now, turned to go to the Friends of Lake Powell event, it was given a police escort out.

Mike Clough said he went to the Friends of Lake Powell gathering not only to save the lake, but his job. Clough works on houseboats at the lake.

"If I didn't come here I might not have a job," Clough said. "It's very important we keep the lake."

Several businesses in Page closed their doors from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. to demonstrate what Page would look like without Lake Powell.

Scott and Virginia Ashton, of Fredonia, Ariz., said they also went to support Lake Powell.

"Hopefully we'll make sure that the lake stays here," Scott Ashton said.

Clare Ramsay, a Garfield County commissioner, said he and fellow commissioner Louise Liston travelled to Page to support the dam, which provides electricity to their county.

"We're here to show our love for the lake," Liston said.

Ramsay added they also wanted to protest the idea of draining the lake.

"We wanted to let them know there is opposition to what those lunatics are trying to do," he said. "There's not a lot of people who're going to sit idly by."

People for the U.S.A. also joined with Friends of Lake Powell in the celebration.

Shauna Johnson, president of the Utah People for the U.S.A. chapter, said they had about 150 members go to the gathering.

She said the group supports Lake Powell because of the electricity the dam provides, the water storage, recreational use and economic benefit to the people in the area.

Johnson said she lived in Southern Utah before Lake Powell.

"When I was in high school, I kayaked in Glen Canyon," she said. "It wasn't accessible and Lake Powell is accessible. It's valuable to far more people than Glen Canyon was."

David Brower, the first executive of the Sierra Club, disagrees with Johnson. He said the Glen Canyon Dam was the greatest disaster of his life.

"The water hides the most beautiful scenery on earth," he said. Brower said he is partly responsible for the dam. He said if he'd kept the Sierra Club fully informed on the dam project, it wouldn't have been built.

"We had enough votes in the House of Representatives to stop it," he said.

Brower has spent years working to gain momentum in the movement to drain the lake.

"I'm glad I lived long enough to be here," he said.

Brower said the lake will have to be drained eventually, and the sooner it happens the safer everyone will be. He added that people don't realize the danger the dam poses.

"It could be a major disaster," he said. "In 1983 it almost collapsed. They were extremely lucky."

And, Brower said, the canyon can be restored at a fraction of the cost of not restoring it.

"We can revive it as a beautiful park," he said. "We can let the world know what it no longer needs to miss."

John Weisheit, president of the Glen Canyon Action Network, said the dam isn't worth the power and water storage it provides.

"(It) damaged the river and ecosystem," he said. "It was supposed to be a national park and we flooded it."

Weisheit said in the 1930s President Franklin D. Roosevelt decided four times not to make Glen Canyon a national monument because of political pressure.

"Rivers are forever and power plants and dams have a life span," Weisheit said.

He said the dam will eventually have to be decommissioned because it's filling with sediment and sand. The dirt will eventually compromise the safety of the dam because there won't be enough room for water. When it was built, he added, engineers said it would have a life span of 200 years.

Weisheit said people who do have a stake in the lake support draining it. He said people from the area, as well as people from neighboring states attended the event.

Copyright 1999 The Spectrum.

###

Forty years after Glen Canyon Dam was built, some want it taken down.

By Mike Ritchey
The Denver Post

03/19/2000

GLEN CANYON DAM, Ariz. - It's not just the Colorado River that they want to set free.

It's our thinking about how we interact with what's around us, with the environment.

That idea was powerful enough to draw some 250 people last Monday and Tuesday to the campus of Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, and at the dam, two hours north, in Page.

During their sessions, participants from several Western states listened to stories, anecdotal and technical, and sang songs of protest and celebration.

Many support a proposal to drain Lake Powell by opening ducts at the bottom of Glen Canyon Dam and allowing the trapped Colorado River to run.

Yet they also seemed to agree that, though they would very much like to see Glen Canyon restored to its earlier grandeur, the point of their movement was aimed elsewhere.

"This movement is an effort to bring about a transformation in the way we think about our relationship to the land," said Owen Lammers, executive director of Glen Canyon Action Network, one of the environmental groups sponsoring the drive to not only turn the Colorado loose but to set free every river everywhere.

"Deep ecology is the study of how humans relate to the land and just what the sustainability of the land is. It is time for man to begin thinking like a river." As Lammers described it, no one should expect to one day see Glen Canyon the way it used to be, especially not anytime soon.

Other speakers elaborated. Bluff, Utah, geologist and river guide Gene Stevenson said that in the 40 years of the dam's existence, piles of silt - perhaps 100 feet or more - have settled on the canyon floor and in the side canyons and on the rocks, "and while we don't know how much, what we can be sure of is that we're talking decades, even centuries, before the canyon and the river will be fully brought back to life." In 1996, federal officials did try to undo some of the damage when one March morning Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt opened up four floodgates at the dam and unleashed a torrent that washed down silt and rebuilt some beaches.

Babbitt declared it "a new beginning for the Colorado River, a new beginning for the Grand Canyon ecosystem and a new beginning in dam management." But to those who got together here last week, that was just a drop in the bucket. They want the dam put out of business.

It seems to the layman too huge a project to be seriously considered.

Yet, there is precedent for so many believing in the movement's eventual success.

One speaker recalled that Barry Goldwater, the late U.S. Republican senator from Arizona who was a moving force in the building of the dam, eventually changed his mind.

Before he died, Goldwater said that out of the thousands of votes he had cast in the United States Senate, the one he regretted, the one he would change if granted celestial opportunity, was the one in support of building Glen Canyon Dam.

In Goldwater's absence, however, another senator, Orrin Hatch, Republican of Utah, whose recent presidential primary campaign was unsuccessful, knows his conservative constituents would miss their water if he were to let their Lake Powell run dry, and has introduced legislation to prevent efforts by environmentalists to decommission the dam.

Dam-building is a nonpartisan issue. Liberals, conservatives, those in-between - most are all for it. A dam can support development or agriculture. The Glen Canyon plant generates more than 1.3 million kilowatts of electricity. When all eight of its generators are revved, more than 15 million gallons of water a minute will pass through it. The

power - as much as 345,000 volts once it goes through transformers - goes to various markets.

And dam-building means jobs. For a legislator to be against building dams, well, he might as well turn down a second military base in his district. The lake too, provides employment for stores, marinas, motels and other businesses, from beer to bait.

The job of those who would drain the reservoir, second in size only to Lake Meade, downstream from Glen Canyon at Hoover Dam, is to alter public opinion, then to bring that opinion to play in the halls of Congress.

"I was ecstatic when the Sierra Club three, four years ago came out in favor of restoring Glen Canyon," said Ken Sleight, an old river runner from Moab, who owns and operates Pack Creek Ranch just outside that bustling slick rock town. "Then, when Dr. Richard Ingebretsen, the professor over at the University of Utah, and the Glen Canyon Institute all came out in favor of this at the same time, well, it was what I've been waiting for all these years."

Sleight, a friendly, generous, and very tough man, made his comments at a teach-in last Monday at the NAU campus. That event was organized by the NAU chapter of Free the Planet, an environmental outfit favored by young people around the world. Student leader Jason Silke, with his pierced ears and nose, was there with Sleight and Kent Frost, men in their 60s and 70s. They in turn mingled with singer, writer and activist Katie Lee, who is every bit of 79, and finally with David Brower, 88, the godfather of the environmental movement. Optimism welcome Silke and his colleagues had put a substantial program together in just two weeks. The infusion of youth's optimism was a welcome addition to the information-laden afternoon. The young people appeared to harbor no doubts that the Will of the People can and will prevail.

But will it, really? Will their will carry the day? And is their will indeed the will of the majority? And when the health of our rivers and of the planet itself is concerned, should the preferences of the majority matter? Or should it even be put to a vote? No matter your leanings on the issue, the sincerity of the participants bordered on the inspirational.

A video, "The Cracking of Glen Canyon Dam," made in 1981 and starring the late Edward Abbey, whose spirit hovered over the twoday celebration, was shown on Monday. In it, Abbey encouraged a small group who gathered back then to drape a black cloth "crack" over the side of the dam, to first exhaust the political approach, and, he said, "if that doesn't work, then sabotage." No one on Monday or Tuesday advocated sabotage. In fact, a major selling point for draining the reservoir is the claim that the dam cannot hold. It was, said several speakers, built in a bad place - on weak sandstone; a sponge that is and has long been leaking. And in June of 1983, a big water year but not one of the biggest, the dam almost was lost - 29 million acre-feet of water blasting down the Colorado River toward Hoover Dam and Lake (Reservoir) Meade; two years of full flow, running free, wild and with no good intention.

So, sabotage is only a word and a thought that is beneath thinking. Although it might be mentioned that in this, the 25th anniversary of Abbey's death, a commemorative edition

of his "The Monkey Wrench Gang," which did embrace sabotage, is set for a June publication. It's already back-ordered.

Can Glen Canyon Dam be decommissioned, Lake Powell drained?

No one at the gatherings appeared to harbor any unreal dreams of when the reservoir would be emptied. Not on Monday at NAU, not on Tuesday, the International Rivers Day of Action, at Glen Canyon, when a declaration was adopted swearing to fight for lifetimes to restore the canyon - and further to make sure no other dams are built. Sierra Club early supporter David Brower, standing tall but clearly weak, tired from a long trip from his home in Berkeley, Calif., near-sea level, to over 7,000 feet, acknowledged that the Sierra Club, of which he was then director, supported the plan in the late 1950s as Congress was considering the construction of Glen Canyon Dam.

"I even wanted to build it 50 feet higher," Brower said.

But he had never seen Glen Canyon. Few had.

The Sierra Club compromised, sacrificing the Glen to save Echo Park, in Dinosaur National Monument where the Bureau of Reclamation, the agency in charge of building and maintaining dams, wanted to build another one.

"When I saw the Glen, I realized our mistake," Brower said. "I began working, and we had the votes in Congress to kill it. But I neglected to bring along my (Sierra Club) board, and without the club's backing, Congress let it go ahead." Brower saw the place and, like Barry Goldwater, changed his mind. He has spent the last 40 years (the dam was built in 1963), trying to correct what he sees as an enormous mistake.

Brower noted that he will not live to see the Glen restored, but Ken Sleight, his old friend and a warrior who has fought right alongside, said Tuesday that he considers the drive to restore Glen Canyon "an ongoing battle, one we're in until we die."

E-mail Mike about this column: mritchey@denverpost.com

<http://www.denverpost.com/news/ranger0319.htm>

© 1999-2000 The Denver Post. All rights reserve

#####

Glen Canyon outrage: 2 sides air views on still-controversial dam 03/15/2000

By Donna M. Kemp
Deseret News

PAGE, Ariz. -- Legendary conservationist David Brower came back to Glen Canyon to atone for what he believes was a sin committed more than four decades ago.

Perched above Utah's favorite water playground Tuesday, the senior spokesman of environmentalism and former executive director of the Sierra Club, said the time has come to correct the mistakes of the past and drain Lake Powell.

Brower's biggest regret is the Sierra Club's failure under his tenure to fight construction of the 710-foot Glen Canyon Dam, which stilled the Colorado River along the Utah-Arizona border in the early 1960s. The Sierra Club's silence on Glen Canyon was offered in exchange for not building a dam in eastern Utah.

"I am glad we saved Echo Park (in Dinosaur National Monument), but we never should have lost Glen Canyon," said Brower, 87. "Forty years later, we are trying to correct that mistake."

But draining Lake Powell would be an even bigger mistake to the people of Page, whose lives are now rooted in a thriving recreation economy.

"In terms of value to our lives, Lake Powell is priceless," said Vivian Firlein, president of the Lake Powell Chamber of Commerce.

Some 3.5 million people visit Lake Powell every year, spending a total of \$154 million in Page alone, she added. Millions more are spent by recreationists at Lake Powell marinas in Utah.

Both sides stated their case Tuesday, when about 600 supporters of Lake Powell gathered on the south side of Glen Canyon Dam, and about 200 "drain it" proponents rallied on the north side of the dam.

People on both sides spoke with evangelical passion, invoking religious imagery to defend their disparate views.

"Lake Powell is a place where God vacations," said Page Mayor Bob Bowling as a houseboat circled the bay below with a sign reading "We love Lake Powell."

Meanwhile, those on the other side of the lake were praising the spiritual values of nature, silence and wilderness.

"Glen Canyon was a quiet, mysterious place," said Katie Lee, a one-time Glen Canyon river runner and author of the book "All My Rivers Are Gone."

"Now it is the Coney Island of reservoirs."

Draining the lake, which would take an act of Congress and likely unleash lengthy litigation, is little more than a verbal threat by environmentalists. But the passion of the debate prompted the Bureau of Reclamation to request unprecedented security around the dam. Dozens of Arizona lawmen patrolled the bridge overlooking the dam, and others closely monitored both sides.

No threats or violence was reported, and leaders of both rallies pleaded for peaceful expressions from those attending.

"We're planning no violence, no friction unless they (environmentalists) force the issue," said Steve Gessig, an Escalante resident and member of People for the USA.

People in Page, a town born with the infusion of dam construction workers in the late 1950s, were not rolling out the welcome mat for their environmental visitors. Some local businesses were pledging not to serve environmentalists.

"I don't think we should feed them, house them or sell them gas," said Pearlana Gibson, a waitress at the Weston's Empire House, a coffee shop in downtown Page.

Some even closed down for the afternoon in a symbolic protest of what it would be like if there was no Lake Powell and no Page.

"What do they expect when they come into someone's town and try to close it down?" asked Don Iverson, a Page retiree who spends about 100 days a year fishing on Lake Powell. "You'd be mad too if someone tried to take away your job that feeds your family."

And it is Lake Powell recreation that feeds the families of Page. People come here from all over the world to play.

"It's so pretty down here," said Sandy resident Linda Savage, as she unloaded her bags from a six-day houseboat trip. "It doesn't make sense to drain it. It would be a humongous junkyard" with coolers, batteries, fishing poles and human trash littering the lake bottom.

The dam, which generates 1.3 million kilowatts of electricity and impounds 27 million acre-feet of water at capacity, is also an integral piece in a system of federally built dams and reservoirs along the Colorado River, bureau officials say.

Patrick Diehl, an outspoken environmentalist from Escalante, said the environmental damage from leaving Lake Powell in place would far exceed the scars of the past decades. He predicted millions of environmentalists would descend on Lake Powell to clean up the mess.

It would be harder to erase the tell-tale white water ring left behind after the salt-laden waters were drained. A white stain much like a bathtub ring still remains around the edge of the lake, a reminder of the high water mark reached in 1983.

That is an ugly contrast to the remarkable beauty that was once Glen Canyon.

"It was the most calm, serene river with alcoves and amphitheaters like Music Temple and Hidden Passage," said Ken Sleight, Utah's dean of environmental activists.

But to those who live and play here, Lake Powell offers a different but no-less-spectacular beauty.

"When we see the red rocks against the lake, it is breathtaking," said Garfield County Commissioner Louise Liston, noting that millions now enjoy the beauty whereas before only a handful ever experienced the remote wonders.

###

Lake Powell: Drain it or save it?

03/15/2000

Two sides rally for their causes near the Glen Canyon Dam

Associated Press

GLEN CANYON DAM, Ariz. -- Demonstrators on the east side of Glen Canyon Dam carried signs urging "Save Lake Powell," while those on the west side said to just "Drain It."

Hundreds gathered for dueling rallies Tuesday staged near the Arizona dam just south of Utah's border.

Glen Canyon Dam, commissioned in 1963, formed Lake Powell and brought northern Arizona and southern Utah an economic boom. Recreationists make more than 2 million visits a year to the area.

Friends of Lake Powell argued the lake is the lifeline of nearby Page, pumping \$100 million a year into the city's economy.

The Glen Canyon Action Network contended restoring the Colorado River to its natural flow would be more beneficial to downstream users because less water would be lost to evaporation and the porous sandstone that molds the lake.

David Brower, the first executive of the Sierra Club, said the Glen Canyon Dam was a disaster.

"The water hides the most beautiful scenery on earth," he said. Brower said he is partly responsible for the dam.

John Weisheit, president of the Glen Canyon Action Network, said the dam wasn't worth the power and water storage it provides.

"(It) damaged the river and ecosystem," he said.

Weisheit said the dam will eventually have to be decommissioned because the reservoir is filling with sediment and sand.

Lake Powell backer Denny Judd, a shop owner and rancher from Kanab, said he and other residents have learned from past experience with government officials and environmentalists not to discount any proposal that could threaten their way of life.

"We've seen the writing on the wall from the past, and are going to let folks know the majority don't want getting rid of the lake to happen," Judd said.

Val Gleave, Friends chairman, said the notion of draining the lake seemed so preposterous at first that no one took it seriously. But as the idea gained momentum, business owners in Page along with the Chamber of Commerce formed Friends of Lake Powell to push their cause.

Gleave, whose group planned Tuesday's rally in response to the Glen Canyon Action Network's protest, also is concerned about the growing movement to drain other reservoirs.

"When the governor of Oregon favors taking two dams down for the salmon, that kind of trend concerns us," Gleave said.

Katrina Reid of Page and her husband visited both demonstrations and said neither side swayed them.

She said the Glen Canyon Action Network's event was intellectual while the Friends of Lake Powell event was emotional.

Her husband, Kyle, said they're trying to create some harmony between the two sides.

Law enforcement worked hard to keep the two sides apart.

Joe Richards, Coconino County sheriff, said his office, the Arizona Department of Public Safety, the National Park Service, Page Police Department and the Bureau of Land Management had between 70 and 80 officers worked as security along the dam and at both events.

Neither group was allowed to protest at the other group's gathering.

###

Salt Lake Tribune

03/15/2000

Rally Pits Advocates for Draining Lake Powell Against Those Who Support Glen Canyon Dam

BY MARK HAVNES

GLEN CANYON DAM, Ariz. -- Posters on the east side of Glen Canyon Dam proclaimed "Save Lake Powell," while placards on the west side pleaded "Drain It."

Those two views clashed Tuesday as hundreds gathered for dueling rallies staged near the Arizona dam just south of Utah's border.

Commissioned in 1963, Glen Canyon Dam formed Lake Powell and brought northern Arizona and southern Utah an economic boom driven by waves of recreationists, more than 2 million a year.

Friends of Lake Powell is proud of the dam and fighting to save it. The group points out the lake is the lifeline of nearby Page, Ariz., pumping \$100 million a year into the city's economy.

The Glen Canyon Action Network takes the opposite view. It argues that restoring the Colorado River to its natural flow would be more beneficial to downstream users because less water would be lost to evaporation and the porous sandstone that molds the lake.

Lake Powell backer Denny Judd said when he first heard talk of draining the reservoir he laughed, but not anymore as the movement to return Glen Canyon to its rugged form picks up steam.

The Kanab native attended the Friends of Lake Powell rally with a contingent from Kanab, 70 miles west of the dam in southern Utah. All sported bright red T-shirts broadcasting their support of the lake.

Judd, a shop owner and rancher, said he and other residents have learned from past experience with government officials and environmentalists not to discount any proposal that could threaten their way of life.

"We've seen the writing on the wall from the past, and are going to let folks know the majority don't want getting rid of the lake to happen," Judd said.

He is not alone.

Val Gleave, Friends chairman, said the notion of draining the lake seemed so preposterous at first that no one took it seriously. But as the idea gained momentum, business owners in Page along with the Chamber of Commerce formed Friends of Lake Powell to push their cause.

"One of our board members, who is a scientist, attends regular meetings on water usage, and he says other scientists are receiving a lot of peer pressure to consider a study of draining the lake," she says.

Gleave, whose group planned Tuesday's rally in response to the Glen Canyon Action Network's protest, also is concerned about the growing movement to drain other reservoirs with smaller dams.

"When the governor of Oregon favors taking two dams down for the salmon, that kind of trend concerns us," Gleave said.

In addition to hydroelectric power, storage capacity for a mushrooming Southwest and abundant recreation opportunities, Lake Powell supplies water for the nearby Navajo Generating Station. The Navajo Reservation hugs the southern shore.

About 700 people attended the Friends rally, with many businesspeople closing their stores for an hour in an attempt to dramatize how Page -- a resort city of 10,000 -- would become a "ghost town" without the lake.

On the dam's west side, the rally pushing to pull the plug on Lake Powell drew about 250.

They heard Steve Hannon -- a water attorney from Loveland, Colo., environmental author and member of the Moab-based Glen Canyon Action Network -- sum up the debate in three words: "politics, money and power, and not the wattage kind."

Hannon believes the issue will be resolved by pressure from Southern California water users, who will grow tired of losing 100 million gallons a year to seepage and evaporation.

Besides, Hannon argued, draining the lake actually would boost Page's economy. He said tourists from around the world would be drawn to the largest restoration project ever. And a new Glen Canyon would produce numerous natural beaches for camping and a Colorado River so tame that the most cowardly river runner could raft it.

"You could go down it on your rubber ducky," Hannon said.

Activists say the dam could be lowered gradually. Once the Colorado is flowing through the canyon, Hannon says an instant garden would spring up because of the accumulated silt.

David Orr, the Glen Canyon Action Network's director of field studies, said conventional ways of generating power are becoming obsolete and should be replaced with more sustainable and controllable sources, including solar energy.

© 2000, The Salt Lake Tribune All material found on Utah OnLine is copyrighted The Salt Lake Tribune and associated news services. No material may be reproduced or reused without explicit permission from The Salt Lake Tribune.

###