
GLEN CANYON SIERRAN

Issue 2

Newsletter of the Sierra Club Glen Canyon Group

Summer 2001

Sierra Club Glen Canyon Group: The First Year

The Sierra Club's Glen Canyon Group (GCG) formed after a meeting between the Utah Chapter and local members/activists at the end of March, 2000. The Executive Committee (ExCom) was elected in June; the first ExCom meeting followed on August 3rd. Since then, the ExCom has met 11 times, or about once each month, far more often than the Club requires. Even so, it has been hard to keep up with the rush of events.

Committees were also formed in the following issue arenas: Colorado River, Forest/Grazing, Local and Political, Membership, Nuclear Waste, Off-Road Vehicles [ORVs], Outings, and Wildlife. A Wilderness Committee is in the works (please see list of committee chairs for contact information on [page?](#)).

Here are some of the highlights from GCG's first year:

A Glen Canyon Restoration Campaign was launched virtually at our inception. GCG threw itself into an ongoing struggle over the text of the Club's Colorado River Task Force (CRTF) Report, and has so far prevented national Club adoption of a version with which we had serious disagreements. In December, we mailed out a high-quality educational publication to GCG members called the "Glen Canyon Advocate." This publication is circulating throughout the country, as free copies are provided to visitors who enter the Restoration Creamery, a non-profit ice cream store in the heart of downtown Moab. On Memorial Day Weekend, 2001, GCG leaders participated in an educational action on "Lake" Powell. We have also enlarged the Glen Canyon issue into a general vision and strategy for the whole Colorado River drainage, including all its tributary rivers and streams.

A well-received conservation "open house" was held at the Moab Arts and Recreation Center (MARC) in Moab on November 11. National board director Ed Dobson, who lives in Bluff, Utah, attended and shared a more intimate side of David Brower, as a remembrance of his passing on November 5, 2000.

GCG is playing a significant ongoing role in the effort to stop disposal of radioactive waste at the White Mesa "Mill," near Blanding. An organizing meeting was held on November 11, at Pack Creek Ranch. GCG members contributed an information sheet about White Mesa on November 18, to the state-wide workshop on nuclear waste

issues in Salt Lake City. GCG leaders also attended a rally in Salt Lake City to protest nuclear waste on April 26. On May 31, GCG members participated in a walk from White Mesa to Moab, climaxing in testimony at the Utah Radiation Control Board meeting on June 1, in Moab.

GCG members have worked hard on local Moab and Grand County issues such as the "dark skies" ordinance, the "Cloudrock" development, and the Highway 191 North Corridor plans, voter registration, and truck traffic through Moab.

The GCG ORV Committee is preparing a citizen's travel plan map to be submitted to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Grand Resource Area for its RMP (Resource Management Plan) amendment process, spelling out the need for protection of east central Utah BLM lands against ORV abuse. The ORV Committee also conducted many activities during Jeep Safari, in Moab and during the Easter weekend. The projects included outreach to "jeepers" to protect fragile desert landscapes and to photo document abuses. GCG members also completed some restoration projects in cooperation with Rim to Rim Restoration and Great Ole' Broads for Wilderness.

GCG member David Stolfa, working with Bill Love of the Forest/Grazing Committee, began development of a Web page to help activists monitor grazing violations in the La Sal Mountains. We hope to enlarge the scope of this page with time.

The chair of the Colorado River Committee, Owen Lammers, was appointed to the GCG ExCom to replace Ken Sleight, who resigned for personal reasons. Owen is currently touring Scotland and Ireland. While in Scotland, Owen presented a collector's item, an original photo of John Muir and founder of the Sierra Club, to the John Muir Society in Dunbar, Scotland. Owen presented this gift on behalf of GCG.

The Membership Committee reports that GCG membership has enjoyed a net increase of 12 memberships that include 17 new members total.

The GCG ExCom has developed and adopted resolutions about the Colorado River Task Force report (9/7/00), the proposed New Wide Hollow Reservoir near Escalante (9/28/00), a proposed dam on Shunes Creek in Zion NP (9/28/00), Flaming Gorge Dam and the need for full NEPA review of dams managed by the Bureau of Reclamation (9/28/00), the White Mesa "Mill" (11/30/00), the "1% for the Delta" Campaign ("Sustainable Water Project Tour") conducted by the Living Rivers and the Glen Canyon

**Run for the GCG
ExCom!**
See page 4 for details

Action Network (GCAN), and Veritas DGV seismic/oil exploration (3/01). See GCG Web page at www.utah.sierraclub.org/glencanyon for texts of resolutions.

GCG committees have developed position statements on Colorado River Issues and on Wildlife, and work has begun on an Outfitters & Guides policy. GCG members filed comments on the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) Grazing EIS (scoping phase), the 3R Minerals Mine Draft EIS for Alvey Wash near Escalante, the new Wide Hollow Reservoir, and the proposed conversion of the Questar/Williams/Kern River pipeline from natural gas to liquid fuels. The GCG Conservation Chair is supporting Kane County homeowners in their struggle to stop a gravel pit from being constructed near the Paria Contact Station on Highway 89 (see GCG Web page for texts).

Finally, we want to draw particular attention to the fact that, as hoped, GCG is acting as a forum where southern Utah activists can meet and work together. Most of our

ExCom and committee members are active in other southern Utah environmental groups as well as GCG. We are proud of these groups and of the community of resistance, and grassroots agitation for change that they and GCG are helping to create. Here are their names, with contact information:

Boulder Regional Group (435.335.7477) focusing on forest protection on Boulder Mountain/Aquarius Plateau and on grazing in Escalante drainage portion of GSENM.

Escalante Wilderness Project (435.826.4778) focusing on BLM and FS public lands issues in Escalante drainage portion of GSENM, especially grazing.

Glen Canyon Action Network/Living Rivers (435.259.1063) focusing on rivers/watersheds, especially the Colorado River and Glen Canyon.

Redrock Forests (435.259.5640) focusing on protection of the Abajos and the La Sal mountains.

-- PD & JW

Group Stages "Restoration Safari" as Critique of Annual Jeep Safari

Every Easter, the Moab area is inundated with absurd numbers of Jeeps, Hummers, and other ORVs. The catalyst for this ritual overcrowding of public lands is the annual "Jeep Safari", badly timed to coincide with college and high school spring breaks. (It should be noted most of the ORV visitors, including nearly all of the unruly ones, are not official Jeep Safari participants.)

This year the GCG, in cooperation with the Glen Canyon Action Network, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, staged a "Restoration Safari" designed to highlight the abuses that occur during Jeep Safari week.

Restoration Safari activities included:

* Repairing ORV damage in Pritchett Canyon and Mill Creek Canyon, in cooperation with the BLM.

* Distributing educational literature to Jeep Safari participants, in an effort to persuade them to minimize their damage to the land.

* Several radio, newspaper and television interviews (which resulted in very favorable press).

* A tour with a professional videographer, where we captured numerous stupid and illegal ORV activities on tape. This footage (of people driving off trail, trashed potholes, tire tracks through cryptobiotic soil, oil spills, etc.) will be useful in the future.

* Capturing "before and after" photos of recent ORV damage.

* A web site (<http://www.suwa.org/restorationsafari/>) highlighting the restoration efforts and ORV damage.

See separate article for our media message.

-- KW

Restoration Safari Position Statement

[This was the restoration Safari media message.]

* Off-road vehicle use on public lands in Utah has grown explosively over the past decade. (Off-road vehicles, or ORVs, include Jeeps, all-terrain vehicles or "4-wheelers", dirt bike motorcycles, etc.) The area around Moab has been one of the hardest hit. New ORV tracks across sensitive desert soils are being created daily. Anyone who visits the backcountry frequently will confirm that there are a lot more ORV tracks now than there were 10 years ago, and that ORV damage continues to increase.

* Nearly everyone agrees that this recent increase in ORV use causes serious problems. We think there are effective and reasonable solutions to these problems -- solutions that could be supported by a majority of the public.

* Part of the problem is sheer numbers: At certain times of the year and at certain places, there are just too many vehicles on the trails. This overcrowding leads to ORV traffic jams and the creation of new bypasses, parking areas, camping spots, etc. If ORV use were more evenly distributed throughout the year, less damage would result.

When a similar situation arose on river corridors a few years ago, the BLM started a permit system to limit numbers. Some river runners grumbled at first, but eventually most agreed that a permit system was the necessary to preserve the river corridor in good condition. Many hiking areas also have permit systems to keep use levels in check, and these permit systems are supported by the majority of hikers.

An ORV permit system need not apply to all trails all of the time. We see no reason why the ORV community shouldn't support a permit system that allows use at reasonable levels but prevents use at unreasonable levels.

* Another part of the problem is location. We all agree that there should be opportunities for motorized recreation on public lands. But that doesn't mean that every square foot of the backcountry needs a tire track on it -- some areas are not appropriate for ORV use.

We think ORVs should stay out of wilderness-quality lands, riparian areas, and other sensitive places. And we think these sensible restrictions can be implemented without greatly reducing opportunities for motorized recreation. For example, only 7% of permitted Jeep Safari routes go through proposed Wilderness areas. This 7% can be easily rerouted, leaving the other 93% of the trails in place, and resulting in a Jeep Safari that has no conflicts with proposed Wilderness. (For more details and maps, click here.) We think this is a reasonable proposal.

* We should emphasize that the official Jeep Safari trips are generally well-managed and do little additional damage to public lands. The problem is that these official Jeep Safari participants represent only about one third of the ORV users in Moab during Easter week. Many of these unofficial participants are drawn to the area by Jeep Safari trade shows and the general ORV circus -- people who like big crowds of ORVs go to where they know the crowds will be, creating a positive feedback loop. If the BLM were to implement a permit system for ORV trails (see above), or if the Jeep Safari were moved to another time of the year, then these severe overcrowding problems could be solved without adversely affecting the official Jeep Safari trips.

Consider Running For GCG ExCom

The Glen Canyon Group will have three openings for Executive Committee (ExCom) members to serve a two-year term of January, 2002, through December, 2003.

If you would like to be a candidate, please submit a ballot statement of no more than 300 words and outlining your experience and qualifications, and what you wish to accomplish by serving on the ExCom. Include a phone number and/or email address where members can contact you for more information. Send your name and ballot statement to: Nominating Committee, Glen Canyon Group Sierra Club, P.O. Box 622, Moab, UT 84532 or e-mail it to binyon@lasal.net by September 15.

Ballots will be mailed in the fall to members living in our seven-county area.

Continuing members of the five-member Group ExCom are John Weisheit and Kevin Walker. The ExCom is required to meet at least quarterly, and has been meeting almost every month, in addition to conducting some business by phone or e-mail. The ExCom will elect from among its members, a Chair, Vice-Chair, and delegate to the Chapter at the January 2002 meeting. Other officers--Secretary and Treasurer, as well as Committee Chairs do not have to be elected members of the ExCom.

For further information, contact Jean Binyon at 435-259-1633 or by e-mail at binyon@lasal.net.

Sierra Club Files Appeal Regarding Molycorp Wastes

GCG members and other citizens in Grand and San Juan Counties have long been concerned about hazards and pollution associated with the operations of the White Mesa Uranium Mill, which is located six miles south of

Blanding in San Juan County. In February, the Group filed a request for a hearing from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) regarding the Mill's application to receive, store and "re-process" 17,750 tons of uranium-

bearing lead sludge from a Molycorp hazardous wastes site in Mountain Pass, California. The Utah Chapter Sierra Club filed a brief in March supporting the Group's action.

Responding to objections filed by the International Uranium Corporation (IUC), owner of the White Mesa Mill, an Administrative Law Judge then issued a ruling that the Sierra Club does not have "standing" for its request. The Sierra Club appealed his ruling and now awaits a response. If the appeal is denied, the decision will have to be made regarding whether to sue.

Glen Canyon Group members also stated their concerns before the State's Radiation Control Board, which met in Moab June 1st. Several members attended a tour of the White Mesa Mill on the preceding day, and followed up with a series of questions to IUC administrators. The Glen Canyon Group organized a walk May 31st from the White Mesa facility to downtown Moab. Forty walkers with

signs protested operations of the Mill and encouraged participation in the Radiation Control Board hearing.

The State has had little oversight of the Mill since 1999, when the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) licensed the White Mesa Mill to begin reprocessing "alternate feed materials"--i.e., tailings and wastes from other locations in order to extract uranium, vanadium and other products. The NRC has approved transport and reprocessing of such wastes as Manhattan Project wastes stored at Tonawanda, New York, and bomb making wastes from the Canadian Port Huron Refinery; both of which are in the process of being delivered and stockpiled at the Mill. Approval was also granted for receipt of thorium-contaminated wastes from Heritage Minerals, Lakehurst, New Jersey, but these wastes are not yet in transit. IUC is stockpiling the materials until they begin batch processing, now projected for March, 2002, when they want to begin with the Molycorp wastes.

-- JB

Williams Pipeline EIS Draws Comments

When the BLM issued a draft environmental impact statement for a proposal to run a petroleum products pipeline from Bloomfield, New Mexico to northern Utah, local members began asking questions about the need for such a project and probable risks and impacts of the line. The "Questar, Williams, Kern River Pipeline" project was actually a truncated version of the so-called Aspen project which would have begun in Odessa, Texas, but which drew so much opposition from citizens of New Mexico that the project was divided into two supposedly independent portions.

At least six GCG Sierra Club members responded with questions and comments to the BLM, focusing on: dangers from spills and leaks of petroleum products and from releases of natural gas; encroachment into Forest Service inventoried roadless and unroaded areas; landslide hazards; effects on streams and rivers, wells, springs and

groundwater; concerns for threatened and endangered species; destruction of cultural and archeological sites; and impacts of a pump station opposite the entrance to Arches National Park and a 60-acre storage and transfer station at Crescent Junction.

Readers found the Draft EIS confusing and incomplete. The Plan of Development, which the BLM published to explain and complete the partially competing proposals, was not available until after the due date for comments. While the Final EIS, which was published in June, was clearer and more complete than the Draft, group members still have questions and concerns which were not answered by the BLM. Addressing the BLM regarding the Final EIS will maintain our standing to challenge the Record of Decision.

-- JB

Update: Local & Political Issues Committee

The Local & Political Issues Committee, which is centered in Grand County, will resume meeting to consider the County's master plan update process, scheduled to begin this summer. All Sierra Club members who live within any city and town limits in the state are urged to vote in municipal elections this fall. Primary elections will be held October 2 for all races in which two or more candidates file; the General election will be November 6. Members needing to register can watch for satellite registration conducted by all the counties on September 21 to 24 and October 26 to 28. In Moab, elections will be held to select the mayor and two city council members.

Following is the status of major issues the Committee addressed since its first meeting in August: 1) City and

County Lighting Ordinances are on hold. Discussion of the problems was effective in increasing public awareness and enforcement of existing ordinances. 2) Plans for the Cloudrock development at Johnson's-Up-On-Top Mesa were significantly improved; they were approved by the Planning Commission and must meet many conditions before the County Council will let them continue. 3) Comments were filed on the Draft EIS for the Questar, Williams, Kern River Pipeline, both on behalf of the Committee and of individual members. 4) Both the City General Plan and the North Corridor Gateway Plan Amendment were approved by the City, and by the City and County, respectively. 5) The County will begin revision of its General Plan this summer. Focus will be growth management and SITLA (State Trust)-owned lands

in the County. 6) Some progress has been made in clean-up of the Atlas tailings. 7) The trucking of radioactive and hazardous materials through the city and county continue to be major concerns. We still have no information on the numbers of trucks or nature of materials being transported.

If the petroleum products storage and transfer station is built at Crescent Junction, the volume of truck traffic will increase.

-- JB

Sierra Club Members Have The Opportunity To Monitor Grazing

A software program is being developed to provide hikers and backpackers in the local Manti La Sal Mountains the opportunity to provide a much needed service to the Forest Service as monitors for the forest grazing allotments. This program was developed for the Club by Dave Stolfa and will soon be available on the GCG website (<http://utah.sierraclub.org/glencanyon/> -- then follow link to Forest and Grazing Committee). The District Ranger for the local Manti LaSal and Abajo Mountains, Glen Casamassa, believes that public participation in managing our forest is important.

The monitoring system consists of a map of the national forest area showing the pastures within each allotment. A chart will show the number of cows and the dates they are allowed to graze each pasture. The data may vary as the grasses are eaten in the lower elevation areas and the cattle are moved to the next area.

Discrepancies between the location of the cows on the mountain can be reported to:

Jimmy Forrest
Manti LaSal Nat'l Forest
P.O. 820
Monticello, UT 84535
435-587-2041

William E. Love
email: sombra@lasal.net
435-259-4626

The Moab National Forest range person is transferring from our area, and there will probably not be a replacement until next year. Your reports as to the location of cows are vital to the management of the allotments. Each year areas are rested from grazing, and some areas are closed to all grazing. Trespassing cows need to be moved from these areas as soon as possible.

Your help in making this program a success is appreciated.

-- BL

The Sierra Club Glen Canyon Group
Sponsors a Night at the Moab Information Center
(Corner of Center and Main)
Thursday, October 18, 2001, 7 PM

Bernie Zaleha from Boise, Idaho
Chair of the Sierra Club's End Commercial Logging Campaign
will give a slide presentation and answer questions about the campaign to
end commercial logging on the National Forests

Followed by
Candidates, Night
A panel discussion among candidates for local and state Sierra Club offices

Stay informed via email

If you want to stay informed on SE Utah environmental issues, we invite you to subscribe to the "gcg" list. This list is open to non-Sierra Club members as well. Sierra Club members can also monitor official ExCom business by subscribing to the separate "GCG-EXCOM" list. To join either list, send a request to Kevin Walker, kwalker@xmission.com.

GCG ExCom Members, Committee Chairs, Etc.

Jean Binyon (ExCom Vice-Chair, Local/Political Issues
Committee Chair) 435-259-1633 binyon@lasal.net

Patrick Diehl (ExCom Member and Secretary, Grazing
Committee Co-Chair) 435-826-4778 toripat@color-country.net

Ginny Carlson (Webmaster) ginny@wyn.org

Jim Gostlin (GCG Treasurer) 435-259-1082
moabvet@lasal.net

Kalen Jones (GCG ORV Committee Co-Chair) 435-259-8618
wgaia@lasal.net

Dan Kent (Forest/Wildlife Committee Chair) 435-259-2667
dan@redrockforests.org

Owen Lammers (ExCom member, Colorado River Committee Chair) 435-259-1063
owen@drainit.org

Bill Love (GCG Grazing Committee Co-Chair) 435-259-4626
sombra@lasal.net

David Orr (Membership Committee Chair) 435-259-1063
davidorr@aol.com

Kevin Walker (ExCom Member, ORV Committee Co-Chair) 435-259-7540
kwalker@xmission.com

John Weisheit (ExCom Chair, Chapter ExCom Representative) 435-259-8077
john@drainit.org

Victoria (Tori) Woodard (Conservation Chair) 435-826-4778
toripat@color-country.net

**Come help celebrate the Glen Canyon Group's first year at our
First Annual Dinner
Saturday, July 28, 2001**

Where: Gold's Bar, 10 miles south of Moab on Potash Road

When:

- 5 p.m. - hike to Corona Arch (optional)
- 7 p.m. - dinner
- 8 p.m. - awards ceremony and natural history talk

Beautiful Corona Arch is sometimes called Little Rainbow Bridge. It looks like Rainbow Bridge without Lake Powell underneath! The guided hike will be on a developed trail and will involve some climbing on steps carved into slickrock.

During the awards ceremony the Glen Canyon Group Executive Committee will give the Edward Abbey Award to a Sierra Club member who has made outstanding contributions to the conservation, preservation and restoration of southern Utah's rivers and wild lands.

John Weisheit, Glen Canyon Group Chair and river guide, will then highlight the natural history of the Colorado River.

What to bring:

- swimsuit
- something to drink
- a side dish.

If your last name starts with a letter between A and L, bring a salad. If your last name starts with a letter between M and Z, bring a dessert. The Glen Canyon Group Executive Committee will provide the main dish.

Don't miss this chance to celebrate with your fellow Club members!

RSVP to David at 259-1063 so we'll know how much food to make.

Sponsored by the Sierra Club Glen Canyon Group

Sierra Club Glen Canyon Group
P.O. Box 622
Moab, UT 84532