

# GLEN CANYON SIERRAN

Volume 2

Newsletter of the Sierra Club Glen Canyon Group

Issue 2

## The Glen Canyon Campaign Building Momentum

While nature is giving the public a taste of life without Lake Powell—currently down nearly 45% from its normal level—the Glen Canyon Group (GCG) has been active on several fronts to realize the Club’s objective that Glen Canyon and the Colorado River be fully restored. From fighting new infrastructure projects proposed for the reservoir, to demanding federal action to address the environmental impacts of the dam’s operations, the Club’s campaign to revive Glen Canyon rolls on.

In January the GCG joined forces with eight other groups in demanding that the National Park Service and Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec) prepare a sediment management plan for Lake Powell Reservoir. This intervention was prompted by a Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (GCNRA) proposal to expand Hite Marina. Located 30 miles from the head of the reservoir, Hite Marina is the first facility that must be decommissioned due to sedimentation. Despite a 2001 GCNRA funded analysis, which concluded that sediment will begin to impact Hite by next year, the Park Service still planned to move forward with a \$2 million expansion.

In March, GCG Chair John Weisheit accompanied Dr. John Dohrenwend, a geomorphologist formerly with the US Geological Survey, on a survey of the upper Colorado River arm of the reservoir. They concluded that Hite Marina will likely require closure by the end of this year due to sediment build-up impeding access. Dr. Dohrenwend also observed that similar to how the BuRec misjudged the amount of water in the Colorado watershed, giving away 22% more water on paper than the river actually delivers, they may have misjudged the sedimentation rates too.

“Sedimentation in Lake Powell, from its creation to the present, occurred during a time of relatively slow landscape change that is not fully representative of historic times. Indeed, a

return to the conditions that prevailed during the first half of the twentieth century would significantly accelerate sedimentation in Lake Powell and would significantly affect future use and operation of this reservoir,” says Dr.

Dohrenwend. As sediment will ultimately render Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell reservoir inoperable, as early as 2063 according to one BuRec study, it seems prudent that the government undertake a complete sediment management plan so that the public understands the potential life span of any future investments before such financial commitments are made.

Also in March, the GCG worked with the Chapter on releasing a statement opposing the proposed \$250 million municipal water pipeline from Lake Powell reservoir to St. George. Currently, “Washington County wastes more water per capita than practically any other community in the country,” says GCG Vice Chair Patrick Diehl. Indeed, at 355 gallons per person per day, Washington County’s consumption is 25 percent above Utah’s average, and Utah ranks among the most water-wasteful of states in the nation—and, by extension, one of the most water consumptive regions of the planet. The GCG hopes to incorporate efforts to oppose this pipeline into a larger statewide effort to implement much more stringent water conservation measures to avoid the construction of any infrastructure that would facilitate diverting more water from Utah’s rivers.

In April, the GCG joined seventeen other organizations in demanding suspension of the planning process for the proposed Antelope Point Marina project on Lake Powell reservoir. In an eleven-page letter sent to GCNRA officials, the groups expressed concern regarding violations of environmental laws, utilization of outdated planning guidelines, a bias toward



servicing motorized flatwater recreation and failure to consult with Navajo interests.

The proposal involves building a 410-slip marina, 225-room hotel complex, 150-site campground, fuel dock, convenience store, restaurant and related infrastructure over a 950-acre site, 710 of which are owned by the Navajo Nations. The Diné Medicinemen's Association is opposed to the project, as it would impact ceremonial and sacred sites, and promote inappropriate development on the Navajo Reservation. Since visitation is down 11 percent since 2000 and 35 percent since 1992, there clearly is no need for additional marina facilities on the reservoir.

On June 17, the GCG, the Club's Colorado River Task Force and 75 other groups released a statement atop Hoover Dam, site of BuRec's centennial celebration, calling for immediate action to reverse the impacts of Glen Canyon Dam on the Grand Canyon ecosystem. Glen Canyon Dam has: caused the complete transformation of the Canyon's food web, such that all native insect species are gone; the loss of four of eight native fish and the near disappearance of two more; the departure of muskrats and beavers from the river corridor and the elimination of riparian vegetation from the Canyon's high water zones.

This initiative by the GCG and others began back in mid January when we learned that one of the four native fish that remain in Grand Canyon, the humpback chub, has declined



Sierra Club activists, past and present, during a rally on June 16, 2002 at Grand Canyon's South Rim Amphitheater. Jeff Ingram (right) led the Sierra Club's fight to keep dams out of the Grand Canyon in the 1960s. Ed Dobson (inset) currently serves on the national board and is a member of the Glen Canyon Group.

80% since BuRec and others began tinkering with Glen Canyon Dam operations in an effort to "increase" its populations. In a letter sent to the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Working Group the GCG, the Plateau Group from Flagstaff and others demanded that BuRec start following the laws that require mitigation of the Glen Canyon Dam's adverse impacts to the Colorado River ecosystem in Grand Canyon National Park. Since then, GCG members have been successfully working to grow a national network of groups to support the Sierra Club in demanding action to restore the natural river corridor through Grand Canyon.

For more details on GCG's efforts to decommission Glen Canyon, contact Owen Lammers, Colorado River Committee Chair, Glen Canyon Group (435) 259-1063, <owen@livingrivers.org>.

### The Glen Canyon Group Leadership

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& Patrick Diehl (see above)

ORV Chair: Kalen Jones

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Membership Chair: John Weisheit

(see above)

Outings Chair: Dan Kent

(see above)

Wildlife Chair: Dan Kent

(see above)

## DOMI PLATEAU SEISMIC UPDATE

The Yellow Cat 2D Seismic Project is located just east of Arches National Park and overlaps the proposed Dome Plateau Wilderness Area. Earlier this year (see previous issue), The Sierra Club (along with SUWA, The Wilderness Society and NRDC) filed an administrative appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). On February 22, 2002 the IBLA granted a stay, halting the project in its tracks. At that time, the project was 1/2 complete, but had not yet entered the most sensitive, wilderness-quality lands.

The Yellow Cat project, and our initial IBLA victory, garnered considerable media attention, including a New York Times Op-Ed piece by Terry Tempest Williams and stories in several national media outlets. It became something of a poster child for Bush administration energy policy in the intermountain west.

This August we lost the IBLA case. As this goes to press, the seismic contractor is restaking the area, presaging a return of the thumper trucks. A federal court case appealing the IBLA decision is in preparation.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH The Glen Canyon Group

GCG needs help in the following areas

**Membership:** help build community spirit in GCG by organizing regular potlucks. Contact John Weisheit at 435-259-1063 or 259-8077.

**Outings:** help plan and lead Sierra Club hikes or other outings in our area. Contact Dan Kent at 435-259-2248.

**ORV Committee:** help fight ORV abuse in our beautiful red rock country. Contact Kalen Jones at 435-259-8618.

**Local and Political Issues Committee:** we need a new co-chair to help this committee get active and make a difference on Grand County issues. Contact Jean Binyon at 435-259-1633.

## DEMISE OF GRAND COUNTY “ACCESS” COMMITTEE

For the past year, SC members Kalen Jones, Dan Kent, Kevin Walker and John Weisheit have spent considerable time attending meetings of the Grand County “Access” Committee (GCAC). This committee was formed by the Grand County Council at the request of the BLM, in order to provide input on road, trail and ORV issues for an upcoming BLM plan revision.

The GCAC contained both sensible, right-thinking environmentalists and wacky, irrational ORV fanatics, making for much lively (if not productive) debate. (To be fair, we should mention that the GCAC also contained a few polite, rational ORV advocates, as well as people who fell into neither camp.) After several meetings, it became clear to neutral observers that while the enviros were making good-faith efforts to arrive at reasonable policy recommendations, the ORV fanatics were just repeating the same silly, discredited arguments over and over and over again. Eventually, the Grand County Council Members in charge of the GCAC realized that the effort was going nowhere, and they dissolved the committee.

There is a lesson to be learned here (other than the obvious one that a large percentage of pro-ORV, anti-Wilderness advocates are incapable of engaging in rational discussions of these issues). It's that the BLM cannot evade its decision making responsibilities by following the recommendations of “consensus” groups. The BLM needs to listen to a wide variety of public input, and then do what's necessary to protect the resources entrusted to it, even if so doing will anger many local residents.

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**THE PLANET.** This action-packed newsletter for activists is *free* to all Sierra Club leaders and to all Sierra Club members who join the Environmental Rights Network (ERN). Members of the ERN are contacted throughout the year and asked to take action as part of the Club's efforts to preserve and strengthen environmental protection. To join the ERN and receive *The Planet* contact:  
<activist.desk@sierraclub.org>

## News Briefs

Grazing on public land. The BLM Kanab Field Office is in the process of preparing Environmental Assessments on permit renewals for livestock grazing on public lands east of Zion National Park. GCG is collaborating with Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, the Western Watersheds Project, and the Escalante Wilderness Project to prepare comments on these Environmental Assessments (EA).

Get in the loop. Activists on the Southern Utah Environmental List (SUEL) share information with each other regarding environmental problems and opportunities for public involvement. To join the listserv, contact Kevin Walker at: [kwalker@xmission.com](mailto:kwalker@xmission.com).

Grand Canyon National Park and the Colorado River Management Plan. Public comments will be accepted by the National Park Service until November 1, 2002 for this very important Environmental Impact Statement. Help to protect the ecological integrity of the Colorado River in Grand Canyon and to maximize its future protection under the Wilderness Act of 1964. Let the Park Service know that you want a Colorado River Management Plan that will:

1. Bring the Park in compliance with the National Park Service Organic Act by developing a plan to restore the ecological integrity lost to Grand Canyon as a result of the operations of Glen Canyon Dam including: restoration of flows, sediment and natural water temperature; a recovery program for all native species known to exist in the Canyon prior to the operation of Glen Canyon Dam, and the eradication of all alien species that are impacting natives.

2. Comply with the recommendations of the Park's 1977 Wilderness proposal, and manage the river corridor as outlined in the 1964 Wilderness Act. Ensure that all management decisions reflect "minimum requirement" in terms of Park Service and visitor impact as prescribed in the Wilderness Act.

3. Phase out the use of motorized river transport so that all travel occurs at river pace. Motorized transport is unnecessary and inconsistent with the mandate that the river corridor be managed as wilderness.

4. Provide for full partnership with Native American tribes affected by the Plan, including

mechanisms to protect and restore sacred sites and opportunities for Tribes to operate any concession services still deemed necessary once the Plan is complete.

5. Provide for an equitable system for individuals to access the river corridor that does not bias against those who cannot afford to buy their way onto a commercial river trip. Encourage the establishment of a waiting list for all people. Once at the top of the list, the permittee can determine how they wish to travel down river, either self-guided or with the assistance of a commercial company.

6. Following its completion, require the development of a "Needs Assessment" for concessionaire services to determine at what level such services need to continue on the river. This assessment must be completed prior to renewing any concessionaire contracts beyond 2005. You can mail your comments to:

Linda Jalbert; Colorado River Management Plan; Grand Canyon National Park; PO Box 129  
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023; 928-638-7909 •  
email:<[gcra-crpm@nps.gov](mailto:gcra-crpm@nps.gov)>

Jet Ski's at Lake Powell. Comments are being accepted for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement conducted by the National Park Service concerning jet ski usage at Lake Powell. The web site to visit is: <[www.nps.gov/glca/plan.htm](http://www.nps.gov/glca/plan.htm)>. Comments can be sent to: Superintendent Kitty Roberts; Glen Canyon National Recreation Area; P.O. Box 1507; Page, AZ 86040-1507; <[GLCA@den.nps.gov](mailto:GLCA@den.nps.gov)>.



Marcia Hanscom, Sierra Club national board member, at Hoover Dam defending the restoration of the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park on June 17, 2002, the centennial for the Bureau of Reclamation.

## Update on White Mesa Campaign

On August 28, 2002, Judge Alan Rosenthal ruled against the Sierra Club in a Nuclear Regulatory Commission hearing regarding International Uranium Corporation's (IUC's) application to bring 17,000 tons of radioactive lead sludge to the White Mesa Uranium Mill from Molycorp's bastnasite mine at Mountain Pass, California.

The ruling unfairly cites IUC's expert testimony that the mill's tailings ponds won't leak and the leak detection system is adequate, while never once mentioning — much less considering — the volumes of expert testimony and evidence that GCG presented showing that the ponds will and probably already do leak, and that the leak detection system cannot detect problems until contamination is already in the groundwater.

The campaign to stop the Molycorp sludge has been a real community effort. The battle was launched in Spring 2001 by Ken Sleight and Herb McHarg, with help from Rosalie Reilly. The Utah Chapter Sierra Club pitched in with financial assistance and expertise from veteran activists Ivan Weber and Cindy King. This year the campaign was spearheaded by Tori Woodard, Sarah Fields, and Bill Love from the Glen Canyon Group, with help from John Weisheit, Karen Robinson, Jean Binyon, David Orr, Owen Lammers, experts Paul Grossl, Roger Coulombe, and Tim Chervick, and others who wish to remain anonymous. Thanks, team, for the great work!

GCG's Nuclear Waste Committee decided not to appeal Judge Rosenthal's decision. Instead, we are adopting a whole new strategy to fight the White Mesa Mill. **Stay tuned!**



Protesting at White Mesa in 2001

## GCG's Fall 2002 Election Schedule

*This is the second election announcement with the first being a postcard sent to the members of the Glen Canyon Group on September 3rd.*

Two positions on the GCG Executive Committee (ExCom) are up for election this year. The winners will serve for calendar years 2003-2004. This year's ExCom sent a postcard to all GCG members notifying you about this opportunity to run for election.

The postmark deadline to apply to be a candidate for next year's ExCom was October 1, 2002. If you missed the deadline, you can still run for election if you get 15 GCG members to sign a petition nominating you. Write a 300-word description of your experience in the Sierra Club or your activist background and why you would like to serve on the GCG ExCom. Mail the petition and the self-description on or before October 25, 2002, to Nomination Committee, Sierra Club Glen Canyon Group, P.O. Box 622, Moab UT 84532.

Below are the deadlines for this year's GCG election:

- October 1: Postmark deadline to apply to be a candidate for next year's ExCom.
- October 25: Postmark deadline to submit candidate petitions and ballot issue petitions.
- November 1: Eligible voter list will be produced. If you want to vote in this year's GCG ExCom election, be sure you are a GCG member and your dues are paid up before this date.
- November 15: Ballots will be mailed to all eligible GCG members.
- December 14: Postmark deadline to return your ballot to the Election Committee.
- December 19: The Election Committee will count the ballots on this day at 1 p.m. at the Creamery/Ice Cream Shop/Living Rivers office, 21 North Main Street, Moab, Utah. Candidates or their authorized representatives may observe the ballot counting.

The winners will be announced electronically on the Southern Utah Environmental List (SUEL) listserv, and in the Utah Sierran newsletter and the GCG newsletter.

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

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### **MARK YOUR POLITICAL CALENDAR**

Election Day is approaching, so it's time to start thinking about our representation in Congress, in the State Legislature, and in our respective County offices, including Commission or Council seats.

All registered voters in the Glen Canyon Group's area will have the opportunity to vote for U.S. Congress in the newly redistricted Second District. The huge new District 2 includes the following counties: Daggett, Duchesne, Emery, Garfield, Grand, Iron, Kane, Piute, San Juan, Uintah, Utah, Wasatch, Washington, Wayne, and part of Salt Lake City.

There will also be elections for the State House of Representatives, state and local School Boards, Judicial and County offices. Grand County will be electing Council members in Districts 1 and 3 and one at-large. Other County officers to be elected are: Assessor, Sheriff, Attorney, Clerk/Auditor, Recorder, Treasurer and Surveyer.

Two GCG ExCom members are running for political office on the Green Party ticket. GCG Chair John Weisheit is running for the State House of Representatives in District 55. GCG Vice Chair Patrick Diehl is running for US Congress in District 2.

Be sure you are registered to vote at your current residence. Find out where candidates stand on issues and problems that concern you. Vote on November 5. If you will be out of town that day, find out how to vote in advance or by absentee ballot. Your County Clerk can answer any questions you have about these procedures. Here are the County Clerk phone numbers:

Carbon - 636-3224 • Emery - 381-5106  
Garfield - 676-8826 • Grand - 259-1322  
Kane - 644-2458 • San Juan - 587-3223  
Wayne - 836-2731