

#1



Colorado River in the Grand Canyon

Arizona

Threat: Massive construction project, mining pollution, groundwater depletion

At Risk: An irreplaceable national treasure

The River

Photo: Tim Palmer

The mighty Colorado River flows 1,450 miles from its headwaters atop Poudre Pass in Rocky Mountain National Park to the Gulf of California in Mexico. Draining over 246,000 square miles, quenching the thirst of over 35 million people, and fueling a \$1.4 trillion dollar economy, the Colorado River is truly the lifeblood of the American Southwest.

Dominating a 277-mile stretch of the Colorado River in Northern Arizona, the Grand Canyon is one of the world's most iconic landscapes. A World Heritage Site and one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, the Grand Canyon awes and inspires nearly five million visitors per year with its grandeur and expanse. It is a sought-after destination for recreation and rejuvenation, and is considered a sacred landscape to more than ten Native American tribes who have called the region home for millennia.

The Grand Canyon is one of our greatest symbols of the values of wild nature. The canyon represents more than 1.7 billion years of geologic majesty and is home to wildlife including bighorn sheep and mountain lion, and fish such as the endangered humpback chub. Dozens of creeks, springs, and tributaries connect with the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, including the Little Colorado, Kanab Creek, Havasu Creek, and Bright Angel Creek.

The Threats

The Colorado River in the Grand Canyon faces a battery of threats, each with a critical decision point this year:

Summary

Millions of Americans recognize the Grand Canyon as one of the most iconic landscapes on the planet. But this natural masterpiece of the Colorado River faces a battery of threats. A proposed industrial-scale construction project in the wild heart of the canyon, radioactive pollution from uranium mining, and a proposed expansion of groundwater pumping at Tusayan, all threaten the Grand Canyon's wild nature and unique experience that belongs to every American. Unless the Department of the Interior acts to stop these threats, one of our nation's greatest natural treasures will be scarred forever.



American Rivers
Rivers Connect Us®

2015 America's Most Endangered Rivers®
www.americanrivers.org

The Escalade project is a proposal to build a two million square foot development on the rim near the east end of the canyon that includes a tram to the bottom of the Grand Canyon at the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers. The Escalade project would forever damage the canyon's remote, wild character. If the Escalade project moves forward, 10,000 people per day could crowd a pair of walkways along the edge of the river in the canyon. The riverside development includes a restaurant, gift shop, and restrooms that would irrevocably scar this national treasure. There are serious concerns about noise, pollution, and human waste. The confluence is a sacred site to the Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, Havasupai, and other tribes, and is one of the most picturesque and unique experiences in all of the Grand Canyon.



Photo: American Rivers

In addition to the urgent threat of the Escalade project, there are other attacks on the Colorado River and the Grand Canyon's health and wild nature. Active and inactive uranium mines on the north and south rims of the canyon threaten clean water. Current proposals exist to revive some of the inactive mines, and expand the exploration of currently active mines. The current moratorium on uranium mining around the Grand Canyon only applies to new mining claims. Nearly two decades of monitoring has documented radioactive contamination of a key Grand Canyon creek by an abandoned mine that ceased operations in 1969.

Finally, a foreign investment group is planning to expand the town of Tusayan, which lies just outside the south entrance to Grand Canyon National Park. The project includes a spa, dude ranch, hotels, and more than 2,200 homes – representing a 1,000 percent expansion of the current population. This expansion may require a substantial withdrawal of groundwater from the already-declining aquifer in an increasingly drought-stressed area of the country, and could negatively impact ecologically important seeps and springs within the Grand Canyon itself.



Photo: Jessie Thomas-Blate

What Must Be Done

Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and the Obama Administration have a responsibility to all Americans to take action and use their existing authorities to protect the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon and its unique natural and recreational values from this battery of threats. Specifically, the Secretary must initiate a dialogue

focused on alternatives to the proposed Escalade project, which could provide viable and sustainable economic development opportunities for the Navajo Nation while protecting the Colorado River and National Park resources.

Additionally, the existing moratorium on mining should be made permanent and comprehensive, including a complete halt to all uranium mining around the canyon. Finally, expansion at Tusayan should not move forward until a comprehensive review of local water resources, a determination that they are adequate to support the development without adverse impacts to the Colorado River and Grand Canyon National Park resources, and a plan is put into place to conserve and manage those resources sustainably.

How You Can Help

- Go to www.americanrivers.org/GrandCanyon and take action
- Retweet from @americanrivers on Twitter and use the hashtags #MER2015 and #GrandCanyon
- Share Grand Canyon posts on [Facebook](#)
- Find out more about the [Grand Canyon Trust](#)

For More Information:

Sinjin Eberle
American Rivers
(720) 373-0864
seberle@americanrivers.org

Roger Clark
Grand Canyon Trust
(928) 774-7488
or (928) 890-7515
rclark@grandcanyontrust.org