

Don't Flood Cathedral in the Desert and Fort Moqui!

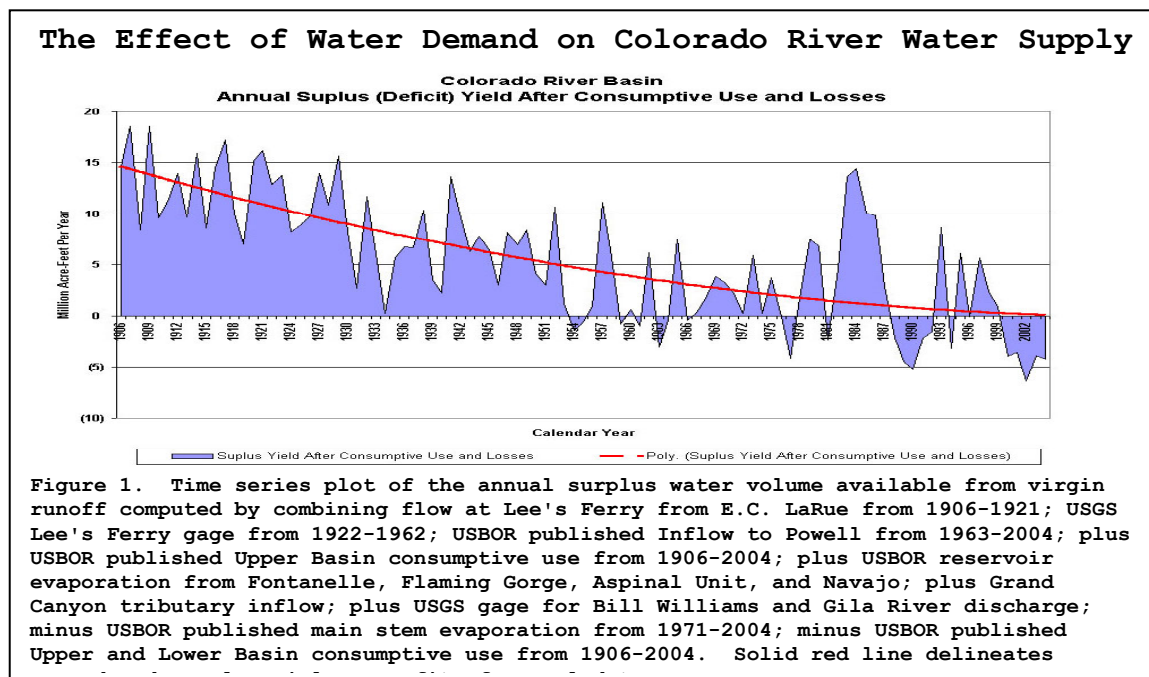
Glen Canyon Institute 3/25/05

Christopher Peterson, Executive Director: 801.363.4450

In 1963, Glen Canyon, the wild heart of the Colorado Plateau, was flooded by Lake Powell for water storage. Backing up the surplus waters of the Colorado River nearly 200 miles, Glen Canyon Dam created 200 mile-long Lake Powell, which generates a small amount of electricity, and provides a water skiing destination in the middle of the desert. Legendary Glen Canyon's 125 major side canyons were lost when the dam was constructed and the Grand Canyon and Glen Canyon ecosystems have been badly damaged due to the dam.

Water Demand has surpassed Supply in the Southwest: *Era of Water Surplus is over*

Today, the water surplus at Lake Powell, accumulated over the past half-century, is nearly gone (see Fig. 1). When the dam was built, demand was far less, but today's demand for water across the basin exceeds the supply of water available from the Colorado River. Demand is predicted to continue to grow, leaving no extra water to store at Lake Powell in the future. Instead, water shortages and transfers from agriculture to urban use will prevail with captured flood waters immediately distributed to thirsty cities. Lake Powell was a "one trick pony" whose usefulness has expired.



Growing demand for Western Water is Draining Lake Powell

Despite premature reports that the drought is over and reservoirs across the West may again be full soon, it is crucial to recognize that growing water demand is draining Lake Powell; the drought has only highlighted the issue. Lake Powell will rise and fall in the coming years as political maneuvering for valuable water as the debate about Western Water builds. Occasional

water surpluses at Lake Powell will be quickly withdrawn for thirsty cities both up and downstream from Glen Canyon. Also, the depletion and recharge processes will be compounded by the effects of on-going climate change in the West.

Lake Powell wastes water

Powell reservoir loses on average 800,000 acre-feet of water annually to evaporation and bank seepage. This is three times the state of Nevada's Colorado River allocation and enough to supply the city of Los Angeles for at least a year. Water managers throughout the West are taking steps toward moving the remaining Colorado River surplus water to other storage facilities in underground aquifers, headwater and off-stream reservoirs, and to Lake Mead.

Lake Mead is enough. Leave Glen Canyon alone.

Lake Powell will never be kept full again. Recent studies on the future hydrology of the Colorado River demonstrate that Lake Powell will be below its current 35% of full most of the next century. Lake Mead, alone, is adequate for seasonal water storage. The occasional flood captures at Lake Powell can easily be stored in existing reservoir and aquifer facilities elsewhere across the basin. Water managers are recognizing the need and opportunities developing, and are taking steps to ensure their own respective water rights are protected. Those steps will render the water storage purpose of Lake Powell unnecessary and obsolete.

America's Lost National Park:

Protect Cathedral in the Desert and the "new" Glen Canyon

Glen Canyon is legendary for its cultural significance, as well as for unparalleled beauty, with lush waterfalls, stone arches, soaring mesas, twisting narrows, hoodoos, natural bridges, ancient ruins, and rock art. Glen Canyon's splendor has been lost for forty years, but now this spectacular lost canyon wonderland is found and has triggered significant international attention. People around the world are clamoring to witness a free flowing Colorado River breathing new life into places like Cathedral in the Desert, with ancient ruins and priceless historical sites emerging from the depths of Lake Powell. The importance of protecting these precious resources is essential in light of increased visitation to the emerging landscape.

Right now, hundreds of spectacular features in Glen Canyon landscape have reemerged and the canyon is naturally restoring itself. More than 40 miles of both the Colorado and San Juan Rivers, and hundreds of miles of side-canyons are rapidly recovering. The biological heart of the Colorado River is proving remarkably resilient as vegetation, native fish, birds and the entire spectrum of desert wildlife species are reclaiming the revealed landscape. Glen Canyon is simply a National Park-caliber landscape that must be protected "unimpaired for future generations", and allowed to naturally restore to its original splendor.

The growing number of visitors to these fragile restoring canyons presents a significant management challenge to the National Park Service in Glen Canyon as the agency adapts to the management challenges presented by the changing user impacts. Precious cultural, historical, and biological resources must be protected against visitor impacts. As visitor use shifts within Glen Canyon, "America's Lost National Park" should be managed as the keystone of the Grand Circle of National Parks across the rugged Colorado Plateau from Grand Canyon to Mesa Verde & Capitol Reef to Rainbow Bridge.

Restoring Glen Canyon will save Grand Canyon

The environmental impacts on Grand Canyon caused by Glen Canyon Dam are undeniable. The failing health of the fragile Grand Canyon ecosystem are well documented by the Federal Government and the tribes. Endangered Species populations in the Grand Canyon continue to drop while nutrient-rich sediment deposits grow rapidly behind Glen Canyon Dam at the rate of 30,000 dump-truck loads daily. With the water storage purpose of Glen Canyon Dam becoming less valuable as demand outstrips supply, the protection mandate of the Grand Canyon Protection Act and the Glen Canyon Dam 1996 EIS must be reconsidered immediately in the face of likely extirpation of Humpback Chub in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River.

Glen Canyon should be protected now

Glen Canyon Institute is currently working to ensure the emerging resources within Glen Canyon are protected and documented. Right now, reservoir levels are projected to temporarily rise 40+ feet, once again drowning incredible features such as legendary Cathedral in the Desert, Fort Moqui, and Gregory Natural Bridge. They will be under water for a few months until the water levels recede again in early fall. This extra water could easily be stored in half-empty Lake Mead.

In the short term, surplus water should be stored in Lake Mead, where there is ample capacity. Open the gates, let the river flow through Glen Canyon.

However, beginning next month, the seasonal rise in reservoir levels will begin to flood these recently emerged treasures again....and they will be underwater for a few months until the water recedes once again early in the fall. This extra water could easily be stored in half-empty Lake Mead reservoir.

Fill Mead First- Let the river flow: Save Fort Moqui and Cathedral in the Desert.

Glen Canyon Institute advocates that the emerging resources in Glen Canyon should be protected and studied. Lake Powell is rapidly becoming a relic of the past and the importance of protecting Glen Canyon and Grand Canyon should be studied immediately by the United States Congress.

Restore and Protect Glen Canyon: Free the Colorado River.

www.glencanyon.org