

The Glen Canyon Dam Declaration for the Restoration of Glen Canyon and the Colorado River

We gather here today at Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River to inaugurate the "Century of River Restoration," celebrating a new approach to and relationship with our rivers, and especially this river, the Mighty Colorado, a river once known as "The American Nile." We seek the restoration of the Colorado River and its tributaries to living rivers that support both their ecosystems and their communities.

Authorized by the United States Congress in 1956 and constructed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation with US taxpayer dollars, Glen Canyon Dam was completed in 1963. Its gates closed on the free-flowing Colorado River on March 23 of that year. The 710-foot high dam created the second-largest reservoir in the United States, which today provides 27 million acre-feet of water storage, 1,300 megawatts of hydroelectric generating capacity, and approximately four million user-days per year of artificial lake recreation.

In providing these services Glen Canyon Dam has been responsible for:

- Inundation of more than 255 miles of some of the most spectacular river canyons the world has ever known;
- Ongoing decline of the integrity of the Grand Canyon's ecosystem, including disruption of vital sediment transport processes and natural river flow and temperature regimes, and the acceleration of erosional processes;
- Elimination or alteration of critical habitat for several endangered fish and plant species in Glen Canyon and below the dam;
- Pollution of the Colorado River from motorized watercraft exhaust, oil (an amount equivalent to the Exxon Valdez spill every ten years), and inundation of a uranium mill and tailings at the mouth of White Canyon;
- Destruction of tens of thousands of documented and undocumented archeological and sacred sites, including the violation of the Colorado River Storage Project Act by inundating a significant portion of Rainbow Bridge National Monument--one of the most culturally significant and sacred sites for the Native American tribes of the Colorado Plateau region;
- Evaporation and seepage loss of huge quantities of water, approaching or exceeding one million acre-feet per year;
- Ongoing accumulation and aggradation of sediments in the upper Colorado River and San Juan River arms of the reservoir, with increasing concentration of toxic metals over time, and
- Continuing and increasing safety risk to communities downstream due to the potential for catastrophic failure as the dam and its spillways age.

All these impacts result in significant societal economic losses that are not being paid for by the Glen Canyon Dam's current beneficiaries.

The power generated by Glen Canyon Dam can be replaced by alternative energy-generating facilities in the region, and/or energy conservation and efficiency measures. Similarly, loss in water storage behind Glen Canyon Dam can be mitigated with existing water storage elsewhere in the basin, and/or implementation of aggressive water conservation programs including more efficient irrigation technologies and cropping patterns. Other reservoirs in the region can continue to provide motorized flatwater recreation opportunities; a restored Glen Canyon will provide human-powered river recreation and hiking opportunities in abundance.

Dams are not permanent. Sometime within the next 150 years, sediment stored in Lake Powell Reservoir will reach a level such that the dam will likely require decommissioning. But waiting for engineering concerns to force Lake Powell Reservoir to be drained will keep downstream communities at risk, further imperil endangered ecosystems, and greatly reduce the potential for successful restoration of Glen Canyon.

The role of Glen Canyon Dam in meeting future needs is one defined by current societal values and knowledge. We have learned from the unexpected and unintended consequences of Glen Canyon Dam, and as we begin a new century, we can and should legitimately question many of the assumptions that led a previous generation to construct this facility. We have entered an era of river restoration and energy and water conservation, a time in which we can responsibly and prudently shape a new history for the dam, Glen Canyon and the Colorado River.

Therefore:

- The Bureau of Reclamation should begin the process of developing then implementing a decommissioning plan for Glen Canyon Dam, including a restoration and recovery plan for those areas inundated by its reservoir and those communities adversely impacted by the reservoir's draining.
- The Bureau of Reclamation should establish a federal laboratory to serve as the nation's primary research facility for river and riverine habitat restoration, and give strong consideration to locating this facility in the town of Page, Arizona. In building their own large dams, many countries emulated what they saw as the success of Glen Canyon Dam. It is fitting, therefore, for this site to offer new inspiration with an international center of excellence in state of the art river restoration and dam decommissioning research and development.
- All new management plans affecting the Colorado River watershed should undergo rigorous analysis of basin-wide impacts and a complete assessment of the potential for dam decommissioning in meeting the plan's objectives.
- No new dams within the Colorado River watershed should be constructed, nor should existing dams be reconstructed in the event of their failure.

- Operating licenses should be required for all federal dams, as has long been the case with all non-federal dams. Federal dams must be subject to periodic re-licensing reviews to ensure compliance with environmental laws and safety standards, and to provide meaningful opportunities for public participation in decisions about the environmental, social, and safety impacts of these projects.
- The Bureau of Reclamation should provide funding necessary to support scientific research on the biological and habitat requirements of the endangered native fish of the Colorado River, and to ensure the full recovery of these species, and
- The National Park Service should implement a program to quantify, monitor and evaluate the presence of a wide range of pollutants including toxic and radioactive metals, petroleum compounds, bacteria, and other contaminants in Lake Powell Reservoir, and the Park Service should ensure full compliance with all laws protecting water quality within Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

Signed here at Glen Canyon Dam on the occasion of the "Colorado River Restoration Celebration and Rendezvous" on this the Fourteenth Day of March, known throughout the world as the Third Annual International Day of Action Against Dams and For Rivers, Water and Life, in the millennial year 2000, by the following undersigned advocates of the global movement for dam decommissioning and river restoration.

We hereby vow to carry this message to friends and colleagues throughout the Colorado River watershed, across the United States, Indian Nations, and around the world. All are invited to join us in signing this declaration, educating the public about its purpose, and supporting the goals stated herein.