



## **Upstream & Downstream Voices: Uniting Native Nations & Communities to Protect the Colorado River and its tributaries, people and sacred places**

Native Nations and grassroots indigenous activists joined with environmental and climate justice activists from Utah and Arizona for meetings, ceremony and public events on May 22-24, 2016 in southern Utah as part of the growing “Upstream – Downstream” alliance to protect the Colorado River, its tributaries, people and sacred places.

Participants in the alliance events included tribal leaders and Mohave Elders of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, the White Mesa Ute Community/Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, tribal members from Hopi, Navajo and the Uintah Ouray Ute Tribes, Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice, Living Rivers, Uranium Watch, Grand Canyon Trust, the Canyon Country Rising Tide and the Gila River Indian community.

These events were a follow up to a strategy meeting organized in February, 2016 by Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice and the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe. That meeting was hosted at the Fort Mojave Tribe’s cultural office, and brought together representatives of many lower Colorado River tribes with indigenous, climate and environmental justice activists. The lower river tribes are concerned about pollution threats and desecration of sacred sites in their region, but are very much concerned about similar problems in the upper Colorado River basin in Utah including the proposed nuclear power plant in Green River and the uranium mill next to the White Mesa Ute Community.



On May 23rd we met at the White Mesa Ute Community with tribal members and their Ute Mountain Ute tribal council representative and heard about the pollution and health problems associated with the uranium mill located directly next to the reservation. The Energy Fuels Resources facility is the last uranium mill in the U.S. and was built on top of hundreds of ancient and sacred sites including burials and kivas. The mill and its disposal ponds emit radioactive pollution into the air, land and water. White

Mesa tribal members and Ute Mountain Tribal Councilman Malcolm Lehi spoke eloquently about his concerns and stated that the tribal government wants to see the uranium mill closed and cleaned up.



*Greenaction photo: David Harper & Amanda Barrera of the Colorado River Indian Tribes and Howard Dennis of the Hopi tribe speak on KZMU Radio, Moab, Utah*

On May 24<sup>th</sup> we were given a tour by U.S. Department of Energy officials of the Uranium Mine Tailings Remedial Action site (the former Atlas Minerals uranium mill) along the Colorado River in Moab, Utah. We raised concerns about recent reductions in federal funding for cleanup of radioactive and toxic contaminated soil and debris. Contamination from this site along with many abandoned uranium mining sites along the Colorado and Green Rivers pollutes the rivers and ecosystem.



*Greenaction Photo: UMTRA uranium tailings contamination site along the Colorado River, Moab, Utah*

Forty people participated in an afternoon intensive strategy session focused on common efforts we can work on together. Participants agreed to form an ongoing alliance in this effort. Key issues we agreed to work on initially are supporting tribal efforts to close the White Mesa uranium mill, calling for full

funding for the Moab uranium cleanup, defeating the Green River nuclear power plant, and supporting the multi-tribe effort to win federal protection of the sacred Bears Ears region in southern Utah.

On the evening of May 24<sup>th</sup>, a standing room only crowd of 150 people attended the “Upstream – Downstream Voices” Film Festival and Forum held at the Grand Center in Moab. The evening featured four short films as well as speakers from Native Nations in Utah and Arizona.



*Greenaction photo: White Mesa Ute Community members Thelma Whiskers & Yolanda Badback speak at Upstream Downstream Film Festival and Forum, Moab, Utah, May 24, 2016*

The four films shown were:

**Half Life: the story of American's last uranium mill**

In southeast Utah lies America's last remaining Uranium Mill. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe worries that lax regulations and the mill's aging infrastructure threaten their water supply and way of life.

**Marking of a Milestone**

The Colorado River Indian Tribes is working to protect the river, their culture and sacred sites, and are facing challenges from industrial scale solar power projects in the Mojave Desert.

**Defending the Sacred**

Story of the long battle by the Colorado River Native Nations Alliance and environmental justice allies that defeated a nuclear waste dump proposed on sacred land at Ward Valley near the Colorado River.

**Bear's Ears: The Movement to Protect a Cultural Landscape**

Native Nations are working to protect the Bear's Ears area, a place rich in indigenous history and culture in a landscape of canyons, mesas, arches, red rocks and the Bear's Ears twin buttes.





# UPSTREAM VOICES DOWNSTREAM VOICES FILM FESTIVAL

**Tuesday, May 24th // 7pm  
Grand Center (182 500 W. Moab, UT)**

## **FEATURING SHORT FILMS:**

- + HALF LIFE:  
The story of America's Last  
Uranium Mill**
- + MARKING OF A  
MILESTONE**
- + DEFENDING THE  
SACRED**
- + BEARS EARS -  
The Movement to Protect a  
Cultural Landscape**

**GUEST SPEAKERS from the COLORADO RIVER INDIAN TRIBES,  
WHITE MESA UTE COMMUNITY, HOPI TRIBE, NAVAJO NATION, &  
THE UINTAH OURAY UTE TRIBE**

**Sponsored by: Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice // Living Rivers // Uranium Watch // Canyon Country Rising Tide  
\*\*DONATIONS ACCEPTED**

**PROTECTING THE COLORADO RIVER, HER TRIBUTARIES,  
PEOPLE, AND SACRED PLACES**