

Grand Canyon River Groups Achieve Historic Breakthrough Settlement Offer Joint Proposal on Key Colorado River Management Issues

For Immediate Release

January 25, 2005

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Flagstaff, AZ – Today, leading Grand Canyon boater groups that represent both professionally-outfitted and self-outfitted recreational users of the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park announced an historic agreement to work together to resolve long-standing river management controversies at the Grand Canyon.

The coalition of participating groups, including the Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association, the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association, American Whitewater and the Grand Canyon River Runners Association, has filed a set of joint management recommendations with the National Park Service regarding how best to revise and update the Colorado River Management Plan.

“A lot of people have worked very hard for many years to achieve this historic breakthrough,” said Richard Martin of the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association. “This is a major achievement that we hope will help bring about real and lasting solutions to some very difficult problems that Grand Canyon river lovers on all sides have wrestled with for years.”

The groups’ core recommendations are for a small number of important modifications of the National Park Service river management proposal currently open for public review and comment. The groups are building on the NPS proposal, not proposing an entirely new plan or concept. The recommendations include equal annual allocations of commercial and non-commercial use, support for the park’s proposal to continue with an appropriate type and level of motorized use, seasonal adjustments that would result in fewer river trips happening at one time, and improvements to the non-commercial river trip permitting system.

“This effort succeeded because people on all sides wanted to move past endless controversy and divisiveness to find real solutions to real problems. It’s time to heal and reunite the Grand Canyon boating community,” said Jason Robertson of American Whitewater. “To do that, each of the groups has been willing to compromise and look at issues in new ways. There’s still a long way to go, but we’re excited because we think we’re off to a good start.”

The groups’ joint recommendations filed with the NPS state in part: “The joint recommendations are the product of what we regard as a major and historic achievement, the coming together of Grand Canyon river user groups that traditionally have been embroiled in deep conflict regarding core Colorado River management issues. We have worked very hard to move beyond past differences. Our united purposes are to constructively participate in and support the NPS in its effort to advance Grand Canyon river management and, most importantly, to meaningfully resolve major outstanding controversies. Our shared focus is on problem solving and the implementation of sound, responsible and lasting solutions to outstanding issues.”

“We hope very much that the NPS will take a good hard look at our proposal,” said Pam Whitney of the Grand Canyon River Runners Association. “We’ve worked hard to respond not only to the issues but to all of the NPS laws and policies that govern how the river in Grand Canyon National Park is managed. We’ve taken these matters very seriously, and we believe we’ve come up with a very responsible set of recommendations.”

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The groups' joint Colorado River management recommendations document is available on each of the participating groups' websites. The website addresses for each are listed below.

The **Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association** (www.gcroa.org) is a non-profit trade association whose membership consists of the sixteen independent river-running concessionaires who make available to the public professionally-outfitted and guided Grand Canyon whitewater rafting trips, while working in partnership with the NPS to help conserve and protect the resources of the Park. Each year, the Association's member companies assist roughly 19,000 people experience the Grand Canyon by river.

The **Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association** (www.gcpba.org) is a non-profit public interest group formed in 1996. Its purpose is to represent and advocate for the interests of recreational river runners in regards to management issues surrounding the Grand Canyon. More than one thousand river runners have joined the all-volunteer organization, which played a key role in NPS decisions to resume river management planning after the effort was first cancelled in 2000.

American Whitewater (www.americanwhitewater.org) is a non-profit public interest group that works to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to use and enjoy them safely. American Whitewater represents nearly 8,000 members worldwide and an additional 80,000 boaters through its 115 local or regional affiliate canoe and kayak clubs. Many of its members have visited or seek to visit the Colorado River within the Park and are currently on the non-commercial permit "waiting-list."

The **Grand Canyon River Runners Association** (www.gcriverrunners.org) is a non-profit public interest group committed to the protection of the Colorado River corridor within the Grand Canyon in an unimpaired condition while preserving public access to the Grand Canyon river experience for those who rely on professional river services. Because both are necessary to appropriately respond to the public's diverse needs, this all-volunteer organization with 1,800 members supports both motorized and non-motorized Colorado River trip opportunities.

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