

The Confluence

...is published quarterly by and for Colorado Plateau River Guides. Help us grow. Join the membership today!

Colorado Plateau River Guides is a non-profit organization dedicated to:

- * Protecting the rivers of the Colorado Plateau.
- * Setting the highest standards for the river profession.
- * Providing the best possible river experience.

Guide Membership is open to anyone who has worked in the river industry.

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We need articles, artwork, poetry, stories, and opinions. If you use a computer, please send text for an IBM PC with WP 5.1 on a 5 1/4" floppy.

From the Eddy

by John Weisheit

The comment period for the Draft EIS on the operation of Glen Canyon Dam ended April 11. Personally, I felt extremely frustrated when composing my letter of opinion. Mostly because my personal desire is to have Glen Canyon Dam removed and yet I am fully cognizant that such an aspiration is quixotic. Or is it? Glen Canyon Dam has a life expectancy and will be decommissioned someday anyway. Silt aggradation or structural failure, whichever comes first, will force us to face the eventuality. The GDC EIS will serve to reform Western water policy. How far will the reform go? When the day comes for a decommissioned Glen Canyon Dam, will we as a society be ready? Will we have new technologies implemented to provide electricity, water, and food? In my view, the dam is already dead. Might as well start now. Free the gates!

In the meantime, the immediate reality is this: A huge political soup kitchen with a constituency that spreads from the Grand Ditch to Laguna Salada. The menu for today's special reads a Modified Low Fluctuating Flow with scheduled high water releases to build beaches and improve fish breeding habitats. Okay, but what's on the dessert tray? I hope to see the reality of an endangered fish recovery program that gives criterion to the relatively intact habitat above Glen Canyon Dam. I don't want the height of the spillway gates at Glen Canyon Dam increased to submerge yet more riparian habitat in Cataract Canyon, the San Juan River, and all the small tributary streams within Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. I also hope that the momentum has started for a scientific study of the entire basin's ecosystem at reasonable costs with minimal impacts. And please - no more water projects - I find my thirst is quenched!

Special Thanks

As you all know the "sour dough" November meeting of Grand Canyon River Guides fermented into a baked Colorado Plateau River Guides loaf. Some other things were cooking that day, master nutritionists Sarah Martin and Dennis Silva.

Apologies

When we went to press for the first issue, we tabled an article about the new boat ramp at Clay Hills Crossing on the San Juan River written by Bill Bishop. Unfortunately, the article did not appear in the text. This was a computer glitch we did not observe until it was too late. Bill, we're very sorry! The article appears in this issue.

Bill has a wonderful collection of Desert Magazine, with wonderful articles about the Colorado Plateau that are now true classics of river running history. Bill is gracious enough to make copies of articles to help river historians with their research. Contact CPRG.

The Prez Says

by Susette DeCoster-Weisheit

Welcome to summer! The other day, as I was rowing the last few miles of Westwater Canyon against the wind, I looked around and realized that spring was fast-fading to brown here in the canyons. I also realized that the next issue of The Confluence was still strewn along the stairs in our house -- unfinished. So with a day-off and laundry in the wash, I have set down once again to update you on the turn-of-events at CPRG.

A big thanks goes out to Tex's Riverways and The "Three D's" for hosting our Spring Meeting on April 9 in their warehouse. Due to the efforts of our Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer, and 19 members the meeting was a success. Although I was on the river and unable to attend the meeting, I got a full update and would like to pass some details on to you.

José Tajade, from Sheri Griffith River Expeditions, spoke regarding Workman's Compensation (WC) and needed reforms. Utah guides are among the highest use percentage for WC withholdings. Compared to Arizona Grand Canyon Guides at 6% our Utah 20% seems outrageous.

How can we change rates? According to a WC representative speaker at the Utah Guides and Outfitters meeting this spring, we can only hope to bring rates down if the incidents are reduced. What can guides do to help? Safety. Most injuries occur during rigging and de-rigging. Ask for help in lifting (food coolers, water coolers, motors, etc.). It is not a question of if you can lift something alone; but, rather a question of should you lift it alone. Much of the equipment is large and awkward. Watch for abuse and be willing to remind your fellow guides they need to take care. Talk with your employer about offering incentive programs; fewer injuries bring higher returns and less equipment damage.

It was suggested that incident reduction is only part of the problem and that fraudulent claims are also a contributor. What can be done about fraudulent claims? Outfitters may be the key in the reduction of fraud. After medical approval, outfitters can by law request the claimer return to work and perform suitable light duty work. This in turn reduces the time the injured party draws against WC and reduces the possibility that someone can take a paid vacation at the expense of the guides paycheck and outfitters profits.

Jeanne Treadway of Canyonlands Natural History Association (CNHA) attended to present CPRG with a proposal for non-profit status. CNHA is a non-profit organization

and they have established a non-profit "umbrella" called the "Canyon Country Volunteers". They have offered to accept CPRG under that umbrella. This would allow CPRG non-profit status as well as some use of CNHA's office equipment and personnel. Why? Because our missions set out to achieve cohesive goals. What do they want in return? Cooperation in achieving our missions. What do we give them? Our book work. They will maintain our accounting with a yearly audit and we gain the security that we will not be responsible for a tax error. Sounds too easy? Well, CNHA has been and continues to be a key force in the protection of the canyons and as a non-profit organization they divert any profits to the lands and river ways they are trying to protect by means of direct funding and through education. CNHA views CPRG as possible means in achieving such goals.

Westwater Ranger Station underwent some changes. The gravel pit operation is gone. Skip is gone and will be sorely missed; however, he can be found not so far away in Desolation Canyon. We are now greeted by Alvin, Chad (returning), and Chuck -- welcome. You may see Doreen in Westwater, she is busy doing wildlife sightings and monitors. There is a bald eagle nesting at Mee Canyon, a Golden at miners cabin and another bald 2 miles below the Ranger station. River otters were introduced once again on the Gunnison River and once again they're moving downstream. If you see something interesting, help Doreen out by writing down the information: the what, where, when, and drop it off at the ranger station on your next trip.

Westwater is getting some much needed attention this year. The miner that bulldozed into the miner's cabin area last year is in trouble. His bulldozing violated four different ecological acts so most hope we have seen the last of him and his destruction. The new ramp at Cisco take-out is making life easier for guides and private boaters alike. Westwater is being considered once again for Wild and Scenic designation; however, it is going to take some letters from us guides and from our guests as well to get things underway. Check out the "Friends of Westwater" for a one day/next day patrol and clean up. No permit needed. Contact CNHA or CPRG.

Other business included a motion that CPRG remain a "river guides" organization which was seconded and passed. Also put to the floor was a motion to accept the by-laws with noted changes.

I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I have and I look forward to hearing your comments. We need articles, art work, and ideas for the next issue please help us out if you can. Have a great summer and see you on the river.