

DAMS WOULD HARM Little Colorado River Above the Confluence

Big Canyon Dam Proposal Threatens the Grand Canyon and the Navajo Nation

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Mere miles from the confluence of the Colorado River and Little Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, a developer seeks to build dams within the Bodaway-Gap and Cameron chapters of the Navajo Nation, inside the Little Colorado River Gorge Tribal Park and a Navajo Nation Fish and Wildlife biological preserve.

A Phoenix company, Pumped Hydro Storage LLC, applied for preliminary permits from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to dam the Little Colorado River for hydroelectric power. After surrendering permits for its proposed Little Colorado River and Salt Trail Canyon dams, the company is focusing on a plan to dam Big Canyon.

WHAT WOULD THE BIG CANYON DAM DO?

- Build four dams to generate electricity for distant U.S. cities.
- Pump billions of gallons of groundwater from the same aquifer that feeds springs along the Little Colorado River.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

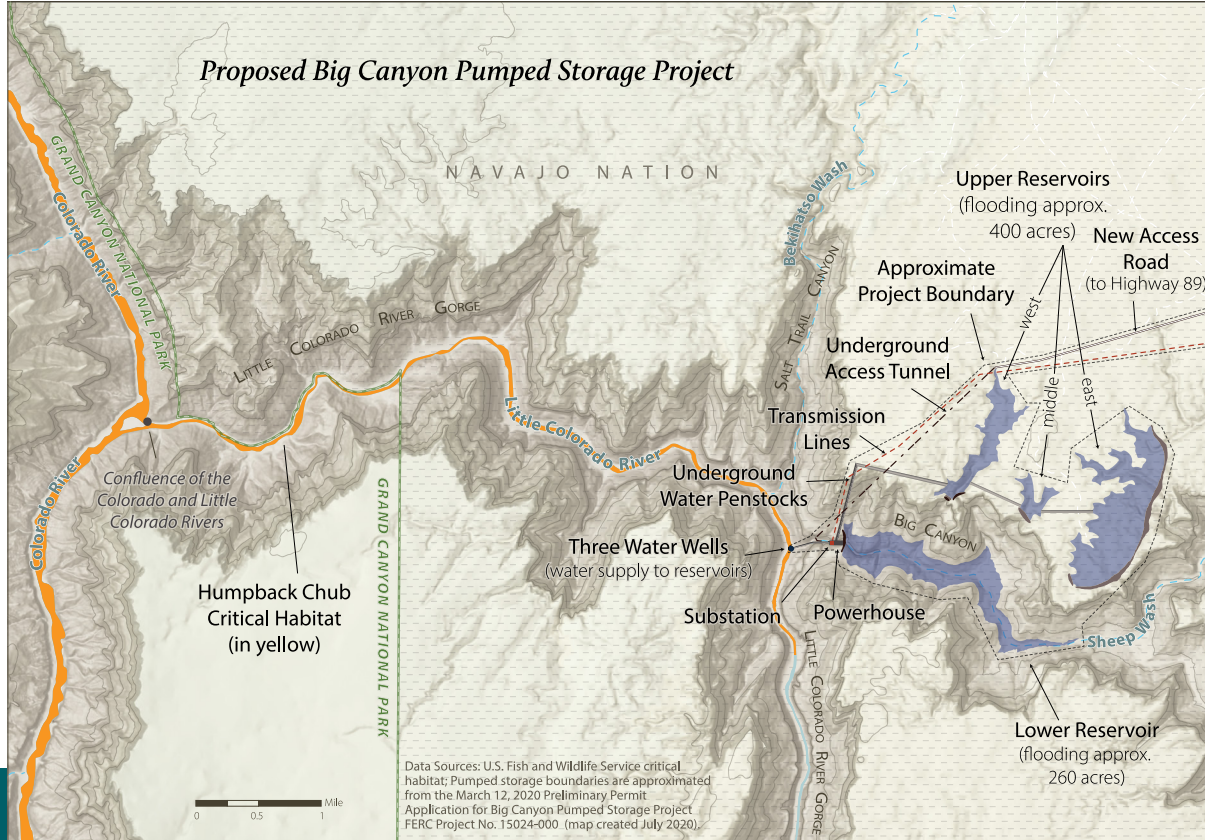
- The project would pump water from a lower reservoir more than 1,500 feet uphill and then flush it down from three storage reservoirs through 30-foot diameter pipes. Highly pressurized water would spin the blades in generators bolted to the floor of Big Canyon to produce electricity.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE RIVER AND ITS PEOPLE?

- Depletion of the source of life-giving springs that feed the river in the middle of a drought.
- Loss of more than 3 billion gallons of groundwater to evaporation each year when one-third of the Navajo Nation population lacks access to running water and many use as few as 2-3 gallons of water per day.
- Sacred places at risk. Tribally recognized traditional and cultural spaces along the river would be harmed by flooding and industrialization.
- Noise, traffic, electric lines. Loud pumps, generators, and massive steel towers with high-voltage electric lines would transform the area, affecting local sheepherders and rural homesteads. It would no longer be a peaceful place for prayer, respect, and reflection.

WHAT ABOUT TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY?

- This project would undermine tribal sovereignty.
- Private investors would profit from the multi-billion dollar project.
- The river, the confluence, the land, animals, and local land users would all lose.
- This project would desecrate shared cultural spaces important to many Grand Canyon area tribes and endanger wildlife and plants used in ceremonies.
- The dam would also destroy the area's natural, scenic beauty.



POSITION OF THE NAVAJO NATION

“The Navajo Nation opposes the Big Canyon Dam project on various grounds, including but not limited to:

- 1 The proposed Project would be located entirely on Navajo Nation land, and the Nation has not authorized the permit holder to enter upon the lands of the Navajo Nation or to use its waters.
- 2 The Applicant has not sought the consent of the Navajo Nation, the local community, or the individuals with customary use rights where the Project would be located.
- 3 The Project may adversely impact the use of these lands by the Navajo Nation and its members.
- 4 The Project may adversely impact the water rights of the Navajo Nation or the use of its waters.
- 5 The Project may adversely impact the fish and wildlife resources of the Navajo Nation, including the habitat for the Humpback Chub, a federally recognized endangered fish, as well as many other wildlife and plants on the Navajo Endangered Species List.
- 6 The Project may adversely impact the cultural resources of the Navajo Nation within the gorge of the Little Colorado River.”

POSITION OF THE HOPI TRIBE

“It takes millennia for this ancient groundwater to emerge as springs, including the spring located at the Hopi Place of Emergence (Sipaapuni), along the Little Colorado River... Therefore, the Hopi Tribe hereby requests FERC deny the request by Pumped Hydro Storage LLC regarding the planned feasibility study on the proposed developments within the Big Canyon.”

—Comments submitted by the Hopi Tribe

POSITION OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

“... the preliminary permit application lists only one tribe, the Navajo Nation. There are at least ten other tribes that may be affected by this proposal. In addition to the Navajo Nation, these include, but are not limited to the Havasupai Tribe, Hopi Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians, Las Vegas Tribe of Paiute Indians, Moapa Band of Paiute Indians, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, Yavapai-Apache Nation, and the Pueblo of Zuni. All of these tribes have aboriginal and current connections to the Project area. The LCR, which includes its tributaries such as Big Canyon, is an important and sacred place to all of the aforementioned tribes and has been since time immemorial.”

—Comments submitted by the U.S. Department of the Interior