GRAND CANYON TRUST *COLORADO PLATEAU*

Advocate

SPRING/SUMMER 2022

THE MAP ISSUE

Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments Restored

PLUS

Indigenous Archaeologists at Work in Bears Ears

Lifeways of the Little Colorado River

A Special Edition Map

Letter from the BOARD CHAIR

JIM ENOTE

Greetings Friends,

A few years ago, I could not imagine the dramatic events ravaging the world today. Now more than ever, humanity must be free to seek solace in sublime natural spaces.

The Grand Canyon Trust exists to ensure future generations will have places for healing and joy. Sadly, we must continually be aware that even the most glorious places on Earth, including here on the Colorado Plateau, can be threatened by greed and misguided political decisions.

But there is always hope, and we have a qualified and competent team. This edition of The Advocate focuses on the Trust's influence and involvement to restore Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments. It details quiet successes, including how the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and community collaboration helped stop the White Mesa uranium mill from receiving Superfund waste, and the ways clever legislation and policy work advanced the REGROW Act, as part of the infrastructure bill, to fund grants to plug and clean up abandoned oil and gas wells.

As a natural resource manager for the Zuni Tribe in the 1980s, I was often bewildered by the frequent dismissal of Native perspectives in public land management. It would be unthinkable today, but those antiquated attitudes were genuine and slow to change. I am pleased to read how the Trust's Lifeways project elevates and dignifies tribal perspectives. This is an important distinction of how the Trust does work differently.

I think you will agree that the world needs a replicable model for appreciating people and protecting places. The Grand Canyon Trust is doing good work, and many are watching how we build mutual understanding and transform the way society relates to and cares for places.

We have a defined purpose and momentum.
We do not sit with our ideas entirely indoors.
We expose them to the natural forces of the sun, rain, and wind.
We are not paralyzed with indecision.
We wake in the morning, decide which foot goes in front of the other, and move.

Generations before us struggled, but people stood and got into lines, chanted old words, conjured the beings around them and those above and below. Those acts are part of a universal and dramatic plan time-tested and appraised with terms set by nature and metaphor.

Enjoy this edition of The Advocate, and thank you for supporting the Grand Canyon Trust.

Sincerely,

Jim Enote

OUR MISSION
To safeguard the wonders of the Grand Canyon and the Colorado Plateau, while supporting the rights of its Native peoples.

ON THE COVER
"Coming Together," where the San Juan River cuts through Comb Ridge. Read more about the prophecy of this place in "Bears Ears Stories" on page 16.
MAP BY STEPHANIE SMITH. SOURCES: ESRI, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, EARTHSTAR GEOGRAPHICS, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

EDITOR'S NOTE
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VOLUNTEER WITH US

Volunteer Elisabeth Evans removes invasive species in Utah's Pando aspen grove. BLAKE MCCORD

There are weeds to pull, springs to restore, and fences to repair.

Lend a hand
grandcanyontrust.org/volunteer-trips

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A Fresh Start
IN GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE

By Mike Popejoy

October 8, 2021 was a monumental day for public lands in southern Utah. On that day President Joe Biden issued proclamations restoring the original boundaries of Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears national monuments, undoing the drastic reductions attempted by his predecessor.

BLAKE MCCORD

BLAKE MCCORD

On October 8, I was on a walk in Grand Staircase-Escalante with fellow monument-lovers. It was a day of gentle rain, rare for this landscape where rain often comes in intense downpours. We were hiking across exquisite Navajo sandstone, a white to cream-colored rock layer composed of ancient petrified sand dunes.

As the rain softly fell, it began to saturate the landscape, which had just endured yet another year of extreme drought. Before long, little rivulets ran down the grooves in the slickrock and joined together to form ephemeral creeks and gather in pools. We marveled at the blessing of rain in the desert—what it meant for the land, and what it meant for us. It felt like a chance to begin again, a cleansing of the turmoil that had gripped these lands in recent years. It felt like an invitation to heal, to leave divisiveness behind and move forward with compassion for the land and those who depend on it, our human and non-human relatives alike.

President Biden's restoration of the monument boundaries provides crucial protection for these landscapes. Biden's action also symbolized restorative justice—for the tribes with strong connections to these powerful landscapes, and for the land itself. The task ahead of us is to fulfill the promise of healing and justice on the ground and in the management of the monuments

moving forward. Lines on a map are powerful and important, but it is what happens within those lines that determines whether we are being responsible stewards of the land.

Last year Grand Staircase-Escalante turned 25 years old. We have seen drastic changes since it was established in 1996. The effects of climate change are intensifying. Drought appears to be the norm rather than the exception. Species, from plants and insects to large mammals, are struggling. Water supplies are dwindling and becoming ever more important in an increasingly arid landscape. In addition, there has been growing recognition that public lands are also Indigenous ancestral lands, and that for too long Indigenous voices have not been afforded the proper weight in determining how these lands are to be managed.

The Biden administration has set a goal of March 1, 2024 to complete a new management plan for Grand Staircase-Escalante, and that process is likely to get underway in the coming months. A monument management plan provides direction for how this landscape will be managed, including how monument "objects," which are specifically mentioned in the proclamation, will be protected. At Grand Staircase-Escalante, these objects include things like dinosaur fossils, cultural sites, and unique plant communities at the bottoms of canyons.

A monument management plan can govern a monument for quite some time. Grand Staircase-Escalante's original management plan was in effect for 20 years. We have the opportunity to shape how the monument is managed for the foreseeable future at a time when proper care for this landscape is sorely needed. To that end, we'd like to share some of our top priorities in the management planning process with you. We hope you'll join us in this process and lend your voice on behalf of the land.

SCIENCE

Grand Staircase-Escalante has been known as "the science monument," and for good reason. The quantity and quality of cutting-edge science that has come from this landscape is astounding, and new findings continue to come to light. For instance, research published just last year suggests that Tyrannosaurs may have hunted in packs when dinosaurs roamed what is now Grand Staircase-Escalante. At least 660 different bee species make Grand Staircase-Escalante their home. Geologic research in the monument has even shed light on similar environments and formations on Mars. These are just a few of the mind-expanding results of science done on the monument.

Such science should of course continue, and, moving forward, a greater emphasis should be placed on the role of science in informing management and the proper care and protection of monument objects. A new management plan provides the opportunity to do just that.

INDIGENOUS TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Indigenous traditional knowledge with respect to Grand Staircase-Escalante is rich and diverse. This land, before it was a "monument" or had "boundaries," saw a unique intersection of various cultural groups with deep ties to the region. Today it remains a living cultural landscape for many tribes. Grand Staircase-Escalante's importance as a cultural landscape includes remnants of human-fashioned materials, as well as plant communities, wildlife habitat, and life-giving springs.

A return to a holistic view of the land, which sees all aspects of the land as interconnected and important, is desperately needed.

TOP: Ready for their closeup: bighorn sheep in the monument. BLAKE MCCORD
MIDDLE: An oasis in the slickrock. MIKE POPEJOY
BOTTOM: Biological soil crusts in the monument hold the soil together, prevent erosion, and provide habitat for hundreds of species of small arthropods that are the base of the desert food chain. BLAKE MCCORD

Traditional knowledge and science can be complementary and weaving the two is a significant opportunity for the future of Grand Staircase-Escalante.

Pinyon pine nuts and juniper berries are enjoyed and used by wildlife and people. BLAKE MCCORD

A return to a holistic view of the land, which sees all aspects of the land as interconnected and important, is desperately needed. It is fundamentally different from the extractive paradigm which breaks the land up into "resources" that are bent to serve our will, and which has dominated management of much of the Western United States since European colonization. Traditional knowledge and science can be complementary and weaving the two is a significant opportunity for the future of Grand Staircase-Escalante. We will be advocating for authentic, robust consultation with tribes, and supporting tribes in their work to ensure Indigenous perspectives are heard and incorporated into the monument management plan.

GRAZING

The history of grazing cattle in the monument has transformed the landscape, undermining the natural functioning of the monument's soil, water, plants, and wildlife. An in-depth analysis of grazing management has yet to be completed since

Birdwatchers Needed

MARIE READ

Grab your binoculars and help us spot pinyon jays

Pinyon jays live in pinyon and juniper forests across the Colorado Plateau. The birds and the trees depend on each other. Pinyon pines provide nuts and pinyon jays help the pines spread their seeds. Both face unprecedented threats.

We need volunteers to help gather information about pinyon jays. Knowing where the birds are helps us protect their habitat and advocate against clear-cutting of the forests they depend on.

WILL YOU HELP?

Sign up and get trained at **grandcanyontrust.org/birdwatch**

A pinyon pine tree in the monument. BLAKE MCCORD

the monument was established in 1996. The new management plan should determine whether existing grazing management allows for the proper care of the many wonders of this landscape identified in the proclamation. We will advocate for land health assessments to identify where change is needed. Lastly, grazing management must adapt to a hotter climate with more intense drought. We are in the midst of the worst drought in 1,200 years, as far back as records go. Grazing management must change to avoid what very well could be irreversible degradation of the monument's soils, plants, and precious waters.

OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

We remain committed to preserving old-growth pinyon and juniper forests in the monument, which have survived here for centuries. Many wildlife species depend on these hardy trees, such as the pinyon jay, whose population has plummeted. These ancient trees, and the species that depend on them, should be protected in the new management plan.

RECREATION

Recreation in Grand Staircase-Escalante is increasing, and understandably so; it's one of the most spectacular places on the planet. But with this increased activity can come unwanted impacts, such as displacement of wildlife, vandalism of cultural sites, and more trash. We're working to address these impacts with a variety of partners and intend to carry that collaborative work into the management plan.

There's a lot of work to be done. We have before us the rare opportunity for a fresh start in Grand Staircase-Escalante, a chance to fulfill and to exceed the original vision for the monument. We hope you'll join us.

Mike Popejoy directs the Grand Canyon Trust's Utah Public Lands Program.

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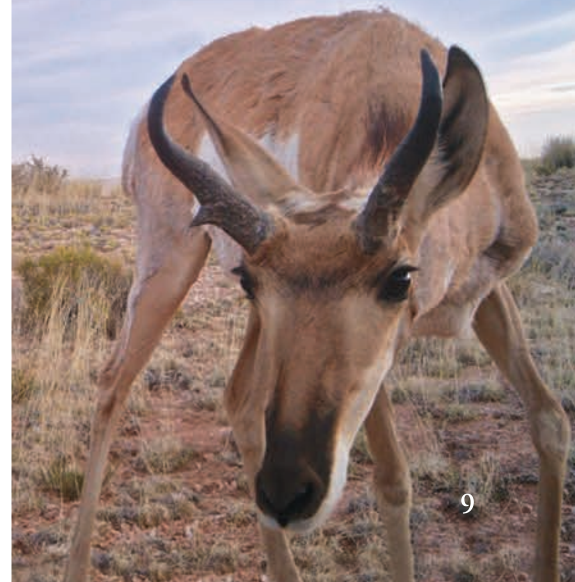
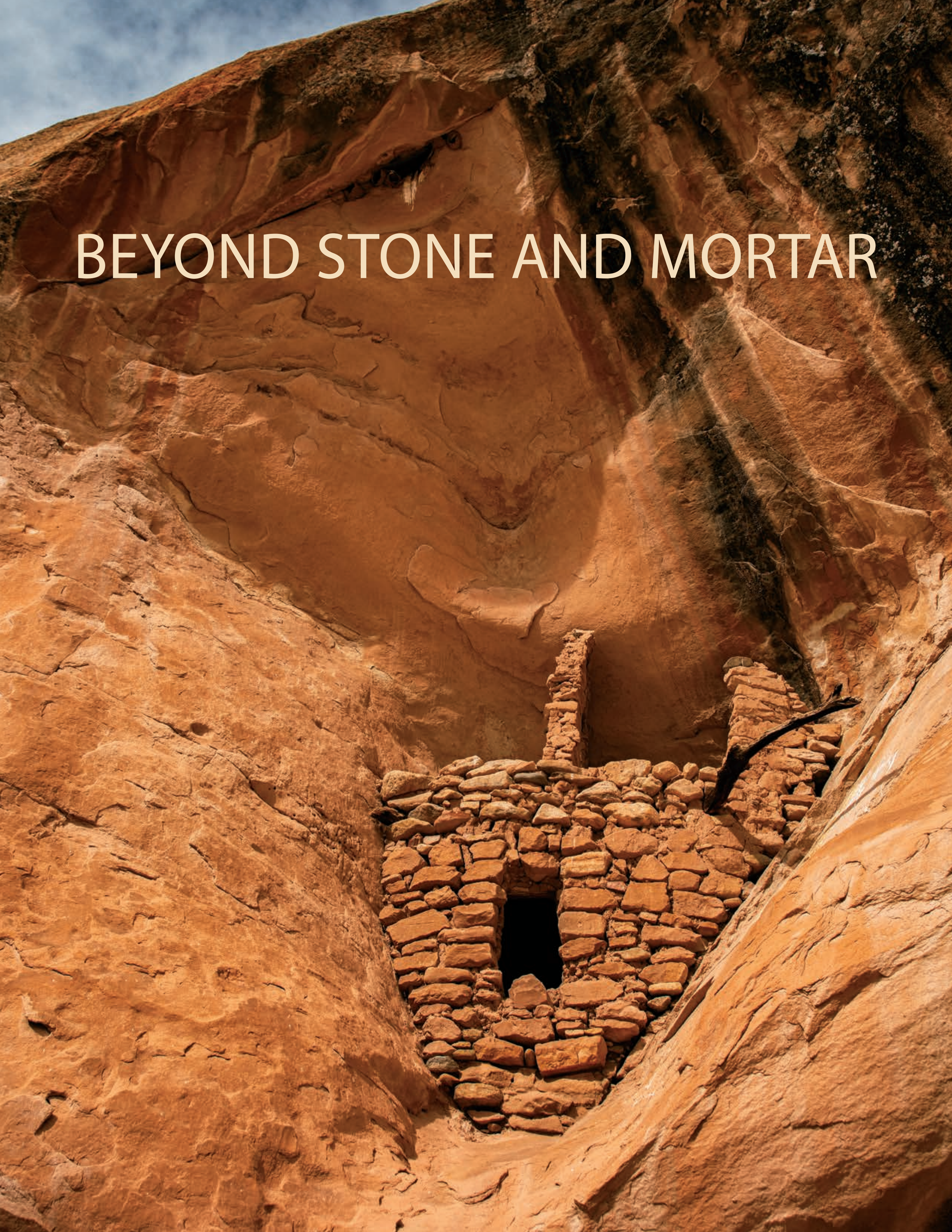
for just pennies a day

The future of the Grand Canyon and the Colorado Plateau depends on the steady support of dedicated people like you. For as little as $5/month, you can help provide reliable funding to support key efforts on the ground.

Become a member of our Sustaining Circle today by making a monthly gift online at grandcanyontrust.org/monthly-giving

For additional information or assistance, please contact Kimber Wukitsch at 928-286-3375 or kimber@grandcanyontrust.org





BEYOND STONE AND MORTAR

Preserving Indigenous Presence Within Ancestral Landscapes

By Lyle Balenquah

> "In the old days, I built a home myself. At that time there were no cinder blocks. We got everything from Mother Earth. Beams, stone, and clay—all these we gathered from her."
>
> — Third Mesa Hopi Sand Clan Man

The following describes conservation projects that occurred at two Ancestral Pueblo sites located in southeastern Utah: River House, also known as Snake House, located along the San Juan River, and another site located in the general vicinity of the Bears Ears. This work occurred over three months, from May through July 2021, during five 8-day field sessions. These projects are the result of collaborative partnerships between federal agencies, archaeological consultants, and the nonprofit organization Friends of Cedar Mesa. The World Monuments Fund provided the financial backing for this work and we are grateful for that support. Partners involved in these current efforts include the United States Bureau of Land Management, the United States Forest Service, and the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps, which sent Crew 640 and Crew 642 from Zuni Pueblo and Crew 613 from Albuquerque. The opinions and viewpoints expressed herein are strictly mine, based on my own experiences and observations as a member of the field crew, as well as my perspective as a Hopi archaeologist.

I'm lying in my tent in the predawn hours waiting for the signal for our day to begin. The birds are making their presence known, and during this time of the year they never seem to sleep, spinning off a repertoire of songs and calls throughout the night. However, that is not the sound I am waiting for. Off in the not-too-far distance, a sudden wave of laughter and voices announces that other crew members are up and about.

Soon enough, we all gather together to engage in the only formal ritual of the day. We are a small group, comprised of archaeologists, nonprofit staff, and the all-Indigenous Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps crew members who lead us through a set of stretching exercises and safety talk. This is their daily routine and we "professionals" have happily incorporated it into our own.

TIM PETERSON

River House, also known as Snake House. TIM PETERSON

We will spend the entire day working in whatever elements the weather gods bring us—hot temperatures (well over 100 degrees some days), high winds (one of the Zuni crew remarked that a ceremony being held back at home was the cause)—and as the summer season progressed, we were blessed almost daily with the sight, sound, and smell of thunder, lightning, and monsoon rains moving in and through the canyon walls.

The work we are here to do goes by various names—stabilization, preservation, conservation—and I won't try to differentiate among them as they have similar goals. When questioned by a sunblasted visitor to the site about the work, our rehearsed response would go something like this:

"We are actively working to conserve this site, which means we are filling cracks, voids, and other deteriorated sections of walls and architectural spaces with new mortar and stones. We are also building small sections of dry-laid masonry to buttress existing walls and, in some cases, to act as barriers to prevent access to fragile areas.

The conservation work is in direct response to increased visitation and impacts that many ancestral sites are experiencing within the Bears Ears region. Sites that were relatively unknown until recently now experience a steady influx of tourists year-round.

We also backfill some room interiors with new soil material to protect intact, original floor deposits that are being exposed by natural erosion, but mostly by visitor traffic. By no means should any of this be considered 'reconstruction' of any portion of the site. We only work on what is deemed necessary and use materials that are similar to or compatible with what the original builders used."

We usually repeat some version of this at least a dozen times a day for visitors. For many of them, this is their first time interacting with actual Indigenous people. The Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps crew seizes this opportunity, sharing stories, posing for photos, and providing much-needed firsthand cultural education on the Indigenous connections that still remain with places like River House. This image is significant: Indigenous people caring for and preserving their own cultural histories on their own ancestral lands. This is an important precedent that must be implemented in other areas of cultural and natural resource management on all "public" lands, not just within the Bears Ears.

The conservation work is in direct response to increased visitation and impacts that many ancestral sites are experiencing within the Bears Ears region. Sites that were relatively unknown until recently now experience a steady influx of tourists year-round. The federal Bureau of Land Management estimates that 20,000 visitors walk through, over,

LEFT: Visitors at River House. TIM PETERSON RIGHT: Conservation work at River House. LYLE BALENQUAH

and under the walls of River House annually. What once was a site only really accessible to river runners now has visitors accessing it from all sides, by river, hiking trails, and off-road vehicles and other motorized traffic.

As I work on the site and experience the incoming barrage of visitors, I often wonder if this place ever gets any peace and quiet. One only needs to spend a day at River House during peak tourist season to witness the impact of visitation. The grind of Vibram-soled shoes wears down the sandstone bedrock, shuffling feet kick walls, knocking stones loose, and oily spots on masonry walls show where thousands of visitors' hands have reached for a hold. We caution some who lean on walls or try to climb into areas that are closed off, although the majority are respectful of these places and of our work. We encourage them to "Speak softly, tread lightly, and show much respect to the Indigenous presence."

Both of the sites we worked on this summer have undergone previous archaeological excavations and stabilization work in the past, most notably in the 1970s and 80s. These initial efforts helped keep these structures upright, preserving portions of the original architecture and construction materials that are important elements of the sites' overall integrity. Nonetheless, over 40 years have elapsed since these sites have received any conservation work. They need not only a minimal amount of treatment, but also updated condition assessments of the sites and the immediate surroundings.

This conservation work does not happen without a great deal of planning and outreach with numerous stakeholders. Formal government-to-government consultation occurs between federal agencies and tribes, through a process meant to inform tribal leadership and staff and gather any concerns or input. It is during this phase that federal land managers will learn about and need to consider tribal perspectives regarding the protection and preservation of Indigenous cultural history, including ancestral architecture.

One Hopi perspective believes that our ancestral Hopi homes should be left to deteriorate through a natural process, eroding down to mounds of rubble and soil. This perspective acknowledges their unique "life cycle," being borne of the earth, providing shelter for their human occupants, and then once their purpose is complete, allowed to gradually be reclaimed back into the earth. Yet even in their deteriorated conditions, these ancient homes and places of worship continue to serve as holy ground, where the spirits of ancestors dwell. With this Hopi perspective in mind, is there a way to reach a suitable compromise in preservation work?

To answer this question, I must look to other teachings from Hopi culture that state these sites are referred to as the "footprints" of the ancestors, physical proof of previous generations occupying vast tracts of the American Southwest and beyond. Included in this ideology of "footprints" is the material culture of Hopi ancestors: the villages, ceramics, lithics and ground stones (stone tools), textiles, and burials.

Cedar Mesa, Bears Ears National Monument. BOB WICK, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The work we accomplished this past year enabled more than preservation of these unique structures; it also enabled the Indigenous crew members to reconnect with lands that have always been Indigenous lands.

BLAKE MCCORD

The large snake pictograph at River House. TIM PETERSON

River House is one example of how Hopi oral histories contain the memories and essence of Hopi ancestors. It is known in the Hopi language as Tsu'ki (Snake House) and received this name due to the presence of a large snake pictograph painted prominently along the back of the alcove wall. Some Hopi believe this is the setting for a well-known oral history that originates with the Snake Clan about a Hopi ancestor who was the first individual to raft what are now the San Juan and Colorado rivers. This is a uniquely Hopi story that belongs to the Snake Clan and their descendants, one that is reinforced through visitation of ancestral sites and experiencing the landscapes they are found on.

In addition, these projects increase the participation of Indigenous people in fieldwork that actively preserves aspects of their own cultural histories. One of the more meaningful experiences was working alongside other Indigenous individuals, teaching them preservation skills, introducing them to archaeological perspectives and the possibility of pursing this work as a future career. There was also much cross-cultural sharing among us, and we learned to appreciate the various tribal perspectives on these ancestral landscapes. The work we accomplished this past year enabled more than preservation of these unique structures; it also enabled the Indigenous crew members to reconnect with lands that have always been Indigenous lands.

At the heart of this conservation work lies an inherent act of respect: maintaining our living culture, while honoring our ancestors of a long ago era. Today when a Hopi person visits ancestral villages, we don't simply see the remnants of a bygone era, we see reflections of who we once were and what we have now become. We witness the artistic and technical accomplishments of Hopi ancestors, but we recall the spiritual accomplishments of our ancestors as well.

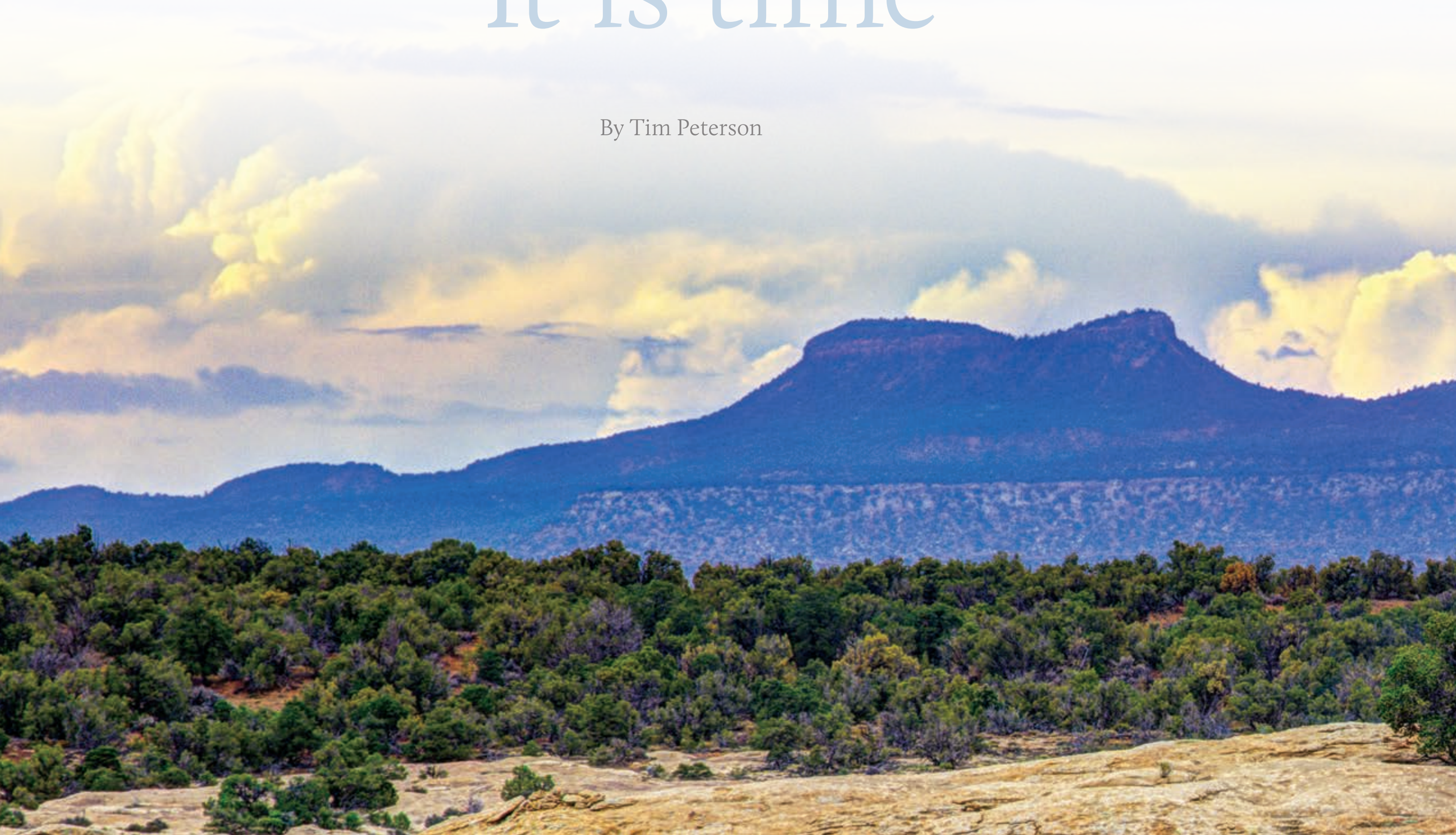
The conservation process seeks to achieve not just practical goals of mitigating visitor impacts, but also to grant future generations of Hopi people the opportunity to follow their ancestors' footprints across the landscape. We owe it to our ancestors who originally built and inhabited these places to respect their efforts, and therefore we must strive to present the truest form of their hard work and dedication. For if not by us, the people charged with their care, the Indigenous cultural preservationists, then by whom?

Lyle Balenquah works as an archaeologist and outdoor guide throughout the Southwest. Follow his work online at fte-studio.com

Bears Ears Stories

It is time

By Tim Peterson



> “This may be the easiest thing I’ve ever done so far as president. I mean it.”

President Biden spoke these heartfelt words just before signing proclamations restoring Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments.

For many of us, the easiest thing he’d done was a long time coming. From a campaign promise made in October 2020, to a visit to Utah by Interior Secretary Deb Haaland in April 2021, anticipation began to ripen.

By June 2021, Secretary Haaland had recommended that the monuments be restored, and each successive anniversary of something related to Bears Ears or the Antiquities Act of 1906 (the law that gives presidents the authority to create national monuments) had us ever more ready for action. By the time the day actually arrived, many of us experienced a deep sense of unreality. After many years of advocacy to establish the monument in 2016, the 2017 gutting of Bears Ears and the years of work that followed, I felt hollowed out.

I know that Bears Ears is whole again, but it still doesn’t feel real. As of press time, there aren’t even any signs posted along the highways at the monument’s boundaries. I know exactly where those signs will go, and each time I pass those points and they’re not there, it only confirms my lingering sense of illusion.

Signs will help ease this feeling (I’m told they’re coming soon), but action beyond window dressing is happening too. The Bears Ears Tribal Commission (the collaborative management body established by President Obama’s proclamation, eviscerated by Trump’s, and reinstated by Biden’s) is meeting with federal land managers, monument management planning will begin any day now, and the future of Bears Ears is on everyone’s mind.

Bears Ears has been restored on paper, but now it’s up to all of us to make sure that the vision of Bears Ears is made real on the ground. Fulfilling that vision means respecting Indigenous traditional knowledge and Indigenous science and using them to plan for and manage the monument. The vision means that Native voices guide interpretation, and that visitors arrive in a good frame of mind and comport themselves with respect. Bears Ears is more than just a place to play.

TIM PETERSON

LEFT: Charissa Wahwasuck-Jessepe (Prairie Band Potawatomi) connects with a cliff in Bears Ears National Monument. TIM PETERSON
RIGHT: Former Hopi Tribal Chairman Ben Nuvamsa and younger visitors observe a petroglyph panel in Bears Ears National Monument. TIM PETERSON

It's time to shift the narrative about Bears Ears from combat to healing, and a way to do that is storytelling.

For years, the media narrative around Bears Ears has been about conflict. Fighting sells newspapers, and discord gets clicks. But that's not what Bears Ears is really about. It's time to shift the narrative about Bears Ears from combat to healing, and a way to do that is storytelling. That's good news because Bears Ears is a place so full of stories that they can't be contained. They emerge from the canyons, from the mountains, from the springs and the cliffs. Stories are a curative tonic, and if we're telling and hearing stories, we're not fighting.

The newest stories are those of the climber, the trail runner, the river runner, the mountain biker, and the backpacker. Written in guidebooks, in magazines, and on the internet, these stories draw more people into the interior of this place to start living stories of their own. These stories of recreation have the shortest tradition.

There are also the stories of the road builder, the logger, the miner, and the drill rig roughneck. These are the stories of the 20th century, of conquest and domination, of hard work scratching a living from the land "owed" to them by the promise of manifest destiny. These so-called "traditional uses," as former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke termed them, are so new that only three or four generations know them as tradition.

But older stories tell us that these lands, the plants, the animals, and the rocks are our kin. They are an inextricable part of what it means to be human—to be alive and a part of all life, inseparable from it. These stories about Bears Ears are far older than the United States of America. These stories tell of cultures born here, formed here, and growing here today.

For some, the Bears Ears buttes are the head of Changing Bear Maiden—a place to cleanse oneself of depression and evil. For some, it is a place to gather plants and minerals found nowhere else on Earth for ceremonial use vital to sustaining culture across hundreds of generations. For some,

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Newspaper Rock. TIM PETERSON

the rock art tells stories of a culture in harmony, and later in jeopardy. For some, the spiritual beings etched in the cliffside are teachers and guides, and the symbols carved there are a map to water sources—the essence of life.

For some, the Bear is the one appointed by the Creator to keep all the animals—including humans—in line. The first thunder of the spring is the Bear awakening from its winter slumber, growling, and scratching a long winter's rest off its back on a tree.

There is a prophecy that at a place in Bears Ears called "Coming Together" (where the winding San Juan River cuts through Comb Ridge) all the nations of the world will come together to heal. For many, Bears Ears National Monument is the fulfillment of that prophecy. At that place there are twinned great kivas, there is ancient writing on the rock, there are Diné hogan foundations, and there are wagon ruts where Latter-day Saints made their last push to "civilize" this rough country. All there.

Former co-chair of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and former member of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council, Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk, collects pinyon pine nuts in Bears Ears National Monument. TIM PETERSON

What we need most now, more than ever, are more stories. Is that mountain, that ridge, that line of cliffs named in your religious ceremonies? Do they teach you, through stories told about them, how to live a complete life? Is your off-road vehicle a storyteller? Mine isn't, but it is a tool that helps me get to the interior.

Will your story be richer if you know the stories of others?
If you learn the stories of those who have built their cultures here?

What about your running shoes? Your carabiners and climbing cams? These are all tools that we can all use to build our own stories to get to the interior of meaning.

Will your story be richer if you know the stories of others? If you learn the stories of those who have built their cultures here? Whose recent ancestors have been removed from this place at the point of a gun, or jailed in a corral, rounded up as if they were animals, and who are still at times treated as if they are less than human?

Will it be richer if you know the stories of those who have newly built their lives here, grazing their cattle, digging uranium, or losing everything, drilling deep, dry holes hoping oil could be down there? Will your story be richer if you listen? It can't help but be.

When Interior Secretary Haaland spoke at the Bears Ears proclamation signing, she knew these things, saying, "Bears Ears is a living landscape… Stories of existence, celebration, survival, and reverence are etched into the sandstone canyon walls. Sacred sites are dotted across the desert mesas. Cultural heritage in the form of ancient pots, arrowheads, clothing, seeds, and evidence of lives well lived are as inseparable from Bears Ears as the air we breathe at this moment." Secretary Haaland's insight is inspiring, and her leadership is the kind that can make the paper victory of Bears Ears real. It is time.

Tim Peterson directs the Grand Canyon Trust's Cultural Landscapes Program. He is also a photographer.

TOP: Rock art of spiritual beings. TIM PETERSON ABOVE: A cliff dwelling on the edge of Cedar Mesa. TIM PETERSON

ENTREPRENEUR
SPOTLIGHT

Bears Ears & Business

Louis Williams
Owner, Ancient Wayves River and Hiking Adventures

How has the monument restoration affected your business?

"The Bears Ears National Monument has brought popularity to the region and we've seen an increase of visitors over recent years. With the increase in visitors comes the immediate need for a broader land management plan to oversee the water sources, delicate archaeological sites, native plants and wild-life, and land uses. We believe our guides contribute to land management by being stewards of the land and educators.

During an Ancient Wayves tour, our Indigenous guides explain and show visitors the importance of protecting these resources for the sustainability of the tribes who reside on the outskirts of the monument boundaries. We emphasize 'Leave No Trace' principles while hiking and practice conservation methods while out in the backcountry.

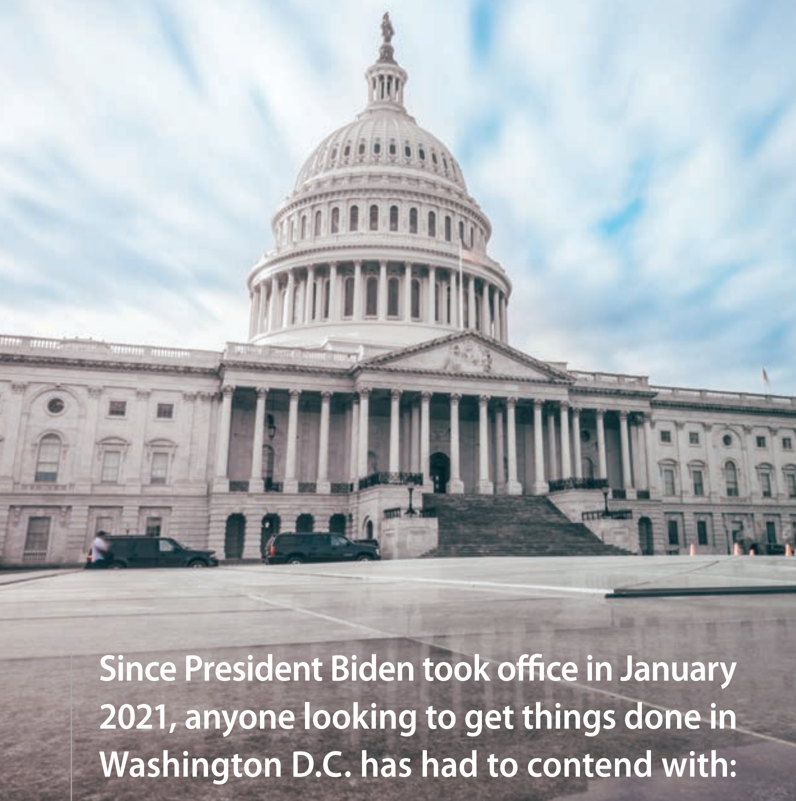
Ancient Wayves River and Hiking Adventures is the only Indigenous-owned (Navajo) guiding company in the Bears Ears region where there is a great need for land stewards.

With the increased demand for Indigenous guides and Native interpretation amongst the Bears Ears landscapes, our company looks forward to growing over the years while helping sustain the health of Mother Earth and the cultures that inhabit her lands. There is great potential for this monument to benefit the landscape, tourism industry, and local economies."

Book your trip:
tourancientwayves.com

BIG Conservation Wins in the Biden Administration (so far)

By Jerry Otero



ANDY FELICIOTTI, UNSPLASH

Since President Biden took office in January 2021, anyone looking to get things done in Washington D.C. has had to contend with:

COVID. In 2021, engaging with elected officials moved to the digital space.

A NEW ADMINISTRATION. It takes time to get the wheels turning. That means cabinet appointments, hiring, reviewing current policies, and setting priorities and guidance for federal agencies.

A DIVIDED CONGRESS. Passing legislation with a supermajority in the Senate can be challenging. It takes 60 votes to end debate or filibuster and force a vote on a measure. Considering that most bills are moved as larger legislative packages, individual bills often have narrow windows of opportunity.

Nevertheless, here are some big conservation wins the Grand Canyon Trust is proud to have had a hand in in year one of the Biden administration.

Big wins for conservation

KEY LEADERS IN PLACE. From Deb Haaland (Pueblo of Laguna), the first Indigenous person to serve as secretary of the interior, to Charles F. “Chuck” Sams III (Cayuse and Walla Walla, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation), the first Indigenous head of the National Park Service, key players in the administration support national parks and conservation priorities.

BEARS EARS AND GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENTS RESTORED. The original boundaries are back. Now it’s time to realize the promise of collaborative management, with tribes working government-to-government with U.S federal government agencies to manage the monuments and incorporate Indigenous ecological and cultural knowledge.

URANIUM IS OFFICIALLY OFF THE CRITICAL MINERALS LIST. The Trump administration added uranium to the critical minerals list—a list of non-fuel minerals prioritized for domestic mining—for the first time ever in 2018, despite uranium not meeting the qualifications. Its inclusion on the list exacerbated risks to communities and the environment across the Colorado Plateau. In February 2022, the U.S. Geological Survey removed uranium from the list.

THE GRAND CANYON PROTECTION ACT ADVANCED. The bill to permanently protect about 1 million acres of public lands around the Grand Canyon from new uranium mines passed the house in February 2021 and was introduced in the Senate with strong support from both Arizona senators.

REGROW INCLUDED IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE BILL. The bipartisan bill led by Senator Ben Ray Luján, D-NM, and Senator James Lankford, R-OK, will plug abandoned oil and gas wells and clean up leaks and pollution. That means thousands of abandoned wells on the Colorado Plateau will now be cleaned up.

On the horizon

From passing the Grand Canyon Protection Act to reforming National Park Service hiring and management practices (creating new opportunities for Indigenous people to work within the agency managing ancestral lands), to advancing environmental justice so that all people have access to clean air and water, the Grand Canyon Trust has our legislative and policy work cut out for us. Thank you for standing with us.

Jerry Otero serves as legislative and policy director for the Grand Canyon Trust.

QUIET Victories

By Travis Bruner

The Grand Canyon Trust does much of our best work quietly. Some of our successes may not grab headlines, but we're in it to see the impact on the ground. Please join us in celebrating a few of the most meaningful results of the Trust's quiet work that you might not have heard much about in the last year.

LITTLE COLORADO RIVER

A developer backed away from pursuing permits to build two hydroelectric dam projects on the Little Colorado River above its confluence with the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. We'll continue to follow the lead of the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and Hualapai Tribe in opposing a third proposed dam in Big Canyon and advocating for keeping the lower Little Colorado River flowing free.

GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Several proposals to draw more water out of the ground in the monument to water cattle have been delayed for the foreseeable future, due to our advocacy during a time of extreme drought.

BEARS EARS AND GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENTS

The new proclamations for the restored Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments both authorize voluntary grazing permit retirement. This clears the way for permanently removing livestock from arid desert lands to protect the environment.

WHITE MESA

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency prohibited the White Mesa uranium mill, a mile east of Bears Ears National Monument, from processing and discarding radioactive waste from Superfund sites. This represents an important step in work led by the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe to protect the landscape and the White Mesa Ute community from radioactive pollution.

UINTA BASIN, UTAH

We filed an administrative protest with the Utah Division of Water Rights seeking the forfeiture of a key water right Estonian-owned Enefit American Oil Co. plans to use for its massive proposed oil shale mine and processing complex not far from the confluence of the White and Green rivers. If victorious, this protest could conserve significant water resources and prevent the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

ACROSS THE COLORADO PLATEAU

More than 250 hardworking and passionate Grand Canyon Trust volunteers devoted their time, energy, and labor to 20 restoration and citizen science projects, in person and online, surveying streams, restoring springs, and documenting declining species to provide the data the Trust needs to advocate for protecting springs, forests, and habitat.

Conservation Director Travis Bruner directs program work across the Grand Canyon Trust.

Make an Exceptional Impact:

BECOME A TURQUOISE CIRCLE MEMBER

With an annual gift of $1,000 or more, you become a member of the Trust's esteemed Turquoise Circle and a cornerstone partner in protecting the Grand Canyon and the Colorado Plateau for future generations.

Turquoise Circle membership includes invitations to exclusive field trips to stunning locations across the plateau and live conservation briefings with Executive Director Ethan Aumack and field staff.

To join the Turquoise Circle, go to **grandcanyontrust.org/turquoise-circle** or contact **Libby Ellis** at **lellis@grandcanyontrust.org**

KATHLEEN DUDINE

Lifeways of the Little Colorado River

By Sarana Riggs

For many tribes in the Southwest, the Little Colorado River is an umbilical cord to the Grand Canyon. Throughout its length, we find there are many different voices that connect us back to our Mother, the Grand Canyon.

Last year, we set out with Diné filmmaker Deidra Peaches to share stories of cultural connections to the Little Colorado River. The resulting multimedia story collection, called "Lifeways of the Little Colorado River," highlights stories from sheepherders, scientists, educators, farmers, artists, and others. Their stories are living reminders that our ancestors have lived and farmed along the Little Colorado River since the beginning of time.

The Little Colorado River is diverse in its identities, cultures, languages, and traditions, and it is important that we are our own storytellers. Hear firsthand from Bernadette Adley-SantaMaria, Lyle Balenquah, Dr. Karletta Chief, Dr. Herman Cody, Radmilla Cody, Jim Enote, Franklin Martin, Ramon Riley, Octavius Seowtewa, Bennett Wakayuta, and Delores Wilson-Aguirre about their personal and cultural ties to the Little Colorado River. The following excerpts from Lifeways of the Little Colorado River affirm that we always have been and will be connected to this place.

Find the full collection at grandcanyontrust.org/lifeways

Bernadette Adley-SantaMaria

White Mountain Apache

… The Little Colorado River begins from the aquifer under our holy mountain, Dzil Ligai Si'an (White Mountain). Two small creeks then flow together to form the river that flows north to join the big Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. If you ask our elders to talk about the water—the rivers, lakes, streams—they'll start with the traditional creation story, as it tells of our sacred mountain and surroundings.

These stories involve the source of water that provides life for our people and all other beings. In contemporary times, we know that our sacred mountain is also a source of water for many others.

The Little Colorado River flows off our lands to the north for use by towns and people along the way to the Grand Canyon, and several rivers flow south and provide water for the desert urban areas. …

DEIDRA PEACHES

'Water is life' is an expression that numerous Native people have been saying across this country. Tu hidahii at'ee, which means 'water is alive' or 'life comes from water,' is our way. The land cannot be without water.

I look at the Little Colorado River as a source that helps all people in the towns and from other tribes, as it flows north into the Grand Canyon. It also helps the Native people who live in the canyon, so we're connected to them too. I would like to see the Little Colorado River continue spilling into the greater Colorado River forever, helping all tribes and towns along the way. It has flowed for thousands of years and will remain so for future generations.

Lyle Balenquah

Hopi

… Back in our ancestral history, the Little Colorado River was an important area for us to live and farm. … All along the Little Colorado River, there are various prehistoric settlements that were built and occupied by Hopi ancestors over 800 to 1,000 years ago. You see places like Chevelon Pueblo near Winslow, and Homolovi. The Little Colorado River borders Wupatki National Monument, a very large ancestral settlement area. As you get further down into the gorge itself, there are shrines and other areas that we identify in archaeology as culturally significant.

When you get down to the confluence area of the Little Colorado River and Colorado River, that's where you really enter an area of increased significance. There is the Sipapuni, which is the cultural origin point for Hopi ancestors. That emergence point symbolizes our coming from a previous world into this world seeking a new way of life. It's how Hopis frame our history.

The Hopi Salt Trail also follows the Little Colorado River. There are naturally occurring salt deposits downstream of the confluence. As part of older initiation traditions, it would have been a rite of passage for male initiates to make this long journey, a spiritually and physically dangerous journey, down into the Little Colorado River Gorge, down into the Grand Canyon, to obtain salt from the salt mines and then bring it back for their female relatives.

The Salt Trail has been in existence for probably thousands of years, as long as people have been living down in the Grand Canyon. …

DEIDRA PEACHES

CONFLUENCE
by Ed Kabotie, Tewa/Hopi, 2021
The union of the blue waters of the Little Colorado and the red waters of the "great" Colorado symbolizes and personifies the miraculous, life-giving union of feminine and masculine energies. Near the confluence of these great waters, along the shores of the Little Colorado, is the original womb kiva from which the human race emerged into this world. Among certain Indigenous cosmologies, the waters surrounding the confluence are the most sacred places on Earth.

DEIDRA PEACHES

Dr. Karletta Chief

Diné

… Communities on the Navajo Nation rely a lot on groundwater sources, aquifers. And those waters decline fast when there is drought. There's also surface waters, mainly rivers. The Little Colorado River is a tributary to the major stem of the Colorado River. It is a river that does not flow year-round. It's very dependent on precipitation, and it's very flashy. The Little Colorado River is an important river to the Navajo people, and culturally for many tribes here in the Southwest.

Climate change has a huge impact on the water resources of Native American communities. Within my lifetime, I've seen substantial declines in available precipitation, both rain and snow, in my community and in the region. In many communities on the Navajo Nation, there have been instances of shallow wells no longer producing because the water table has dropped below the intake of that well.

Our communities have gone through changes in climate through a variety of sustainable ways of living, ways of knowing. It's important to understand and amplify that resilience to promote adaptation to climate change.

My cultural background has a huge impact and influence in the way that I do environmental science with communities. Three of my four clans are water. So, water is my identity. And water is life, Tó' éí iiná at'éé. It drives me in the work that I do. I believe that I'm still going through that process of connecting what I know through the science I've learned with what my grandmother taught me as a child growing up. …

DEIDRA PEACHES

Dr. Herman Cody

Diné

… I was born in a hogan with no modern amenities such as electricity or running water, on a desolate wind-swept mesa several miles north of Grand Falls. …

Grand Falls is the English name. In Diné bizaad (Navajo language), it is 'Adah'iilíní' interpreted as 'waterfall.' My father is from that area. He was a well-known Native practitioner, and he was named after the falls. They called him Hastiin Adah'iilíní, which literally means, 'Mr. Grand Falls.' He had three brothers and they were all Native practitioners.

When my father did ceremonies close to home, he and others left sacred stones along the Little Colorado River. It was called Nitł'iz Nihe'nííł. The ceremonies were done with prayer and song. Some medicinal plants used in ceremonies grew along the riverbanks, and I recall times when my older brothers would be asked to obtain certain medicinal plants.

We were always told, lectured, reminded that the river was sacred. We were told that the creatures that live there—the frogs, tadpoles, and such—were sacred. They take care of the ecosystem, and they are more important than us as humans and are therefore sacred. So we grew up adhering to those cultural teachings, along the river. …

Even in the hardest of times, the Little Colorado River had water for us somewhere. And the river provided more than water. Sometimes we would take our wagon to gather driftwood along the riverbed for our heating and cooking. … I don't live there anymore, but that doesn't mean I have left. It's where I was born and raised. I will always be from there.

DEIDRA PEACHES

Radmilla Cody

Diné

… I grew up in the Grand Falls area, and that is where I call home. My late grandmother, Dorothy Cody, raised me—herding sheep, planting corn, and everything that incorporates and embodies the life-sustaining methods of the Diné people. We spent a lot of time on foot, visiting relatives. We would walk anywhere from 5-8 miles just to say yá'át'ééh, just to say hello.

Our system of k'é, kinship—it goes beyond just our relationship to one another. It's our relationship to the land, to Nahasdzáán nihí'ma (Mother Earth), Tó Diyin Dine'é (water deities), Nitchí Diyin Dine'é (air deities), Kǫ' Diyin Dine'é (fire deities).

For us as Diné, we rely heavily on our lifeways. We need water to exist. We need air to exist. We need the fire to exist. We need the land to exist. We rely heavily on these sacred elements. …

I recently went to Adah'iilíní (Grand Falls), and it was really running. My aunt was there, and we stood there, looking down in the Adah'iilíní. She said the last time the Little Colorado River ran that much was in 1994. And so, we have to think about what's causing our rivers to not flow the way they used to. …

My concern for the Little Colorado River is that it continues to be exploited and used for capitalistic purposes. And then where does that put us again, as Indigenous peoples? Leave the Adah'iilíní alone. Let it be. …

Jim Enote

Zuni

… I grew up hearing from my grandparents that if I left our house in Zuni and followed the Zuni River downstream, eventually it would reach the Little Colorado River. And if we kept going and walked down the Little Colorado River, it would take us back into the Grand Canyon, the place where everything began for the Zuni people.

The world began for the Zuni people at a place called Chimik'yana'kya dey'a, a place that many will know as Ribbon Falls. That is the place where the Zuni people emerged from beneath the surface of the Earth. After many years living in the Grand Canyon, we explored the tributaries of the Colorado River, including the Little Colorado River, finally to the Zuni River. Then we settled in Zuni, where we are now.

So all the tributaries nourish and contribute to the place where we began. The Little Colorado River is like an umbilical cord. It connects the Zuni people back to their place of origin. It is a very important conduit for remembering where we came from, and it can be a conduit for offering blessings. …

Water is life. These are the most important arteries of Mother Earth. And they need nourishment. So we pray for rain, we pray for snow, we pray for moisture, and dew, and mist. To help our Mother survive. And then, if our Mother survives, so do we. …

DEIDRA PEACHES

MIDNIGHT CHALLENGE
by Ed Kabotie, Tewa/Hopi, 2021

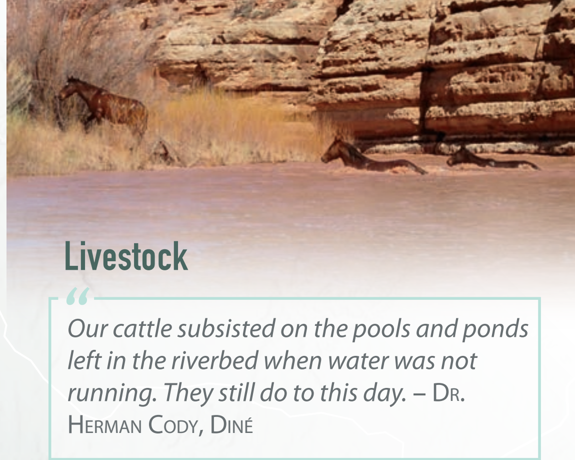
The Warrior Brothers live on opposite sides of the Little Colorado River. Their salt magic is recognizable throughout the Grand Canyon. In "Midnight Challenge," the brothers are engaged in their favorite pastime, "shinny" (Indian hockey) at Desert View, Grand Canyon National Park.

In recent years I've had the profound privilege of working with The Conservation Associates on murals that my grandfather, Fred Kabotie, painted at the Desert View Watchtower in 1932. The Warrior Brothers' presence at Desert View is evidenced by the fact that most of my work was focused on scrubbing salt stains off the interior walls of the tower.

Lifeways of the Little Colorado River

Farming

I grew up in the Grand Falls area . . . herding sheep, planting corn, and everything that incorporates and embodies the life-sustaining methods of the Diné people. – Radmilla Cody, Diné



JEFFREY CREAMER

Livestock

Our cattle subsisted on the pools and ponds left in the riverbed when water was not running. They still do to this day. – Dr. Herman Cody, Diné

Salt

When I was young, my dad took me and my brothers down the Salt Trail to the Little Colorado River . . . Navajos have been going down there for salt for a long time, for our ceremonies. – Franklin Martin, Diné

As part of older initiation traditions, it would have been a rite of passage for male initiates to make this long journey, a spiritually and physically dangerous journey, down into the Little Colorado River Gorge, down into the Grand Canyon, to obtain salt from the salt mines and then bring it back for their female relatives. – Lyle Balenquah, Hopi

Prayers

When I'm at the confluence, I feel my mind is at peace. I say my prayers. I am part of the canyon walls, the holy spirits there. – Delores Wilson-Aguirre, Diné

SHANE MCDERMOTT

Life

All these waterways are connected. Any confluence, where it connects two rivers and makes one, is important because it's like a whole new generation, a whole new life coming in. – Octavius Seowtewa, Zuni

BLAKE MCCORD

Page
98
89A
Navajo Nation
Kaibito Plateau
9206 ft
8890 ft
Grand Canyon National Park
Havasupai
Grand Canyon
89
64
Moenkopi Wash
Kaibab National Forest
Cameron
Hopi
87
Cedar Wash
Little Colorado River
Painted Desert
Dinnebito Wash
Oraibi Wash
Polacca Wash
89
Jeddito Wash
6689 ft
180
Grand Falls
San Francisco Peaks
Corn Creek Wash
San Francisco Wash
Canyon Diablo Wash
Flagstaff
San Francisco Plateau
Winslow

Sources: Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS

Water

We sing for water. When we sing to one tributary of water, we're praying for all the water that it's connected to. – Bennett Wakayuta, Hualapai

Water is sacred and is important to a lot of cultural practices. – Dr. Karletta Chief, Diné

JACK DYKINGA

DEIDRA PEACHES

Animals

The Little Colorado River begins on the White Mountain and flows north all the way into the Grand Canyon. It gives life to all the animals, all sorts of creepy crawlers, even human people. – Ramon Riley, White Mountain Apache

Hopi
Pohacca Wash
Jeddito Wash
6785 ft
191
Navajo Nation
40
Canyon Diablo Wash
Corn Creek
87
Winslow
Little Colorado River
Petrified Forest National Park
Zuni River
Zuni
377

Medicinal plants

Our people went to the Little Colorado River to gather medicinal plants for healing ceremonies. – Ramon Riley, White Mountain Apache

Zuni
180

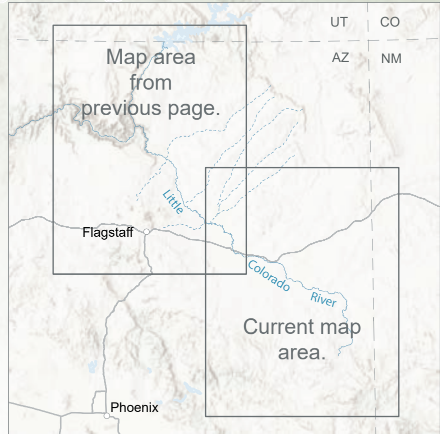
Communities

I look at the Little Colorado River as a source that helps all people in the towns and from other tribes, as it flows north into the Grand Canyon. – Bernadette Adley-SantaMaria, White Mountain Apache

The Little Colorado River is an important river to the Navajo people, and culturally for many tribes here in the Southwest. – Dr. Karletta Chief, Diné

DEIDRA PEACHES

Sitgreaves National Forest



Little Colorado River
60
Pinetop-Lakeside
Eagar
260
White Mountain Apache
Apache National Forest
11419 ft
White Mountains

Origins

The Little Colorado River is like an umbilical cord. It connects the Zuni people back to their place of origin. – Jim Enote, Zuni

White River
60

Down in the confluence area, there is also the Sipapuni, which is the cultural origin point for Hopi ancestors. – Lyle Balenquah, Hopi

Explore videos, art, stories, and more in the full collection. grandcanyontrust.org/lifeways

Sources: Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS

JACK DYKINGA

DEIDRA PEACHES

Franklin Martin

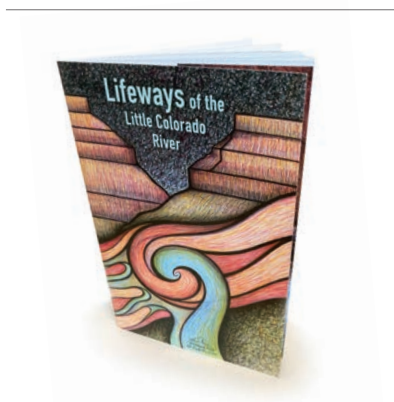
Diné

… When I was young, my dad took me and my brothers down the Salt Trail to the Little Colorado River. The water that comes out of the Little Colorado River is used in ceremonies. The female water is the Little Colorado River, the male water is the Colorado River, and they come together at the confluence.

When you're down at the Little Colorado River, you do offerings to the water. It's a sacred and holy place. You listen. You do not shout. You hear the winds talking to you. It's like a temple. We collected salt there, and my dad instructed us to take only what we needed. Navajos have been going down there for salt for a long time, for our ceremonies.

Three of our ceremonies use salt. One is a baby's first laugh. The first laugh is a gift of joy, and whoever made the baby laugh is responsible for doing that ceremony for the child. The second ceremony is done during puberty, when boys' voices change and girls enter womanhood. And the third is the wedding. We also use the salt for butchering wildlife, like deer and elk. Buckskins are used in ceremonies, so they're treated with the salt we've collected. That's how you treat the wildlife with respect.

People come back from the Little Colorado River with different stories of what they went through. My dad said he started hearing the wind singing songs on the way back. I think what you get out of it is personal. You carry that on, and you tell your kids those things. …



GET YOUR COPY
Request a print booklet of the stories in *Lifeways of the Little Colorado River* by emailing Lisa Winters at **lwinters@grandcanyontrust.org**

Ramon Riley

White Mountain Apache

… Our sacred mountain to the east is called Ba'ishzhine Dzil in Apache (the Black Mountain), because that's where we collect beads that we use for our ceremonies. But when the army came, they named it White Mountain because they saw snow on it. When the Spanish conquistadors came through, they too called it Sierra Blanca.

The headwaters of the Little Colorado River are below what people nowadays refer to as White Mountain. One elder told me, referring to the White Mountain, 'You see that rock there? That rock holds the water, the holy living water. There's a reservoir under that, which the water resource people call an aquifer. But we know it's a stream that has continued since time began.'

So the Little Colorado River begins on the White Mountain and flows north all the way into the Grand Canyon. It gives life to all the animals, all sorts of creepy crawlers, even human people. They all survive. …

Our people went to the Little Colorado River to gather medicinal plants for healing ceremonies. We don't utilize it as much as we used to. It is controlled by the Apache National Forest. But if we are there, we wash ourselves with the water, cleanse ourselves. And even take some spring water from there. When we take it, we pray first, and we even sing a song for it. The Little Colorado River water is important. The animals need it. All living entities need it. And it's part of the holy elements that are given to us. …

Octavius Seowtewa

Zuni

… Today, our land is the border of Arizona and New Mexico, but we have a river connection back to the Grand Canyon. The Zuni River runs right through Zuni and connects with the Little Colorado River. The Little Colorado River connects into the Grand Canyon. All waterways are connected, and the connections have no end.

Water doesn't regularly flow through the Zuni River, but our religious leaders still leave offerings there. When we do get floods, we understand that whatever was offered in Zuni ends up in the Colorado River. If you put something in that obstructs the natural flow of the river, like a dam, it takes away the ability to have our offerings and prayers answered. Any obstructions with our prayers is a block of our spiritual way of life.

I've been to the confluence of the Little Colorado and Colorado rivers many times. I've been there when it was flooding, and I've been there when the water has been blue. But standing there, during the floods when the water is red, I know that water came from Zuni. So I have that connection all the way back home.

We identify the Little Colorado River as "K'yawinan A'honna," which means "red river." The Little Colorado River is important, not only to Zuni, but to all the associated tribes that have connections to the Grand Canyon. It's a very important spiritual place for all of us. There are a lot of collection areas, a lot of offering places. …

DEIDRA PEACHES

DEIDRA PEACHES

Bennett Wakayuta

Hualapai

… Hualapai and Hopi are two tribes that have always been affiliated with the Grand Canyon. We both have similar creation stories, where we came up from the third world into the fourth world. And both of us kind of agree that our spirit energies will release here when we pass on. …

DEIDRA PEACHES

Our creation story talks about how each tribe was given a duty in life. For the Hualapai people, our duty was the deer. For the Hopi people, their duty was the corn. For the Navajo people, their duty was the sheep. For the Mojave people, their duty was the fish. With everyone's duties, we became important to each other. That was the way we lived in harmony.

Our connection with the Hopi Tribe has been like brothers forever. The Little Colorado River is revered by the Hopi. If my brother is going to protect something, then I'll help him protect it. We're protecting that water for everybody. …

There are salt mines a mile below the Little Colorado River. The Hualapai used that salt as one of our main trade items. For us, it was more precious than gold. We were able to keep meat for longer periods of time; it was used for food seasoning. It was an incredible resource for us, and we began taking the salt to far places. We know of a trail from the Yucatán Peninsula all the way to Deer Creek in the Grand Canyon. We were travelers. We still use that area as one of our pilgrimages. …

GET YOUR COPY

Request a print version of the *Lifeways of the Little Colorado River* map by emailing Lisa Winters at **lwinters@grandcanyontrust.org**

Sarana Riggs is from Big Mountain, Arizona, and is a member of the Navajo Nation. As an independent consultant, she educates about and advocates for cultural and environmental protections for all Indigenous peoples in the Southwest.

DEIDRA PEACHES

Delores Wilson-Aguirre

Diné

… During the summers, I would help my mom and my grandma with the sheep. We listened to my grandma, she taught us. The times we went to the confluence were just to take our corn pollen and say our prayers. It's quiet there, and if you stand near the edge, you can hear echoes down in the canyon.

My grandma used to tell us those echoes are the holy beings that are living there, so do not disturb them by yelling. You look at the turquoise water. One river is female, the other is male. They come together, it makes life. When I'm at the confluence, I feel my mind is at peace. I say my prayers. I am part of the canyon walls, the holy spirits there.

My brother went to Vietnam back in the 60s. My mom used to go to the confluence, and she used to say her prayers for a safe return for her son. Prayers were not only made for my brother, but as a family we had a lot of ceremonies. And that's how we were connected to the canyon and the land. When my brother came back, he went to the confluence and said his prayers. You cannot destroy the paths that we made there, which are sacred.

From many years of going there, saying our prayers, you cannot dig those out and erase them. That's our pathway to our lives, our church. And other tribes, they have connections to the area too. …

LOOKING FOR MORE?
Watch videos, listen to audio clips, and read more in the online collection of *Lifeways of the Little Colorado River.* Explore the interactive story map at **grandcanyontrust.org/lifeways**

Rising Leader SPOTLIGHT

Katie Valdez

Meet
Katie Marie Valdez (she/her), a recent summa cum laude graduate of the Justice Studies Program at Westminster College. Katie joined us for LeaderShift in 2021.

Interview by Amber Benally

What did you learn from working with the Grand Canyon Trust's Rising Leaders Program?

That where there is oppression, there is always resistance. My takeaway here is that [in the environmental movement] we are rarely starting from scratch—most of the time, there are already organizations and communities doing the work. We must uplift and support them, lending to the struggle whatever skills we may bring.

What would you like to see for the Colorado Plateau and your communities?

Simply put, I want to see us win! I want...our communities to be strengthened...I want to see Indigenous futures and Black futures and the futures of imperialized peoples around the globe come into fruition as they see fit. I want to see us rebuild and relearn how we relate to the land and to each other.

What impact does climate change have on young people? On those who are older?

The climate crisis is impacting people now—young and old. Frontline communities have already been experiencing the effects of climate change and they are concerned about their present. This is why the concept of 'just futures' is important. It recognizes that our present reality is unjust—that people are suffering now—and that this reality must change.

If you could give one piece of advice to young people today, what would it be?

Always ask the hard questions of yourself and others in your life. Never stop pushing yourself and those you care about to be more critical. This may result in some tough conflicts—both internally and externally—but I've seen the good that can come from them if you decide to stand your ground and fight rather than shy away. With humility, and with courage, always be critical.

What's next for you?

I hope to go to graduate school, and then possibly become a teacher or professor in sociology or another similar field. I want to keep studying the works of Black and Indigenous revolutionary and decolonial theorists, researching graduate school programs, and keeping my eye out for job opportunities in my field of interest.

Amber Benally manages the Grand Canyon Trust's Rising Leaders Program.

The Grand Canyon Trust's Rising Leaders Program brings young people together to build leadership, advocacy, and professional skills and work toward creating a more just and sustainable future for the Colorado Plateau. Learn more at **grandcanyontrust.org/rising-leaders**

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