



# THREATS TO THE GRAND CANYON

Recommended location: Marble Canyon Dam Site (RM 39-40),  
Confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers (RM 61-62)

## OVERVIEW

- Introduce human impacts to the Grand Canyon
- Show and discuss threats map
- Share example of Escalade or Little Colorado River dams
- Discuss impacts to confluence

## 1) ASK

**What signs of humans have you seen in the canyon so far?**

EXAMPLES: rock art, cliff dwellings, artificial water flows,  
helicopter noise, gauging stations, bridges

**What are some things that might impact the canyon that you can't see?**

EXAMPLES: climate change, power demand in Phoenix, monsoon  
storms, groundwater use

The Grand Canyon is protected as a national park, but activities outside of park boundaries impact the canyon and its neighboring communities.

## 2) WHAT THEMES DO YOU SEE?

SHOW MAP AND DISCUSS

Look at threats map together

### DAMS AND POWER PLANTS

The Bureau of Reclamation considered building the Marble Canyon and Bridge Canyon dams in the 1960s. In the past few years, a Phoenix-based company has proposed three hydroelectric dam projects in the Little Colorado River and its tributaries on Navajo Nation land.

### URANIUM MINING

Hundreds of mining claims outside park boundaries threaten to permanently contaminate the Grand Canyon's seeps and springs. An active uranium mine, called the Pinyon Plain Mine, is located less than 10 miles from the South Rim and less than five miles from Red Butte, the emergence place of the Havasupai people and a recognized Traditional Cultural Property. The Havasupai Tribe is leading the effort to secure permanent protections for lands around the Grand Canyon.

### TOURIST DEVELOPMENTS

Proposed mega-resorts on the south rim threaten to guzzle scarce groundwater that feeds seeps and springs in the Grand Canyon and water sources for the Havasupai people.

### 3) SHARE

## ESCALADE TRAMWAY

- A Scottsdale-based developer lobbied the Navajo Nation from 2012 to 2017 to approve a **mega-resort** on its lands and a **tramway** that could carry 10,000 people a day to the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers.
- The **confluence** is sacred to Native peoples of the Grand Canyon region, including the Navajo, Hopi, and Zuni tribes.
- A coalition of local Navajo families, called **Save the Confluence**, led the opposition to the proposed Escalade development.
- The Navajo Nation Council voted down the **Escalade** proposal in 2017.

## LITTLE COLORADO RIVER DAMS

- A Phoenix company is looking to build **dams in the Little Colorado River** and its tributaries for hydroelectric power. The company surrendered two of its permits and is now focusing on a plan to dam Big Canyon, approximately 6 miles upstream of the confluence.
- **Big Canyon** is a dry side canyon to the Little Colorado River Gorge, where Navajo families still herd sheep and practice traditions that have sustained them for generations.
- The proposed hydroelectric project would **pump billions of gallons of groundwater** from the same aquifer that feeds springs along the Little Colorado River and provides habitat for **humpback chub**.
- The Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, and many Native **communities oppose the Big Canyon Dam** project. Dam licensing rules allow preliminary permits to be granted despite objections by tribes.

#### 4) DISCUSS

**Imagine how the confluence would differ today if history had played out in favor of development?**

EXAMPLES:

noise

traffic

electric lines

loud pumps

## generators

steel towers

crowds

trash

electric lines

## RESOURCES

[www.grandcanyontrust.org/grand-canyon-threats](http://www.grandcanyontrust.org/grand-canyon-threats)

