

Impact 20 Report  
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GRAND CANYON  
TRUST

## OUR MISSION To safeguard the wonders of the Grand Canyon and the



23

years ago in August, I walked through the creaking front door of the Grand Canyon Trust's Flagstaff headquarters and found my home. Over nearly a quarter century, I have watched in awe as the team at Grand Canyon Trust has led efforts to create national monuments, clean up polluting power plants, and restore precious springs and towering forests.

We and so many others have successfully halted the expansion of uranium mining around Grand Canyon, put to rest incredibly bad ideas like trams into the canyon, and launched sustainable economic development initiatives across Native America. The collective impact we, and you, have made on this remarkable place over the last few decades is profound.

Truth be told, though, amidst the moments of pride and elation that punctuate our work are longer moments, sometimes measured in months, years, and even decades, of head-down, gritted-teeth determination to see our way to a brighter day.



Colorado Plateau, while supporting the rights of its Native peoples.



South Coyote Buttes. RICK GOLDWASSER

Over their lifetimes, my young daughters have witnessed not only the Trust’s victories but more often our day-in, day-out work to protect the places we’ve been fighting for since before they were born. They have come to know the lessons we’ve all learned over the decades—that our work is never done, and is more important with each passing year.

The Trust’s work that you support transcends elections, political cycles, lifetimes, and even generations. It requires a never-ending supply of patience and fortitude, mixed with a never-dwindling sense of urgency.

In times of turmoil such as these, my primary sustenance in continuing the fight is the enduring, patient beauty of the lands we work to protect—I hope you find the same to be true.

On behalf of the Grand Canyon Trust team, thank you for standing with us—for the duration.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ethan Aumack'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a prominent loop at the end.

Ethan Aumack  
*Executive Director*

# OUR SUSTAINED EFFORTS



Tens of thousands stand in opposition to massive dams near the Little Colorado River



LISA WINTERS



ADAM HAYDOCK

In a remote stretch of the Little Colorado River, the craggy landscape gives way to the awe-inspiring and pristine turquoise waters of the Little Colorado River—a shared cultural space to 11 tribes that was first targeted for development in 2012. While the Indigenous-led coalition Save the Confluence, the Grand Canyon Trust, and numerous other tribal and community partners successfully halted the initial destructive project, a gondola, the site has once again become the target of a private company. Over the past year, Phoenix-based developers have been working overtime on plans to build three massive hydroelectric dams within the Little Colorado River Gorge, and submitted applications for feasibility studies this past summer. The dams would not only wipe out habitat for endangered wildlife, but would also deplete an ancient turquoise spring and destroy cultural sites for Indigenous communities of the Southwest.



Fish survey. LEFT: LISA WINTERS, RIGHT: JACK DYKINGA

The multibillion-dollar pumped hydro storage projects aim to profit from billions of gallons of precious water kept behind dams. Despite the proposed project being on lands owned by the Navajo Nation, the company behind it, Pumped Hydro Storage LLC, has not yet sought consent from tribes. But Native leaders, the Trust, and the public aren't waiting—together, we are rising up to defend this remarkable place and stop the dam projects in their tracks.

With Navajo and neighboring Indigenous communities taking the lead, we joined a force of lawyers, community leaders, and advocates in opposition to the dams. Following the Navajo Nation's filing of a notice of intervention, the Grand Canyon Trust partnered with a coalition of conservation groups to file a motion to intervene to oppose the preliminary permits for the projects. This critical work was amplified by tens of thousands of supporters like you who also took a stand to protect the Little Colorado River. More than 70,000 people submitted public comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission through the Grand Canyon Trust alone, declaring that any proposal to degrade the Little Colorado River for profit is simply unacceptable.

In addition to stopping the latest projects, we are diligently seeking permanent protection for the Little Colorado River, and working collaboratively with the local communities of the Navajo Nation to put an end to these relentless proposals. The Trust remains steadfast in our commitment to ensure the Little Colorado River flows freely now, and for future generations.

## Escalante River buffered from impacts of cattle grazing



One thing we have come to know from our work is that progress does not always happen in a straight line forward—it is sometimes two steps forward and one step back. However, the Trust remains committed to long-term solutions to complex conservation challenges. Over 20 years ago, the Grand Canyon Trust offered three ranchers compensation to voluntarily relinquish their federal grazing permits along the Escalante River within the boundaries of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, to protect the river and surrounding canyons from the damaging impacts of cattle. This unique market-based solution benefitted the ranchers, as well as the rare fish, birds, bighorn sheep, and other wildlife dependent on the river, and was praised by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and the Department of the Interior. After 35 years as an organization, this effort still stands out as one of our signature accomplishments.

PHOTOS BY BLAKE MCCORD



That victory was followed by two decades of extensive river restoration efforts, with great success. Then the unthinkable happened in 2017—Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was cut in half by the Trump administration, more than 20 years after its designation. The proclamation removed critical land protections and had the potential to reopen the Escalante River corridor to cattle grazing. The new management plan for the shrunken monument was finally released this past February, which reopened nearly 30,000 acres of land to grazing, including 90 percent of the land we worked with ranchers to protect

back in 1999. Fortunately, after much pressure from the Trust, our partners, and the public, the Bureau of Land Management changed course by excluding the Escalante River corridor from any new grazing.

While this was an important victory for the Escalante River region, we are not done. That is why at the Grand Canyon Trust, our legal team is doing the long-range work to restore the monument’s original boundaries and to make certain that every possible safeguard is returned for the Escalante River, and the entire Grand Staircase-Escalante region.



## SUSTAINED THREATS to the Grand Canyon call for SUSTAINED SUPPORT to protect its future.

FOR AS LITTLE AS \$5 EACH MONTH, you can help fund critical programs to safeguard the wonders of the Grand Canyon and the Colorado Plateau, while supporting the rights of its Native peoples.

Become a Sustaining Circle Member of the Grand Canyon Trust by donating each month, starting today.

Make your monthly donation today at  
[grandcanyontrust.org/monthly-giving](https://grandcanyontrust.org/monthly-giving)

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact  
**Megan Hosterman** at [mhosterman@grandcanyontrust.org](mailto:mhosterman@grandcanyontrust.org)  
or **928-286-3375**

New regulations help to protect vital water from a toxic uranium mine







**Less than 10 miles from the south rim of the Grand Canyon, and at the foot of a site sacred to the Havasupai Tribe called Red Butte, lies Canyon Mine.** It is here that a uranium mining company has drilled through a pocket of groundwater—water that is precious to the plants, wildlife, and people who call the canyon’s arid landscape home—sending millions of gallons of contaminated water plunging into the mine’s bottom. In an emergency effort, that same contaminated water has been continuously pumped from the mine shaft into a radioactive pond that attracts desert birds and wildlife. In recent years, after the pond reached capacity at two million gallons, mine operators began spraying the water into the air and surrounding national forest to hasten evaporation.

No one is absolutely certain of the course of water that remains in the mine shaft, but many fear it may be the same water that feeds the ancient seeps and springs of the Grand Canyon, endangering the sole source of drinking water for the Havasupai community. The Trust’s fight against Canyon Mine, operated by Energy Fuels Resources, began in 2013. While our ultimate goal is closure and remediation of the mine, this past August, persistent efforts by the Grand Canyon Trust, Native communities, and other partners to stand up against this decades-long exploitation bore fruit when the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) chose to tighten up its regulation of the mine. ADEQ will now require the operators of Canyon Mine to obtain an individual aquifer protection permit, which could mandate heightened monitoring and inspection of the mine to protect critical water resources.

While this new requirement for the mine encourages our work, the fact remains that any uranium mine near the Grand Canyon poses risk to the water, plants, and animals of the plateau. That is why we continue our long-term campaign to permanently ban uranium mines on more than one million acres around the Grand Canyon through the passage of the Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act.



PHOTOS LEFT TO RIGHT: BLAKE MCCORD, BLAKE MCCORD, AMY S. MARTIN

# Forests around the national monuments safeguarded from destruction



At the Grand Canyon Trust, we not only work on issues that affect the land and people of the Colorado Plateau, but also the animals that call these wild places home. In the rugged expanse of old-growth pinyon and juniper forests that sweep across Utah's Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, nearly one thousand species of wildlife abound. The monument is home to trees dating back 1,400 years that have adapted to the changing plateau for over a millennium, and the animal life that relies on these forests has adapted right along with them.



Clear-cut pinyon pine and juniper forestlands on the Plateau. TIM PETERSON

The pinyon jay, a small and scrappy blue bird with a sharp bill, not only relies on the pinyon pine trees interspersed in these forests for food and shelter, but also plants new pinyon pines by caching seeds in shallow soil where new life inevitably takes root. But, as pinyon jays and pinyon forests grow together, so too do they decline. And that is exactly what has been happening for several decades.

Since 1970, pinyon jay populations have declined by 85 percent, and the dwindling populations are expected to halve in the next 15 years. While the climate crisis contributes to decreased populations, there's an even more direct and insidious cause for the mass decline of the plateau's pinyon jays—the deforestation of pinyon and juniper forests at the hands of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the very agency responsible for stewarding the monument. Across Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, the BLM has been clear-cutting forestlands and planting non-native grasses for cattle grazing in their stead—practices that lack both scientific and public consideration.



At the Grand Canyon Trust, we have always prioritized science-based stewardship of the plateau, including forest-management policies that reflect the best available research. While the pinyon jay is just one species among many affected by management decisions for forests on the plateau, it exemplifies the fragile interconnectedness of plants, wildlife, and humans. That is why last year, we joined partners to successfully challenge the BLM's plans to clear-cut 30,000 acres of forests on Skutumpah Terrace, on the grounds of protecting wildlife like the pinyon jay. This small victory also contributed to the subsequent withdrawal of nearly 200,000 additional acres from consideration for clear-cutting, building on 30 years of the Trust's work to protect forests across the plateau. As we look toward the future, we are rooted in our vision for a Colorado Plateau where vibrant forests, flowing waters, and abundant wildlife are restored and protected, against all odds, and for their own sake.



# The future of environmental justice on the Colorado Plateau

As 2020 brought forth isolation for so many across the nation, the Grand Canyon Trust's Rising Leaders Program brought young people together—virtually. In 2020, dozens of participants gathered to take part in LeaderShift, a workshop series that trains and empowers young people to become environmental justice leaders for the Colorado Plateau, and beyond.

Even from afar, this year's cohort learned invaluable lessons as they examined the region's historical reliance on fossil fuels, and explored what a just transition away from an extractive economy might look like for the Colorado Plateau. In addition, the cohort listened to the teachings of Indigenous peoples who have been leading a generations-long fight to protect their communities from exploitative practices. Further, LeaderShift participants were trained on advocacy skills, ranging from storytelling to grassroots organizing.

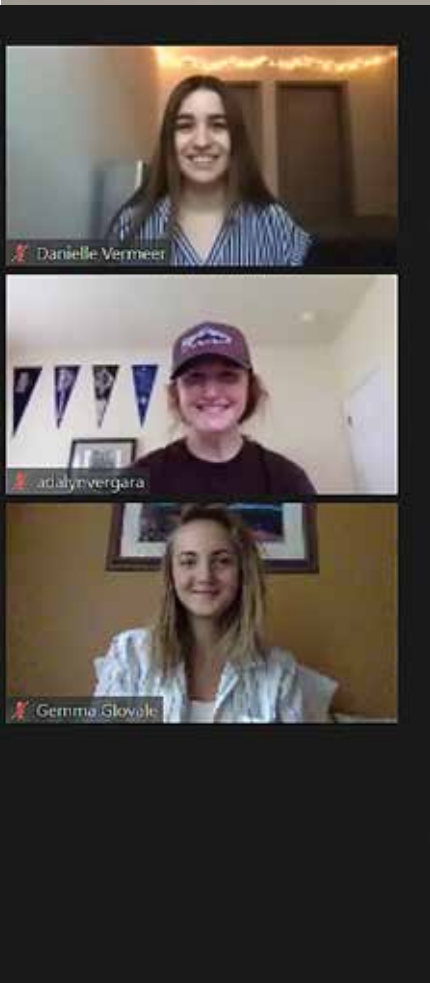
Through our Rising Leaders Program, the Trust invests in the future of conservation. Young people trained through LeaderShift bring innovation to the field—finding solutions in unexpected places and offering ambitious visions for the years and decades ahead. The return on this investment for the Trust, and for all of us who care deeply about the future of the Colorado Plateau, is beyond measure.





# LEAVE A *Grand Legacy*

WHEN YOU LEAVE A GIFT TO THE GRAND CANYON TRUST IN YOUR WILL OR ESTATE PLANS, YOU EMPOWER US TO PROTECT THE LANDSCAPES YOU LOVE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.



If you have named the Trust in your will, or as a beneficiary of an IRA/Retirement plan, please let us know. *We'd love to thank you and welcome you to our Legacy Circle.*

If you would like additional information on other planned gift opportunities, please fill contact **Libby Ellis** directly at **928-286-3387** or **lellis@grandcanyontrust.org**

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5 YEARS IN A ROW!



# A Message from Trustee Rebecca Tsose

Board Member, Grand Canyon Trust

Regents Professor of Law and Faculty Co-Chair Indigenous Peoples' Law and Policy Program, University of Arizona

2020 has been a year of reckoning, for the Colorado Plateau, our country, and the world. The global pandemic has taken an unprecedented toll in loss of life and the experiences we once took for granted, like gathering together. At the same time, brutal episodes of racial injustice and widespread social protests, along with natural disasters, like fires and floods that have decimated communities, have forced us to confront the stark intersections of poverty, politics, and the natural environment that put our most vulnerable people and places at great risk. We are left questioning how we will rebuild our fragile world, and how we will heal from these events.

Some of the answers we seek, like how to adapt and survive, are etched into the sacred landscapes of the Colorado Plateau. Other answers can only be found in each other. Just as we have shared the difficult experiences of 2020, the Grand Canyon Trust and its extended community of supporters also share a commitment to honor and protect the intricate and life-sustaining qualities of this landscape—its people, rivers, forests, and shrines.

How will we, the trustees of the Grand Canyon Trust, use our position to contribute to the well-being of our





collective future? We will continue to invest resources in those communities across the plateau who have traditionally been excluded from making decisions about their future and the future of the places they call home. In doing so, we will continue to support the Trust’s collaborative work with Native communities of the Colorado Plateau, and empower young people to become the next generation of decision-makers. We will build upon the strength that the Colorado Plateau embodies—a resilience that has endured past generations and will continue into the future.

What I find most moving about the Grand Canyon Trust is its commitment to honor the Indigenous Nations that steward these lands. With a strong commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, the Trust recognizes the interconnectedness and need to respect each other, our communities, and the land.

I am continually inspired by the work of the Grand Canyon Trust, and I appreciate the community of supporters who enable us to do the critical work of protecting the future of the Grand Canyon and the entire plateau.

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JAKE HOYUNGOWA



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Our work is never done, and is more important with each passing year.

—Ethan Aumack, Grand Canyon Trust Executive Director

