



**Impact Report** 2021  
A YEAR OF  
OPPORTUNITY



GRAND CANYON  
TRUST



## OUR MISSION

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







Bears Ears National Monument. TIM PETERSON



The past several years have been some of the most challenging in recent history for those who care deeply about conservation and environmental justice across the Colorado Plateau. I am so proud of the work we did during this time—holding the line with so many of you in the halls of Congress, courtrooms, and over the last 18 months, too many Zoom rooms to count. I'm also proud that we kept our collective chin up, never losing sight of the change needed in policy, law, theory, and in-the-dirt practice to ensure that this incredible place is thoughtfully stewarded for generations to come.

While we've moved into a different era of political leadership, many of the same challenges remain. Simply put, we still need better, stronger, and more durable protections for public lands around the Grand Canyon and across the plateau. We still need bold actions from our political leaders that ensure a livable climate for the plateau and beyond. And we need more opportunities for tribes to help lead the management of their ancestral lands.

To these ends, the Grand Canyon Trust team and our allies have remained steadfast in providing support—and applying pressure as necessary—to this Congress and administration on essential conservation initiatives. We have worked closely

with members of the Arizona congressional delegation to move the Grand Canyon Protection Act (S. 387) forward, and we are measurably closer to a permanent mining ban as a result. We have identified and worked to curb myriad sources of greenhouse gases across the plateau. We celebrated a major victory in July when a hydroelectric dam developer surrendered two of three dam proposals for the Little Colorado River within the Grand Canyon after unwavering advocacy spearheaded by the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, and Hualapai Tribe. And we have continued to support our tribal partners in the push to restore Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments, a success we collectively lauded in October when President Biden signed restoration proclamations for both.

While there has been a change in those holding the reins in Washington, D.C., the urgency of our work has not faltered. At the same time, we take a moment to celebrate the impact of our accomplishments over the last year—and remain committed to working tirelessly with you, and for you, to safeguard this place we call home.

Ethan Aumack  
*Executive Director*

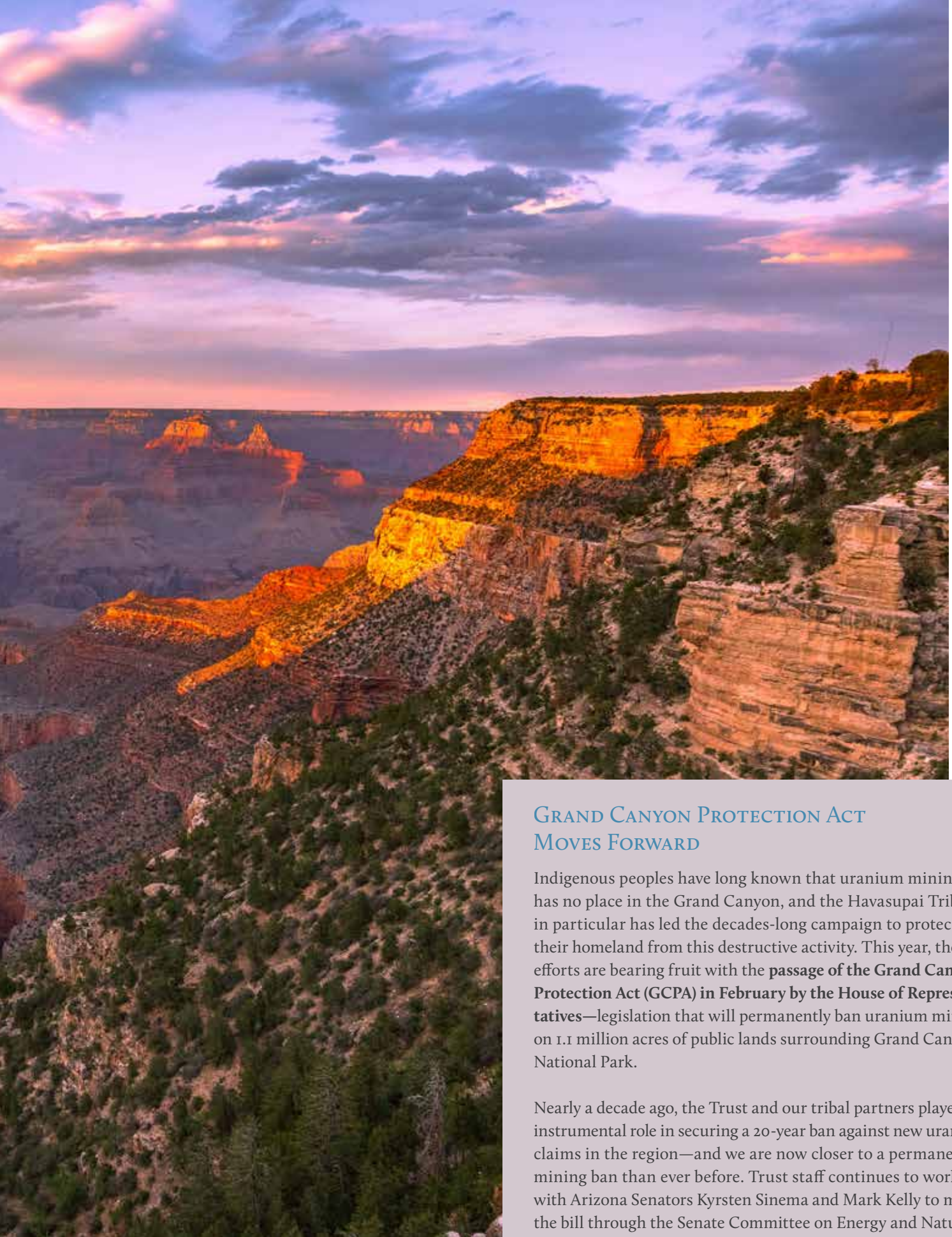


# Protecting the Grand Canyon

The Grand Canyon is one of the most stunning destinations in the world, yet countless threats continue to jeopardize its surrounding land, waters, and the Native communities that call it home. Mining poses one of the greatest risks to the region's precious water sources due to the incredibly complex nature of groundwater flow adjacent—and connected—to the Grand Canyon. This year, the Grand Canyon Trust has continued working closely with our Native partners to fight for this unparalleled natural landscape and its irreplaceable ecosystems, and we've seen promising movement in key areas to date.





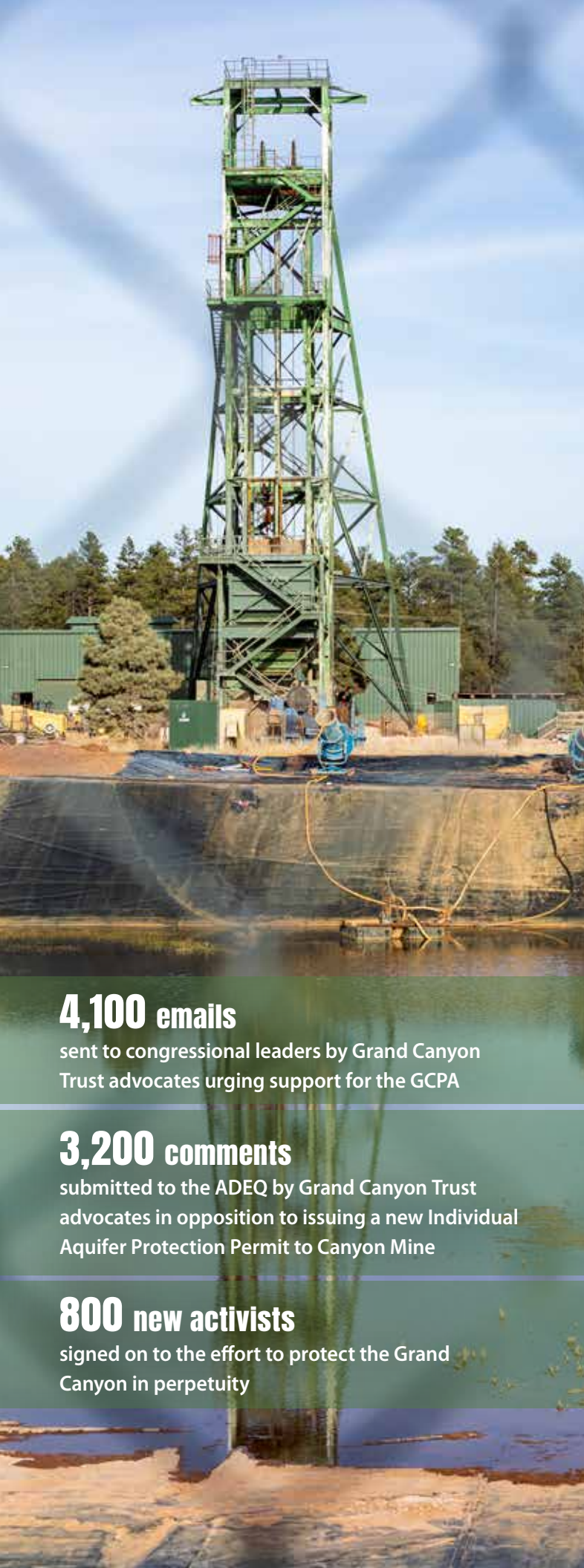


## GRAND CANYON PROTECTION ACT MOVES FORWARD

Indigenous peoples have long known that uranium mining has no place in the Grand Canyon, and the Havasupai Tribe in particular has led the decades-long campaign to protect their homeland from this destructive activity. This year, those efforts are bearing fruit with the **passage of the Grand Canyon Protection Act (GCPA) in February by the House of Representatives**—legislation that will permanently ban uranium mining on 1.1 million acres of public lands surrounding Grand Canyon National Park.

Nearly a decade ago, the Trust and our tribal partners played an instrumental role in securing a 20-year ban against new uranium claims in the region—and we are now closer to a permanent mining ban than ever before. Trust staff continues to work with Arizona Senators Kyrsten Sinema and Mark Kelly to move the bill through the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, where it awaits a hearing at the time of this writing.





**4,100** emails

sent to congressional leaders by Grand Canyon Trust advocates urging support for the GCPA

**3,200** comments

submitted to the ADEQ by Grand Canyon Trust advocates in opposition to issuing a new Individual Aquifer Protection Permit to Canyon Mine

**800** new activists

signed on to the effort to protect the Grand Canyon in perpetuity



ED MOSS

## CANYON MINE: THE FIGHT CONTINUES

Canyon Mine (recently renamed Pinyon Plain Mine) sits fewer than nine miles from the south rim of Grand Canyon on the Red Butte Traditional Cultural Property, a sacred site for the Havasupai Tribe. For decades, it has threatened water in and around Grand Canyon National Park, including the Havasupai community's primary source of drinking water. **The Forest Service granted Canyon Mine an exemption from the existing, temporary mining ban**, and despite never commercially producing uranium ore, it has been the source of severe, accidental mineshaft flooding since 2016.

To date, **more than 40 million gallons of groundwater contaminated with uranium, arsenic, and other potentially hazardous substances have been pumped out of the mineshaft** and dumped in an uncovered pond. Trust staff and volunteers have observed on monitoring trips to the mine that wildlife frequently breach the boundary fence to drink from the pond, and the water is often misted across the chain-link fence into the national forest to hasten evaporation.

This year, the Grand Canyon Trust and our partners have **continued our years-long fight over the legality of the Canyon Mine's exclusion from the mining ban**. Oral arguments before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals occurred in late August, and with the state groundwater permit for Canyon Mine up for renewal with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), the Trust and our Native partners have advocated tirelessly for its denial. We are instead pushing for a **new permit that would require the mining company to clean up the mine, mitigate existing and future contamination at the site, and monitor the groundwater in perpetuity**.

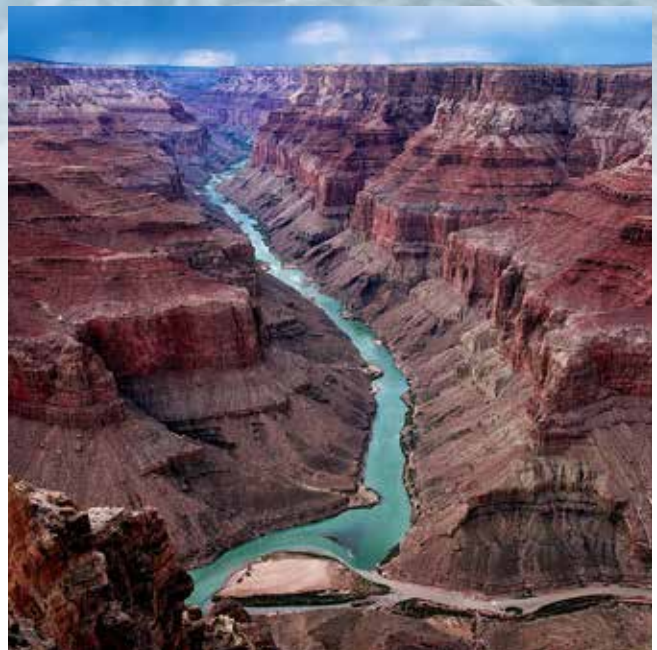




## VICTORY FOR THE LITTLE COLORADO RIVER

The lower Little Colorado River flows into the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon and is a deeply spiritual place for many Native communities in the area. Last summer, this place of reverence and beauty was threatened when the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued preliminary permits to a Phoenix-based developer for two proposed hydroelectric dam projects on and near this life-giving water source.

In July, we celebrated a major victory when the developer requested that these hydroelectric projects be canceled, citing conversations with Navajo Nation representatives (with whom the developer failed to consult prior to seeking the permits) and strong opposition from conservation groups. The developer is continuing to pursue a



TOP: ADAM HAYDOCK, ABOVE: SHANE MCDERMOTT

third dam proposal, the Big Canyon dam project, on a tributary to the Little Colorado River just miles from the confluence with the Colorado River. We will continue to fight this and any other destructive projects alongside the Navajo Nation, the Hopi Tribe, the Hualapai Tribe, and local communities.



# Restoring National Monuments

National monuments—thus designated by the president or Congress—preserve archaeological, cultural, and historic sites. Though intended to be permanent, former President Trump unlawfully revoked and replaced Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments in 2017, slashing them by 85 and 47 percent, respectively. Following that action, we challenged the legality of the former president’s executive order in courts and on the ground, in support of tribes and in collaboration with other key partners.



Monuments proclamation signing at the White House. SHAWN THEW/UPI/NEWS.COM

On October 8, 2021, years of collective education and advocacy paid off when President Biden **signed proclamations renewing protections for both monuments**—and including protections for 11,200 acres around Indian Creek in Bears Ears that were not in President Obama’s original designation. With these landmark proclamations, Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante are once again fully protected under the Antiquities Act of 1906 from new fossil fuel development, new mining claims, and other threats. By restoring the monuments, President Biden has also provided renewed opportunities to honor the rights of Indigenous peoples who have conserved these places for hundreds of generations.

President Biden’s proclamations mean we can begin rebuilding what we and many others have worked so hard to protect. We will now focus on ensuring that the forthcoming management plans not only include adequate protections for both monuments, but also provide expanded opportunities for shared governance with tribes.







## **2,000 emails**

sent to President Biden by Grand Canyon Trust advocates urging the immediate restoration of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments

## **500 signatures**

collected on a petition advocating for restoration of the monuments

## **2,500 views**

to date of our 5-part teach-in series: "Native Perspectives: Tribal Consultation and Collaborative Management"

## **5.5 million people**

reached via social media during an online day of action for restoring Utah's monuments

## **80 springs**

surveyed in the Escalante River watershed to help inform land management, protection, and restoration efforts in the region



# RESTORATION OF BEARS EARS AND GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENTS

OCTOBER 8, 2021

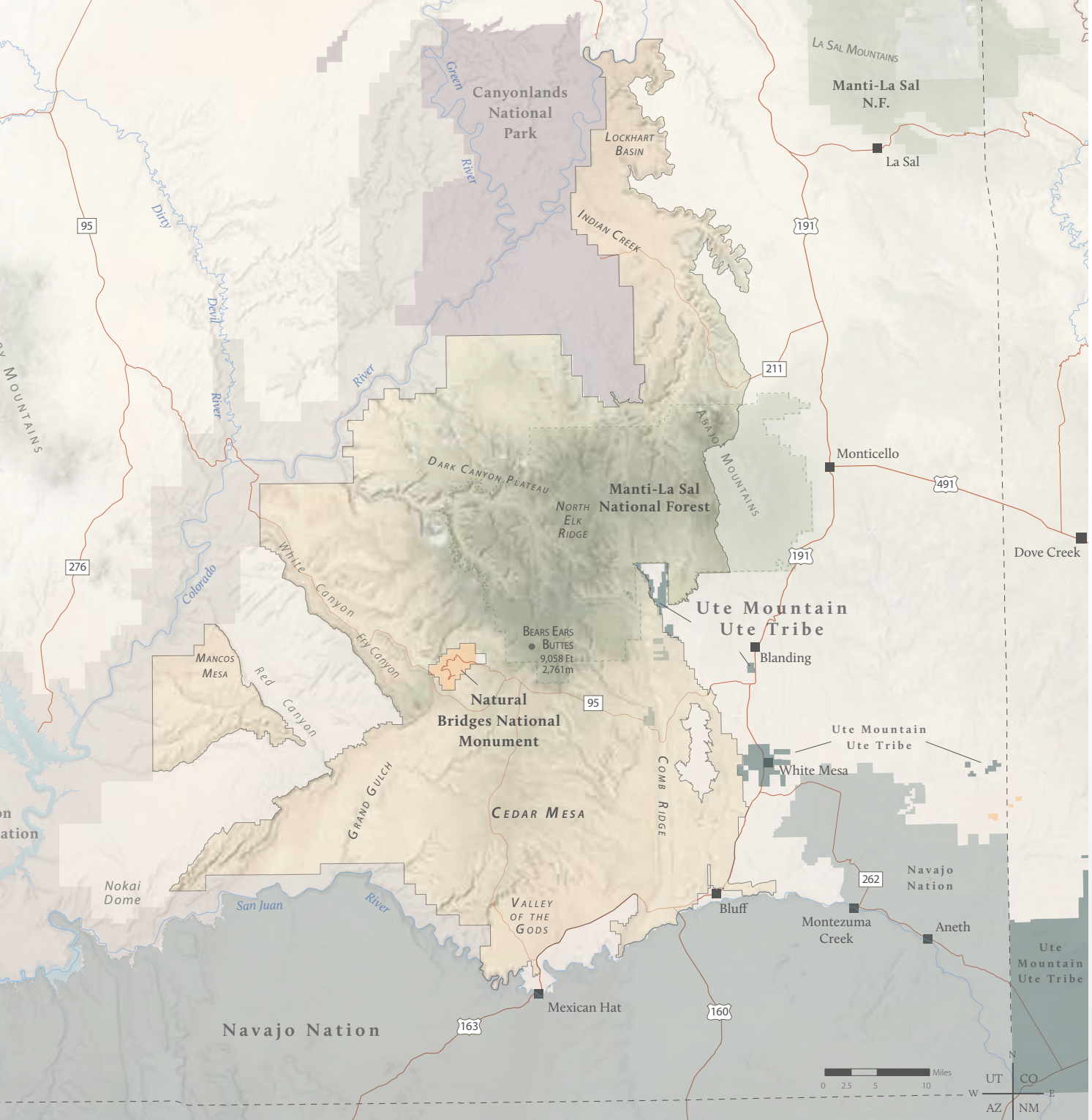


## GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Prior to Biden’s restoration of Grand Staircase-Escalante, the Trust maintained efforts to safeguard it from any harmful activities. The new proclamation not only **prevents new fossil fuel development and mining claims**, it also **provides a pathway to reducing the impacts of livestock grazing across the monument** by allowing

ranchers to voluntarily “retire” their grazing permit if they so choose. This arrangement, for which we have been advocating, empowers ranchers to make new decisions about their livelihood and protects the monument landscape, plants, animals, and cultural resources from potential damage from cattle.





## BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT

In the effort to protect the integrity of Bears Ears until its boundaries were restored, we continued to reinforce and elevate the voices of Indigenous communities and the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition—comprised of five sovereign nations that joined together to protect and defend the monument. Over the past year, our work in Bears Ears ranged from **exposing new threats from**

**mining and fossil fuel leasing to raising awareness for how to visit Bears Ears cultural sites with respect.** To foster collaboration on behalf of the monument, the Trust maintained our annual support of the Bears Ears Summer Gathering, a cultural and traditional knowledge-sharing event led by the grassroots group Utah Diné Bikéyah.



# Battling Climate Change

Stories of heat domes, flooding, and widespread wildfires have been prevalent among global headlines this year, making the effects of our ever-changing climate impossible to ignore. The report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) this summer confirmed that many of the changes we're witnessing are unprecedented over thousands—even hundreds of thousands—of years. Along the Colorado Plateau, rampant drought linked to climate change is already a grim reality with devastating impacts on plants and wildlife, water resources, landscapes, and human life.

Although climate change is a global problem requiring broad-scale change, mitigating its effects on a regional level is a top priority for the Grand Canyon Trust. **Our ongoing climate action ranges from broad efforts to achieve carbon neutrality on the entire plateau to improving the resiliency of key landscapes to withstand the growing impacts of a changing climate**, and much more. As the collective sense of urgency increases, so does the Trust's commitment to addressing this paramount issue.

## ACHIEVING CARBON NEUTRALITY ACROSS THE COLORADO PLATEAU

The IPCC report reiterates what we already know: that “strong and sustained reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases would limit climate change”—although the report admits that any subsequent stabilization in global temperatures could take 20-30 years. This underscores the value of our ongoing efforts to measure and reduce emissions throughout the Colorado Plateau, historically a region of carbon-intensive energy development.

This year, the Trust finalized and refined **a rigorous inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and carbon storage for the entire plateau**. Our expert staff has analyzed the data, which is being used to identify the highest-value opportunities for reducing emissions across the region. Our initial steps to implement the findings include supporting the federal **Revive Economic Growth and Reclaim Orphaned Wells (REGROW) Act of 2021** that would plug methane-leaking orphaned oil and gas wells. Our efforts, in close collaboration with tribes, local and federal governments, and other organizations, will move the Colorado Plateau toward a more environmentally just and sustainable future.









## LAND CONSERVATION EQUALS CLIMATE RESILIENCE



BLAKE MCCORD

Healthy lands and forests are critical to addressing greenhouse gas emissions—both by blocking carbon-intensive development and by offering natural carbon sequestration. As such, **land conservation is a key solution to lessening the effects of climate change, along with maintaining healthy watersheds.** For the past two decades, the Trust has embarked on numerous projects with our partners aimed at protecting and restoring riparian and forest habitats, which will ultimately make landscapes across the plateau more resilient to drought and wildfires. Strategically planned land conservation efforts are complex yet essential in the era of rapid climate change—and we continue to identify regional priorities that foster resilience, mitigation, and adaptation.





Fishlake National Forest. BLAKE MCCORD

**2.4 million acres**  
of ponderosa pine forests  
being restored to natural  
wildfire patterns, in collaboration  
with the Forest Service

**1 million acres**  
of public lands protected from  
the negative impacts of livestock  
overgrazing



TOM TILL

## BRYCE CANYON PROTECTED FROM STRIP MINE

We celebrated a victory this year when a Utah district judge ruled in our favor on a lawsuit we filed in 2019, in collaboration with several other environmental groups, to **protect lands surrounding Bryce Canyon National Park from the proposed 2,000-acre expansion of the Alton Coal Mine.** The judge found that the Bureau of Land Management had unlawfully approved the plan to expand the mine during the Trump administration because the agency failed to adequately analyze how it would contribute to climate change. We are optimistic that the Biden-Harris administration will recognize the danger of expanding the Alton mine and will renew its commitment to move away from harmful fossil fuel projects.

## SKYLINE MINE UNDER PRESSURE

The favorable decision in the Alton mine lawsuit is a good omen for a similar coal mine case we've been pursuing for years in Utah federal court. A government lease of public coal reserves allowed the Skyline Coal Mine to expand onto 2,700 additional acres in the Manti-La Sal National Forest. This case, as with the Alton case, **contests the government's decision to issue the lease while ignoring its severe climate change impacts.** Our legal team negotiated our crux move this spring as we filed our main written arguments with the court, capitalizing on the Alton decision that was providently announced just days before. We are currently awaiting the court's decision.



# Volunteer and Rising Leader Program SNAPSHOTS

## VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR THE TRUST

For the past 20 years, the Trust has relied on thousands of volunteers to help carry out restoration projects across the Colorado Plateau designed to protect critical riparian ecosystems—wetland biodiversity “hot spots”—and conserve native species and their habitats. The COVID-19 pandemic did not allow for a safe field season last year, but we were eager to get back in action in July once vaccines were readily available. This year, **we held a variety of volunteer trips across the Colorado Plateau that ranged from restoring critical streams to protecting Utah’s Pando aspen grove.** We also launched a new

“**Nourishing the Land**” framework to incorporate land acknowledgments on each trip as a means of recognizing and respecting Native peoples as the plateau’s original stewards. Also new in 2021, we rolled out an **online training platform** that engages volunteers directly in protecting and advocating for pinyon jays and their pinyon-juniper habitat that faces ongoing threats.

We remain immensely grateful for the dedication of our many volunteers, who enable the Trust to continue fulfilling our mission throughout the plateau.





**18** volunteer trips and events

**185** volunteers

**1,865** total volunteer hours

**4,100** invasive plants removed from fragile habitat

**35** rock structures built to heal degraded stream channels

**10** monitoring trips to Canyon Uranium Mine to collect data on potentially harmful operations

**6** Rising Leaders alum served on our Rising Leaders Advisory Council, providing direction and counsel for program planning

**2** summer interns worked closely with the Trust on policy development for the Grand Canyon region and surveying springs across Utah's public lands

**1** research fellow helped the Trust's Just Transition team analyze renewable energy opportunities for the Navajo Nation following the closure of the Navajo Generating Station

**12** young leaders completed nearly 350 hours of training in environmental and climate justice



TOP AND BOTTOM: AMBER BENALLY

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE RISING LEADERS PROGRAM

The Trust's Rising Leaders Program provides opportunities for individuals ages 15-30 to build leadership, advocacy, and professional skills to support environmental justice on the Colorado Plateau. This program's most intensive leadership training is the **annual LeaderShift workshop**, a 12-day "deep dive" which focused this year on a **Just Transition for the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe**. We also offered **two service-learning opportunities for youth** this fall—one focused on the cultural significance of the Bears Ears region and a second that explored Indigenous agricultural practices as a model for sustainability.





## A Message from Trustee

# Rhea Suh

President and CEO,  
Marin Community Foundation

When I was approached by Executive Director Ethan Aumack and Board Member Steve Martin more than a year ago about joining the Grand Canyon Trust’s board of trustees, I was ecstatic. I can hardly think of a landscape that I love more than the Colorado Plateau, but that isn’t why I accepted. I joined because I believe the Trust is not only the best conservation organization in the region, but it is also a leader in fundamentally reshaping and redefining what conservation looks like in America today.

First, let’s start with its conservation impact. The Trust celebrated a major milestone this year when the House of Representatives passed the Grand Canyon Protect Act (GCPA) designed to protect 1.1 million acres around the park from the ravages of uranium mining. The awareness around the vast threat of future mining and the colossal mess of past mining were first brought to the public’s attention

primarily by the Trust more than 20 years ago. The GCPA simply would not even exist if it wasn’t for the dogged scientific, advocacy, and policy work of this organization.

In addition, during a year filled with climate chaos, the Trust has stepped up its climate work—leading the effort to finalize a full inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and carbon storage across the Colorado Plateau. This inventory will offer a roadmap that can help highlight priorities and opportunities for governments, non-profit organizations, and communities across the region.

Second, let’s turn to the way in which the Trust is approaching conservation. The Trust has long held the view that working with and in support of communities—specifically Native communities—is critical for success. This ethos remains truly singular. The reality is that for too long and in too many places, tribal communities and





other communities of color have been ignored and, in some cases, disproportionately saddled with environmental burdens. The work of the Trust goes far in building trust, capacity, and a future conservation movement that is fairer, more just, and reflective of our society. Its Rising Leaders program, for example, has provided intensive training for dozens of young leaders in the region on developing Just Transition plans for the Navajo and Hopi nations. It is a prime example of the Trust's commitment to having conservation truly benefit all peoples.

In reflecting back upon this year, with the many twists and turns we have all endured, I cannot help but be proud of my association with the Trust. I rest easy knowing that the landscapes I love are being fiercely protected and that the people who have long lived on and stewarded these landscapes are benefiting from that conservation.



TIM PETERSON

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Editors: Kimber Wukitsch  
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