ADOPT-A-BEACH PROGRAM
Long-Term Monitoring of Camping Beaches in Grand Canyon

Summary of Monitoring Observations for Year 2017

By
Paul Lauck[1]

January 31, 2018

Example of camp degradation due to rain event during lunch stop, September 14, 2017.
Upper North Canyon Camp, RM 20.71 R. Photo on left taken 10:15 am and photo on right taken 1:15pm.

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Abstract

For the past twenty-two years, the Adopt-A-Beach repeat photography program has been monitoring beaches along the Colorado River through Grand Canyon. By comparative examination of photo series and on-the-spot observations contributed by the volunteer photographers, conditions pertaining to the desirability of the beach as a camp for rafting parties are evaluated. Factors considered, which contribute to changes that may have an effect on the camp, both positive and negative, include: fluctuating river flows, aeolian action, vegetation increase/decrease, human introduced change, rain associated erosion or other actions, natural or anthropomorphic. Beginning at River Mile 11.3, as measured downstream from the United States Geological Survey gaging station at Lees Ferry, AZ (USGS, 2013), the 239 miles of river in the study are divided into four separate geomorphic reaches, and the resulting evaluations are also segregated and examined by reach. The conclusions are presented as observational, monitoring data only.

A comparison of beach evolution from late season 2016 to early April 2017 was conducted on all 44 study beaches. Although the April photos were collected five months after the fact, this serves to evaluate the results of a High Flow Experiment conducted the second week of November, 2016. Two thirds (66%) of the beaches showed Improvement through the spring of 2017, 7% of the beaches had Degraded between the latest 2016 photo and spring 2017, and 27%, were considered Unchanged. Of the 3 beaches classified as Degraded for this period, two (67%) are located in the Marble Canyon reach and one (33%) was found in the Upper Granite Gorge reach. No beaches in the Muav Gorge or in the Lower Granite Gorge were considered as Degraded. Twelve beaches were Unchanged for this period, with 8% in the Marble Canyon reach, 42% in the Upper Granite Gorge, 50% in the Muav Gorge reach and none located in the Lower Granite Gorge reach. Distribution of the 30 beaches classified as Improved since late summer 2016 was even, with the Marble Canyon reach, the Upper Granite Gorge and Muav Gorge reaches each containing 30%. The remaining 10% are located in the Lower Granite Gorge.

For the time spanning the 2017 summer boating season, early April to late October, 29 of the 44 study beaches in the program had photographs and photographer comment sheets spanning a sufficient period of time to be evaluated. Of these 29 beaches, 41% were classified as Unchanged for the time period, 59% were considered as having Degraded by the end of the season, and None of the 29 were seen to have Improved. Of the 12 Unchanged beaches, 58% are located in the Marble Canyon reach, 25% in the Upper Granite Gorge reach, and 17% are contained in the Muav Gorge reach. None of the Unchanged beaches were in the Lower Granite Gorge reach. Eighteen percent of the 17 beaches classified as Degraded are located in the Marble Canyon reach, another 29% in the Upper Granite Gorge reach, 41% are found in the Muav Gorge reach and 12% were located in the Lower Granite Gorge reach. Occasionally, a beach will exhibit Improvement during a season but factors will conspire to Degrade it before Fall. In all instances, a beach will receive a classification based on its condition on the final date of evaluation for that season. The primary factor cited for 10 of the camps classified as Degraded was beach recession due to the fluctuating flow releases from Glen Canyon Dam. There were 4 beaches classified as Degraded where rain events are cited as the primary cause. Wind erosion was a primary factor in one Degraded classification, and vegetation increase and human impacts, as well as the previously cited factors, were all noted as secondary agents of change on one or more beaches.

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Keywords: repeat photography; river sandbar erosion; river sandbar restoration

Introduction and Background

In 1981, the Glen Canyon Environmental Studies (GCES), under the administration of the Bureau of Reclamation, began to study the effects of controlled flow releases from the dam on the downstream river ecosystem (U.S. Department of Interior 1987). Included in this study were effects on sediment supply and recreational resources. Studies of sediment dynamics showed that fluctuating flow releases from the dam have had a degrading effect on sand bar deposits (Hazel and others 1993, Schmidt and Graf 1990) since the closure of the dam. However, beaches can also be replenished by high flows adequate to entrain bedload sand and cause deposition to high elevation areas of beaches (Parnell and others 1997, Wiele and others 1999). Studies of campsite resources demonstrated that the impact to sand bars due to erosion decreases the carrying capacity and camping area available for river parties and backpackers (Kearsley and Warren 1993, Kearsley and Quartaroli 1997).

The Grand Canyon Protection Act was passed by Congress in 1992 to ensure that ecological, cultural and visitor resources downstream of the dam would be monitored for changing conditions imposed by operation of the dam. The Act states that Glen Canyon Dam:

"….must be managed in such a way as to protect, mitigate adverse impacts to, and improve the values for which Grand Canyon National Park….were established, including, but not limited to, natural and cultural resources and visitor use" (U.S. Department of Interior 1996).

In 1996, following completion of the "Operation of Glen Canyon Dam: Final Environmental Impact Statement" (EIS), a Record of Decision was signed and implemented which included provision for the use of "beach/habitat-building flows." Now referred to as High Flow Experiments (HFE), the EIS defined these events as "…scheduled high releases of a short duration designed to rebuild high elevation sandbars, deposit nutrients, restore backwater channels and provide some of the dynamics of a natural system" (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1995), with the added intent of restoring some of the dynamics that resulted from flooding in the ecosystem. Further, an HFE is defined as a flow release exceeding 31,500 ft^3/s. Sandbars form when sediment carried by the river, either from bed load or suspended load, is deposited by the action of eddy currents in recirculation zones. This occurs primarily on the downstream end of debris fans, but also in areas along the river's channel margin (Schmidt 1990). The first HFE was conducted in late March 1996, and consisted of a 7-day steady release of 45,000 ft^3/s that was preceded and followed by steady flows of 8000 ft^3/s for 4 days each (Melis, 2011).

Grand Canyon beaches form the substrate for communities of plants, invertebrates and vertebrates, including species such as riparian birds (Carothers and Brown, 1991). These beaches are also an important resource for river parties conducting trips through Grand Canyon. Both commercial and private river trips, as well as backpackers, rely on wide sandy areas for camping and recreation. Consequently, those who run the river are interested in observing the changes to camping beaches throughout the river corridor in the Grand Canyon. As a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting Grand Canyon and the Colorado River experience, Grand Canyon River Guides developed and implemented the Adopt-a-Beach Repeat Photography (AAB) program prior to the initial flood event in 1996 in order to assess the evolving state of the recreational resource. The use of photographic duplication over time, and analysis of the differences between photo duplicates as a means of detecting change in the Grand Canyon landscape, has been demonstrated previously (Turner and Karpiscak 1980, Webb 1996). AAB is a long term monitoring program that relies on systematic photograph replication to document and analyze changes in sand deposition and other physical attributes using a dataset of 44 camping beaches along the Colorado River corridor in Grand Canyon. A cooperative agreement with Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC), ensures that the extensive AAB photo archive and legacy data are incorporated into the GIS Campsite Atlas project to build a more complete and robust understanding of the status, trends and conditions of camping beaches in the river corridor affected by the operations of Glen Canyon Dam.

Since its inception in 1996, the Adopt-A-Beach program has utilized volunteer photographers to conduct repeat photography of these camps. Professional river guides and other river runners make the program possible, contributing 100% of the manpower, the entire dataset of repeat photographs, and valuable input about the condition of beaches throughout each field season and between years. Volunteer photographers for this program are unique in that many run the Colorado River more than once in one season, and are able to provide sets of repeat photographs and on-the-spot comments for each study beach. With the end of the 2017 season, and the addition of new 1216 images, river runners have produced more than 15000 replicate photographs on more than 3800 dates with associated field sheets recording the sequential condition of beaches.

Standardized comment forms completed by the volunteers at the time the photographs are acquired, assist in the effort to document the beach conditions (see Appendix B). The program assesses the visible photographs and first-hand, objective comments pertaining to changes to beaches, and reports on the conditions as influenced by regulated flow regimes, rainfall, wind, vegetation, human impacts or any other factors that may be present. Monitoring includes information on natural and human-induced impacts to beaches such as cutbank retreat, wind erosion and dune formation, rain gully formation and the effects of visitation and camping (Lauck, 2009).

The presence and impact of the tamarisk beetle, *Diohabda spp*. have been included in these comments and documented photographically at least as early as 2011. Beginning with the 2014 season, photos are acquired simultaneous to the beach photographs with the specific intent on monitoring the beetle activity. This component of the analysis was added not only for ecological monitoring reasons, but also because of related questions pertaining to the recreational experience: will the beetle remove valuable shade from camping areas, how will other vegetation respond to the impacts on the tamarisk, and how might these changes affect the camp.

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the monitoring effort for the period between late summer 2016 and late October 2017.

Research results include reporting positive “Improved” conditions, negative “Degraded” conditions or “Unchanged” conditions, when no changes were found in beaches. Attributes of the primary and secondary processes that cause change in camping beach area and quality are also included. Specific research questions that are addressed by this report are:

- What changes, if any, are found at the beaches through the boating season of 2017?
- What changes occurred in beach conditions during the winter between late 2016 and April 2017, which includes an evaluation of the effects of the November 2016 High Flow Experiment?
- How are the resulting observations distributed throughout the river corridor?
- Which processes resulting in a change of condition at a beach are most prevalent?

Methods

Study locations and beaches

Since 1996 the AAB program has studied an average of 37 of the 44 targeted beaches per year from within three of the five *critical reaches* of the river corridor (Figure 1). The practice of assessing camping beach resources within critical reaches was first developed by Kearsley and Warren (1993), and modified for the 1996 Adopt-a-Beach study by Thompson and others (1997). A critical reach is defined as a section of the river where camps are in high demand and few in number. The same reach system has been in use for all years of study, 1996-2017. All river miles used conform to the GCMRC mileage system (USGS, 2013). The reaches are as follows: 1) Marble Canyon, river miles 9-41; 2) Upper Granite Gorge, river miles 71-114; 3) and Muav Gorge, river miles 131-165.

Two additional critical reaches were added during the 2003 monitoring season. The purpose was to increase the sample set of beaches in order to more widely represent the effects of beach erosion and building throughout the whole river corridor below Glen Canyon Dam. These new reaches included Glen Canyon, from the dam to Lees Ferry (river mile 0), and Lower Granite Gorge, from Diamond Creek (river mile 226) to Gneiss Canyon (river mile 236). Unfortunately, no data has been collected for the Glen Canyon reach for a few years, but the Lower Gorge reach, which was been extended to include the 250 Mile Camp in 2009, is still being actively monitored.

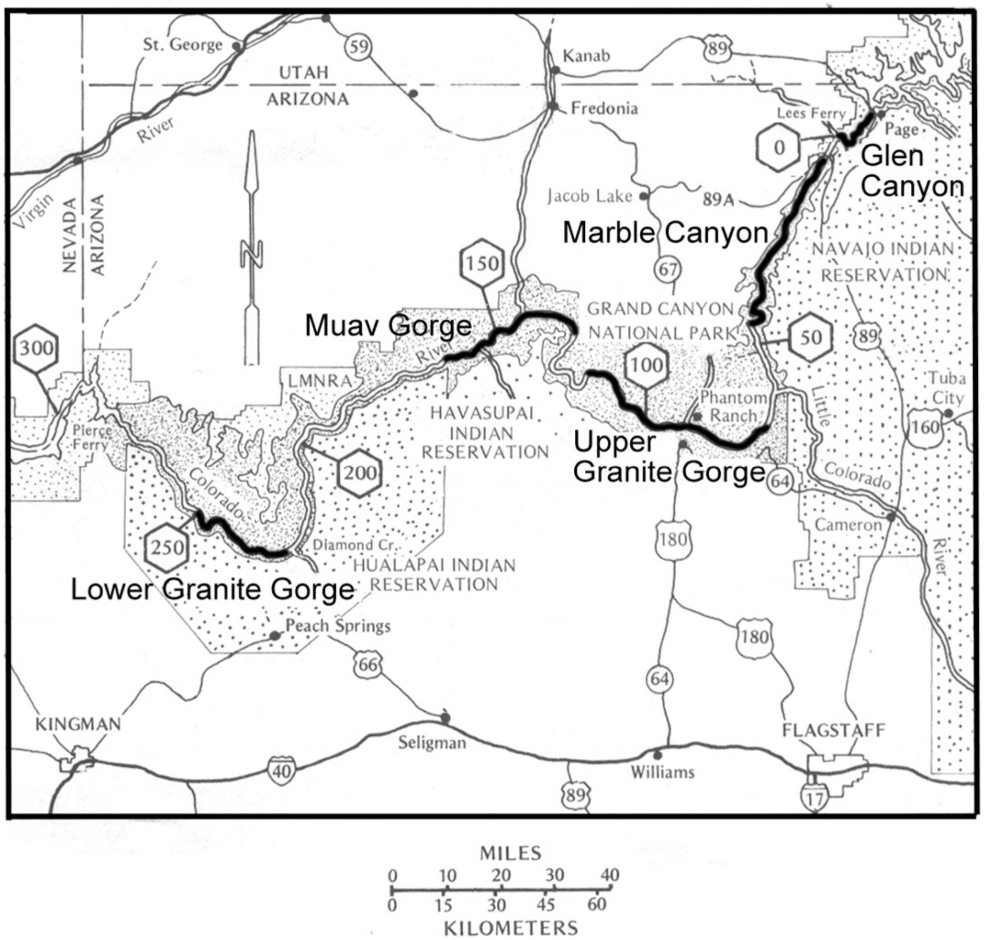


Figure 1. Locations of five critical reaches along the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park

Table 1 shows popular campsites (n = 44), 34 of which were originally inventoried in 1996, and includes beaches added in 2000, 2001 and 2009.

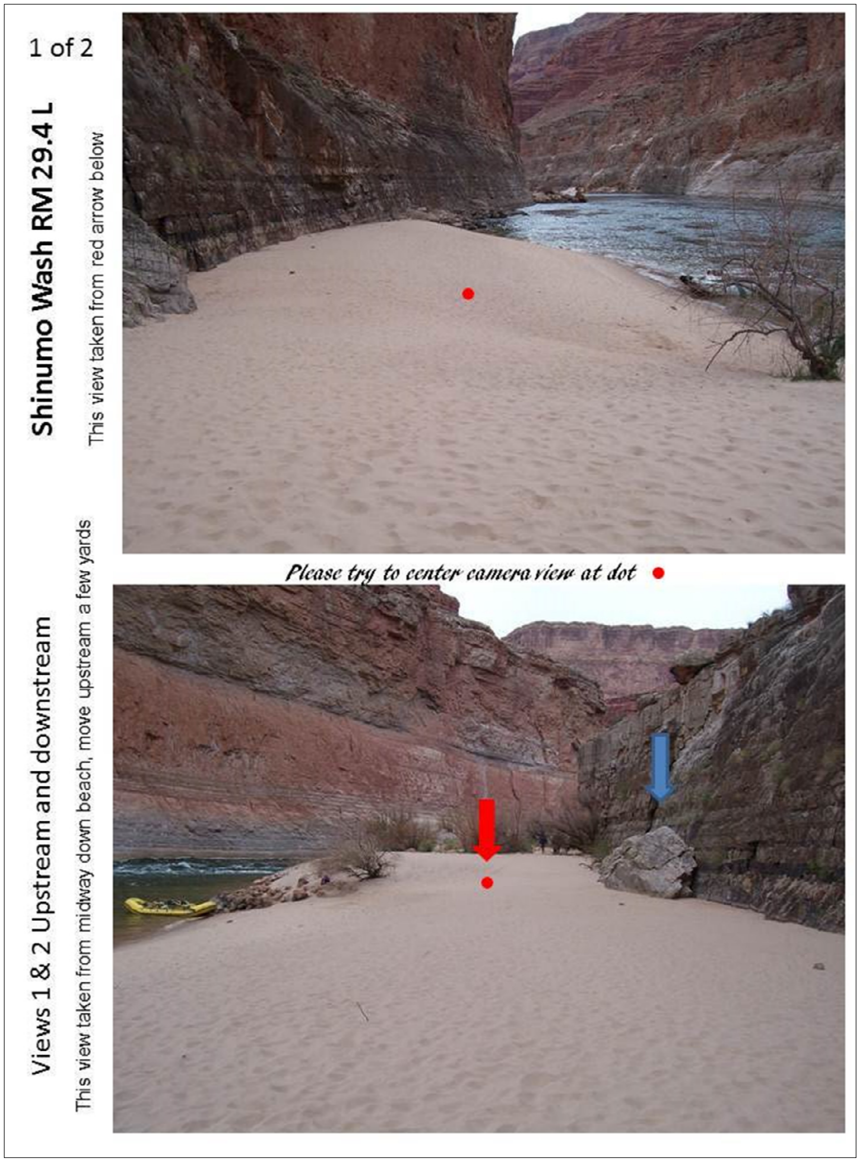
Glen Canyon		Marble Canyon		Upper Granite Gorge		Muav Gorge		Lower Granite Gorge	
Mile	Camp	Mile	Camp	Mile	Camp	Mile	Camp	Mile	Camp
-13.0	Dam Beach	11.3	Soap Creek	76.0	Nevill's	131.7	Below Bedrock	230.6	Travertine
-8.0	Lunch Beach	12.4	12.4 Mile (Salt Water Wash)	77.1	Hance	132.5	Stone Creek	236.1	Gneiss Canyon
		16.6	Hot Na Na	81.7	Grapevine	133.7	Talking Heads	250.0	250 Mile
		19.4	19.4 Mile	84.6	Clear Creek	134.2	Race Track		
		20.7	North Cyn	85.0	Zoroaster	134.5	Lower Tapeats		
		22.7	23 Mile	92.1	Trinity Creek	135.2	Owl Eyes		
		29.5	Shinumo Wash (Silver Grotto)	96.6	Schist	137.8	Back Eddy		
		35.0	Nautiloid (Middle&Lower)	97.3	Boucher	144.0	Kanab Creek		
		37.9	Tatahatso	98.7	Crystal	146.1	Olo		
		38.6	Martha's (Bishop's)	100.2	Lwr Tuna	148.9	Matkat Hotel		
		41.2	Buck Farm	108.3	Ross Wheeler	150.9	Upset Hotel		
				109.0	Lwr Bass	156.3	Last Chance		
				110.0	110 Mile	165.2	Tuckup		
				114.9	Upper Garnet	167.0	Upper National		
				115.1	Lower Garnet	167.2	Lower National		

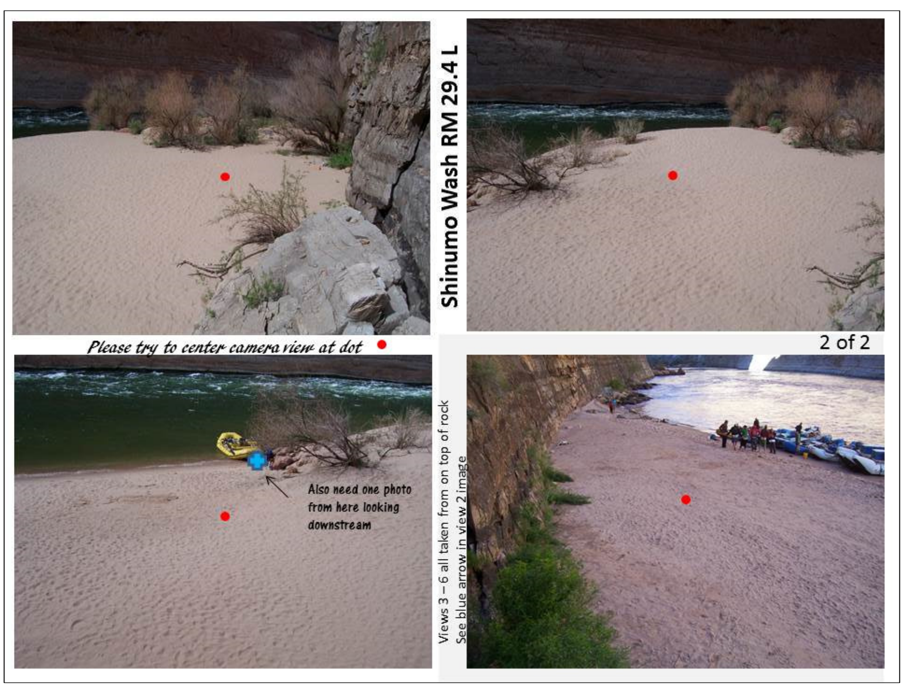
Table 1. Sample set of camping beaches inventoried that lie within the five critical reaches.

Unlike other established re-photography studies, both within and outside of the Grand Canyon, the AAB program does not adhere to a regime which includes matching photos per a specific time of day or date (Webb 1996, Webb, Boyer and Turner, 2010). The photographs obtained here are much more opportunistic and acquired whenever a volunteer happens to pass their chosen camp. However, guidelines for the volunteer are provided to help regulate the consistency required to make adequate comparisons between the images. Every beach in the inventory has established photographic locations that show an optimum view of the beachfront and as much of the actual camping area as possible. However, the portion of the camp photographed at each beach, the relative photographic locations between beaches and the number of images acquired per beach are not all the same. This means that one beach may be evaluated through slightly differing information than another one, in that not every beach photo set contains the same 'clues.' The resulting evaluations can only be compared with results for camps using the same views. Most commonly, photo sets are taken from the boat on the river, taken as a single image or overlapping series, to provide a full, upstream to downstream look at the beach. Photos taken from specifically designated locations on shore, looking across the front of the beach, usually from an elevated, oblique angle, are usually acquired as well. Combined, these views provide a considerable amount of information for analysis.

Occasionally, a few beaches are photographed from the river only. Unfortunately, this often limits the visibility of the upper or rear part of the camp. Efforts are being made to expand these visits to include a shore-based view, but this is completely up to the volunteer and their time available. Also, almost half of the beaches have photo locations toward the back of the camp, looking across the upper part of the beach or toward the river. While not always practical, these views are invaluable additions to the beach dataset.

Each year, GCRG motivates guides to adopt as many beaches as possible. To encourage a relatively complete data set from year to year, GCRG encourages adoption of high-priority beaches (n = 27) first. These beaches have been adopted for most of the study years. Usually, they are camps that can be used year after year by the river community, and thus are continually in high demand. The remaining beaches are adopted once high-priority beaches have been claimed.





Figures 2 & 3. Examples of reference sheets supplied to volunteers directing photographer on where to stand and which views should be acquired.

The time-series photos taken within study locations allow assessment of relative change over the course of each season and between monitoring years. The number of adopted beaches with useable season long data in 2017 totaled 29. Each record in the data base represents an individual visit to a beach where each beach usually has 2-5 photos associated with it. Adopters often take extra snapshots of various impacts such as flash flooding in Schist Camp (August 2002) and North Canyon (October 2010) and debris flows at National Canyon (July 2012). These documented events and data are available to any interested researchers through Grand Canyon River Guides or Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center, http://www.gcmrc.gov/ and the images are currently available as part of the Adopt-A-Beach photo gallery, http://www.geanious.com/gallery/main.php. Part of the Adopt-A-Beach program is to provide photos of unusual natural events in Grand Canyon to interested parties.

Analysis

When a volunteer requests a camera and a beach assignment, they are asked to photograph a completed datasheet (Appendix B), identifying the beach name and mile, plus the photo date and time, immediately prior to photographing the camp. This information is included in the captioning of the image, and helps to correctly place the photo chronologically during analysis. While this practice occurs most of the time, occasionally the datasheet is photographed later or, rarely, not at all. Photos without a distinct date/time attribute in the photography sequence are examined by water color, shadowing on the surrounding walls, or other common elements such as guest attire when available, to help correctly identify the proper sequential placement of the image(s). Embedded metadata in the image can also be used as reference to correctly code the image by date and time. It is possible that the date/time attributes are incorrectly applied to a very few images.

When comparing the photos for evaluation, numerous criteria are used to gather the empirical data. After the images are sorted by camp and have been given a date and time caption, a consistent pattern of examination was conducted for every analysis. This began with the water level determination for the first image examined in any set. This was accomplished by consulting the flow graph of one or all of the following USGS gauges: Colorado River at Lees Ferry, AZ (09380000), Colorado River Near Grand Canyon, AZ (09402500), Little Colorado River Above Mouth Near Desert View, AZ (09402300), Kanab Creek Above the Mouth Near Supai, AZ (09403850), Havasu Creek Above the Mouth Near Supai, AZ (09404115) or the Paria River @ Lees Ferry, AZ (09382000) and Colorado River Above Diamond Creek near Peach Springs, AZ (09404200). See Figures 4 – 12. These graphs also helped determine when additional sediment may be entering the mainstem for possible deposition along beaches downstream. During comparison to each subsequent image, identification of a near-shore landmark or two and its proximity to the current shoreline was employed to help determine relative water levels. The flow graphs were also revisited if required, particularly when it appeared that the river volume and possible sediment load changed due to additional input from the Paria or Little Colorado tributaries.

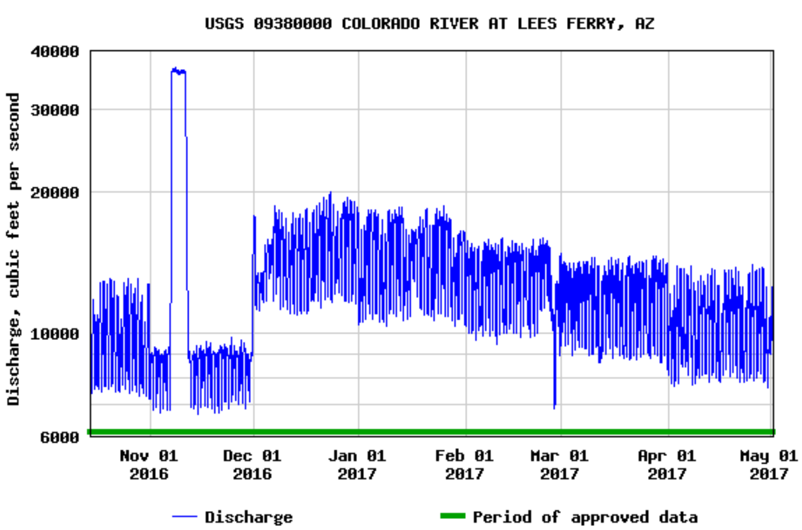


Figure 4. Flow graph for Colorado River at Lees Ferry, AZ., October 1, 2016 through May 1, 2017

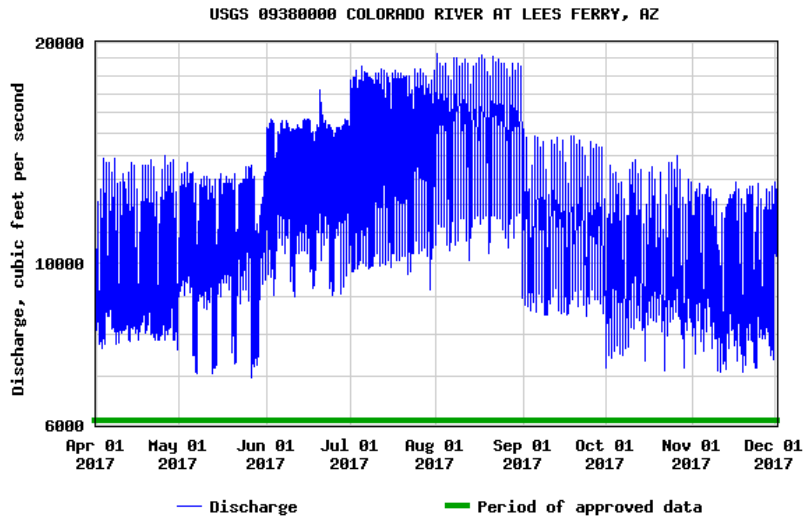


Figure 5. Flow graph for Colorado River at Lees Ferry, AZ., April 1 through December 1, 2017

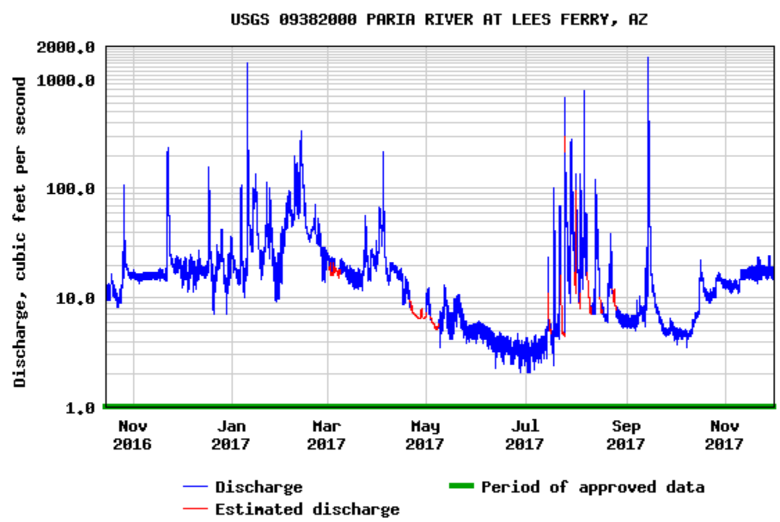


Figure 6. Flow graph for Paria River at Lees Ferry, AZ. November 1, 2016 through December 1, 2017

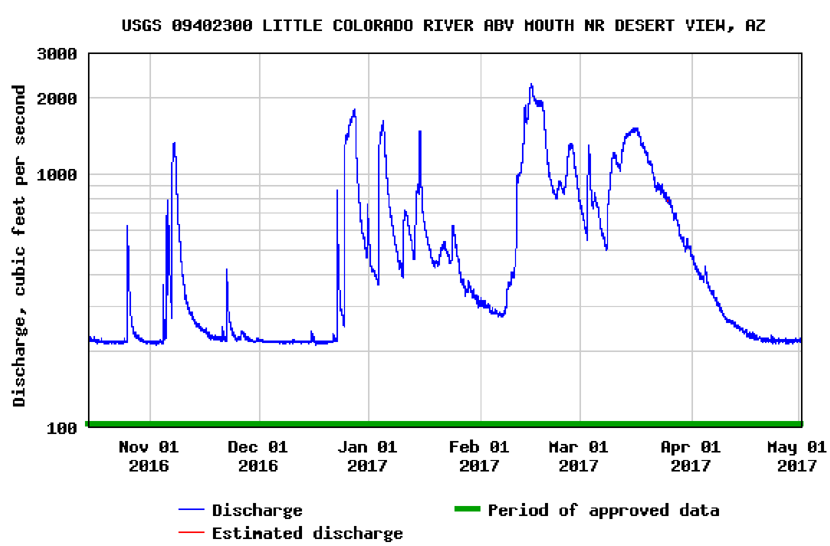


Figure 7. Flow graph for Little Colorado River above mouth near Desert View, AZ, October 1, 2016 through May1, 2017

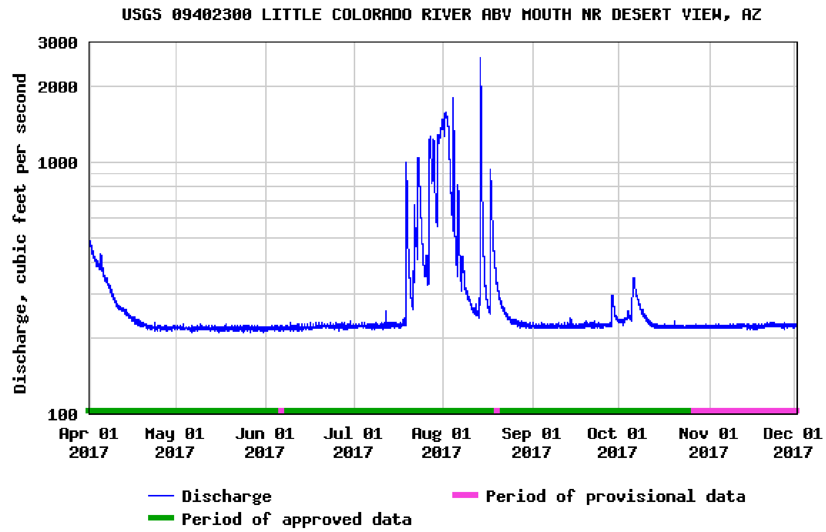


Figure 8. Flow graph for Little Colorado River above mouth near Desert View, AZ. April 1 through December 1, 2017

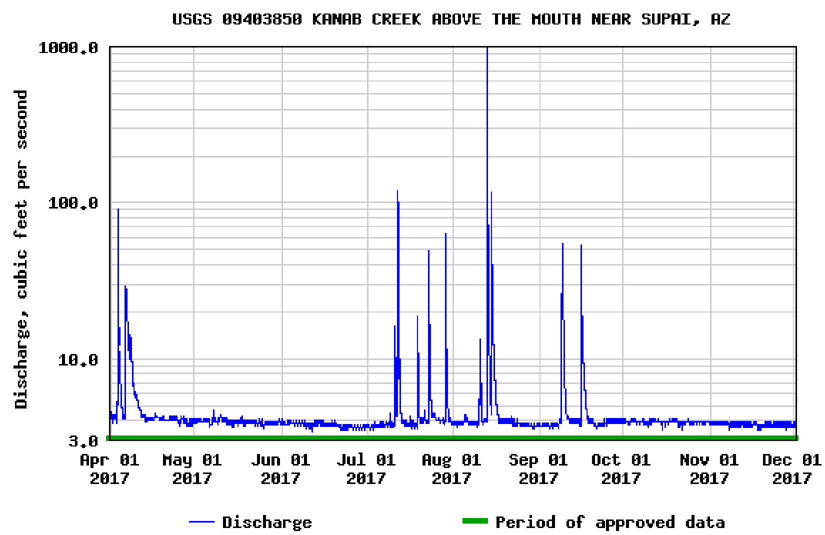


Figure 9. Flow graph for Kanab Creek above the mouth near Supai, AZ. April 1 through December 1, 2017

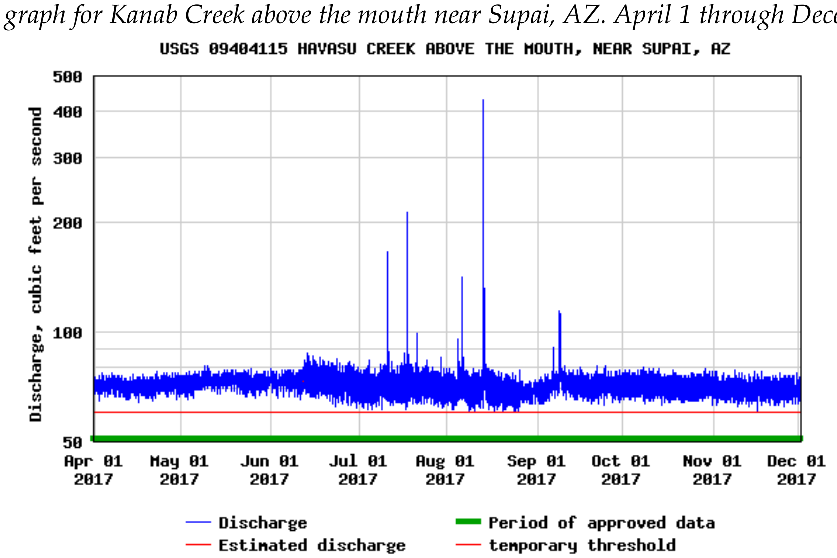


Figure 10. Flow graph for Havasu Creek above the mouth near Supai, AZ. April 1 through December 1, 2017

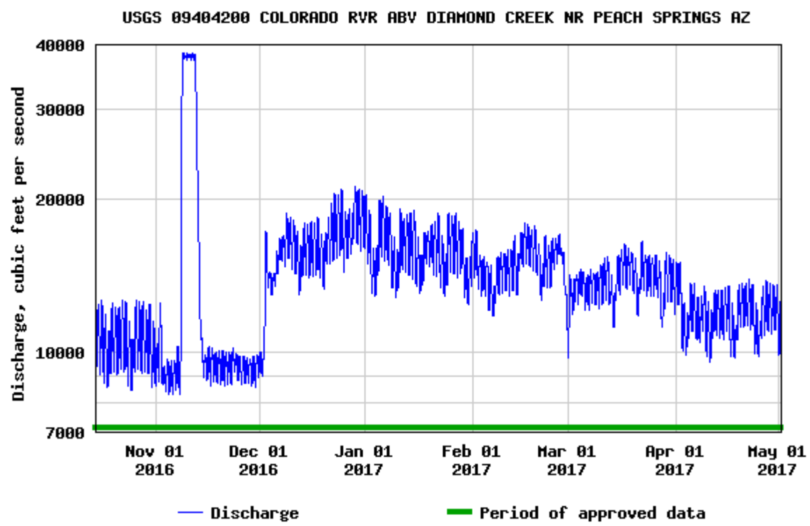


Figure 11 . Flow graph for Colorado River above Diamond Creek near Peach Springs, AZ. October 1, 2016 through May 1, 2017

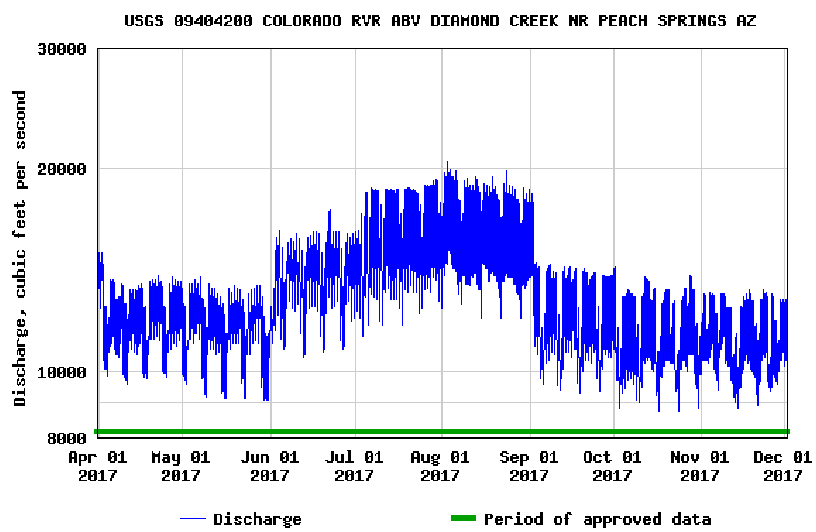


Figure 12. Flow graph for Colorado River above Diamond Creek near Peach Springs, AZ. April 1 through December 1, 2017

The images were viewed for evaluation using the Adobe Photoshop v7.0 software on a Dell 24" monitor. Beginning at the front, or shoreline of the beach, the images were examined and compared. The presence/absence of rocks or debris, either hindering or enhancing boat parking, were noted. Due to the variety of river flow levels between the comparison photos, change in the 'parking' at a particular beach is often difficult to evaluate, and, when covered at higher flows, is considered only when recorded by the AAB observer. Any beach front cutbanks which would affect unloading/loading of boats at similar flow levels, or which indicated erosion of the beach by the river flow were also noted. Conversely, the absence of a cutbank or smoothing of an access slope helped determine the possible addition of sand by sediment augmentation or other river action that benefited the camping desirability of the beach.

The images being compared were then examined progressively from front to back to note the absence or addition of rocks or other debris which would impact the total area being used as a camp. The location and visual extent of emerging rocks can usually indicate the physical action which occurred to reveal the rocks. As an example, rocks which were covered in image "A" by sand, covered by river flow in image "B" and subsequently revealed as the water level receded, are noted as indicators of river flow erosion. Conversely, the reverse action would be noted as an indicator of sediment deposition.

The same kind of visual clues can also be used to determine aeolian impact, particularly when the exposed and/or covered rocks and shelves are higher than any possible river flow level during the time period being examined. During the November 2016 HFE, some camp areas increased as a result of boulders and bedrock being covered by sand carried onto the beach at the higher flow. Since then, some of these rocks have re-emerged as a result of wind scour, resulting in a decrease in camp area.

Determining whether a beach was uncomfortably steep for access was easily assessed if one of the photos was taken across the front, either looking up or downstream. But beaches with only head-on photos are more difficult to discern. Well-trodden paths, leading to and from obvious access points, creating easily eroded channels, are the primary clues. Human caused erosion is usually noted by the volunteer photographer and can be correlated with the images.

Beach images acquired from various viewpoints were the easiest to determine changes in vegetation. When this was not possible, such as head-on only shots, a systematic comparison from one end of the beach to the other was used. Baccharis species, arrow-weed (*Pluchea sericea*), Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*), coyote willow (*Salix* species) and camelthorn (*Alhagi* species) were usually identifiable when noted moving into a previously open sand area, or were missing from subsequent images.

Because of varying photo locations from one beach to the next, some agents of change are more readily apparent than others. Deposition/erosion across a beach front at waterline is always more prominent in the images than perhaps vegetation incursion or loss. Aeolian activity on a beach is more apparent when the photograph is acquired from an angle slightly higher than the beach itself, and vegetation changes are more readily denoted when there are images of the beach in addition to the beach front itself. Not all beach photos include areas where human impacts would most likely be found.

While every effort is made to ensure an even, consistent analysis of the beaches, the patterns of photo acquisition on any particular beach may bias the evidence of an agent of change. Conversely, some bias towards a No Change determination may be present in other photo acquisition sets. The final determination is sometimes dependent on the patterns of photo acquisition established for a particular beach and, to a lesser extent, the effort exerted by the volunteer photographer.

Prior knowledge of the study sites by the investigator was also considered, though this did not determine the final classification used for any particular beach. Using these analysis criteria, the beaches are given classifications indicating desirability as camping beaches, stated as Improved, Degraded or Unchanged. While the designations of Unchanged, Improved and Degraded are inherently subjective, the results are reflective of the stated evaluation purpose of determining the beach as a useable camp for river trips. No photogrammetry techniques were employed and this should not be interpreted in any way that results were obtained using anything other than objective evaluation.

The data are compared and analyzed according to the research questions that are most applicable for the time period being studied.

Figures 13 & 14. Documentation of beach replenishment following November 2016 HFE. Stone Creek Camp, RM 132.49R, July 26, 2016 (upper) and April 11, 2017 (lower).

Results

Through 2017 boating season

Per Classification

For the period covering the 2017 summer boating season, photos were used which spanned from March 5 to November 6, though the largest portion spanned April 3 to mid-September. Daily fluctuating flows occurred steadily during the study period, with the maximum daily release topping near 19000 cfs through August. Weekday daily flow fluctuations were consistently near 8000 cfs increase and 8000 cfs decrease through the 24 hour period, with weekend fluctuations slightly lower. Thirty-six of the 44 beaches were adopted for the 2017 season with 29 having photographs and photographer comment sheets spanning a sufficient period of time to be evaluated. The seven beaches excluded were not photographed late enough in the season to be considered for a complete season analysis. Of the 29 beaches included in this portion of the analysis, 12 (41%) did not show significant changes, and were classified as Unchanged through the season. Seventeen of the beaches (59%) had Degraded through the summer, and none of the beaches evaluated was considered to have Improved by the Fall of 2017.

The most often cited cause of beach Degradation during the 2017 season was beachfront erosion by fluctuating flows, particularly noticed after the higher flows during August. This was considered the primary cause in eleven cases and as a contributing factor in additional instances. Rain events were the second most often cited cause for Degradation, with four instances where rain was the primary reason and other instances where rain was a significant contributing factor (See Figure 16). These impacts occurred as both flash flooding from an associated tributary or as more localized erosion from hillside runoff at the camp. Wind deflation of camps was frequently present, easily perceived as rocks became exposed above the maximum waterline, and figured predominantly in a classification of Degraded at two of the beaches. At one camp, sand loss from wind erosion is cited as the primary factor. Vegetation encroachment was considered as the primary contributing factor for Degradation at one beach and was a secondary factor at others, as was human traffic erosion.

Per Reach

Those beaches classified as Unchanged were not distributed evenly through the four reaches, with 7 in the Marble Canyon reach, 3 in the Upper Granite Gorge reach and 2 in the Muav Gorge reach. None of the beaches located in the Lower Granite Gorge were classified as Unchanged. The 17 Degraded beaches were located in all four reaches, with 3 in Marble Canyon, 5 in the Upper Granite Gorge, 7 distributed through the Muav Gorge and 2 of the beaches located in the Lower Granite Gorge (See Figure 15).

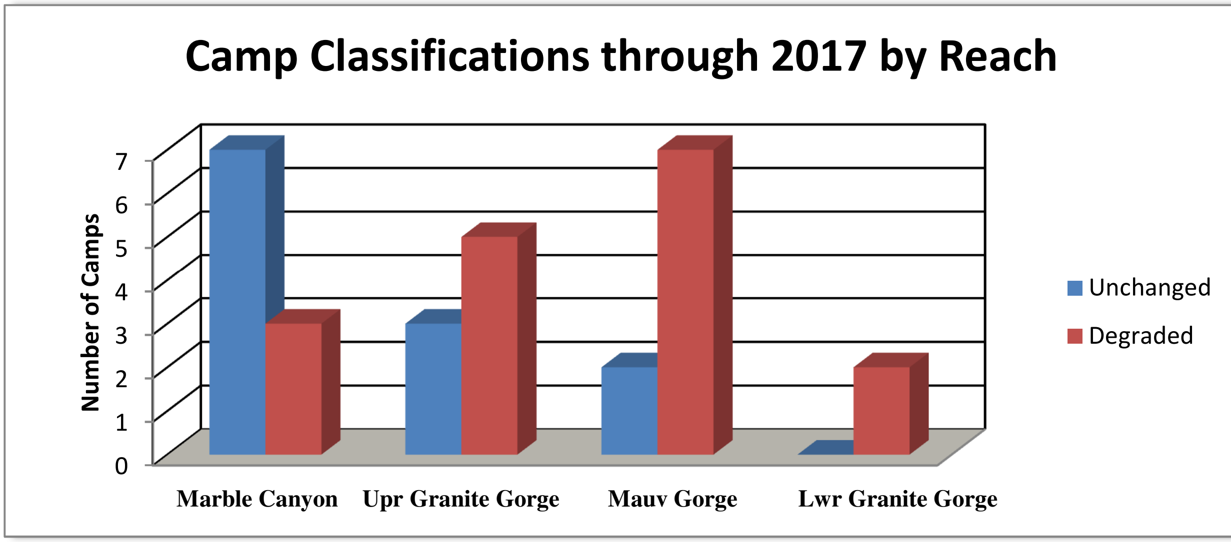


Figure 15. Graphic illustration for 2017 seasonal evaluations

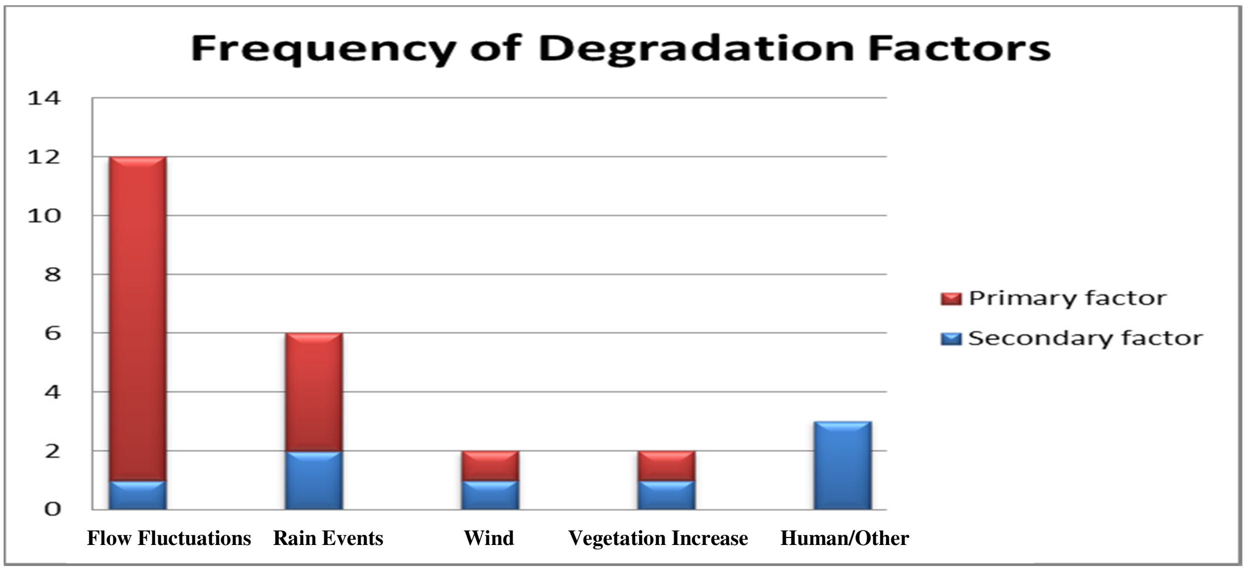


Figure 16. Graphic illustration for 2017 factor frequencies

Figures 17, 18 & 19. Tall, shear, almost inaccessible beach fronts are not uncommon in Spring after a HFE event. Grapevine Camp, RM 81.74 L (upper) on March 10, 2017, Zoroaster Camp, RM 84.98 L (middle) on April 8, 2017 and Olo Camp, RM 146.09 L (lower) on April 13, 2017.

Winter of 2016 - 2017

Per Classification

A High Flow Experiment (HFE) was conducted November 7-12, 2016, with a maximum of 31,000 cfs released (GCDAMP, 2017). However, the earliest post-HFE photos taken of any AAB beach was March 5 at Shinumo Wash Camp, and only 7 of the study beaches were photographed prior to April 3. While the "through-winter" results could be largely attributed to the effects of the HFE, this could be very misleading, given the time lapse between the event and the collection of photographs. An examination of the tributary flow-graphs for this period reveals one notable inflow from the Paria River of close to 1500 cfs on January 10 and eight flow spikes exceeding 1000cfs from the Little Colorado River between late December 2016 and the start of the AAB photographs in 2017. One flow recorded on February 15, 2017 was approximately 2300cfs. The resulting increase in river flow related to any of these increases would probably not be significant when applied to the evaluation of sand deposition in the camps but may be sufficient to create cutbanks and erosion across the front of many beaches.

All 44 of the Adopt-A-Beach study beaches were included in the through-winter evaluation. Ten beaches did not have photos acquired after August, 2016, but in those instances the latest 2016 images were included and compared to the 2017 photos to better estimate the impacts of the HFE. Of the forty-four, 29 (66%) appeared to have Improved, three of the beaches (7%) had Degraded since summer 2016 and 12 (27%) showed no appreciable change. A majority of those beaches which had Improved showed considerable sand buildup, expanding camping area, usually by covering rock or vegetation, and improving access at the boat landing areas. Those beaches which improved were evenly distributed throughout the corridor (See Figure 20).

Two of the three beaches which Degraded during the winter had had sand eroded from the camp in areas that were obviously overtopped by the HFE and one had an increased cutbank, which steepened access. The two eroded beaches were located toward the end of the Marble Canyon reach and the other is in the Upper Granite Gorge reach at river mile 109.

Those beaches classified as Unchanged increased in number going downstream, with 1, 5 and 6 per reach through the first three reaches respectively, but none are located in the Lower Granite Gorge.

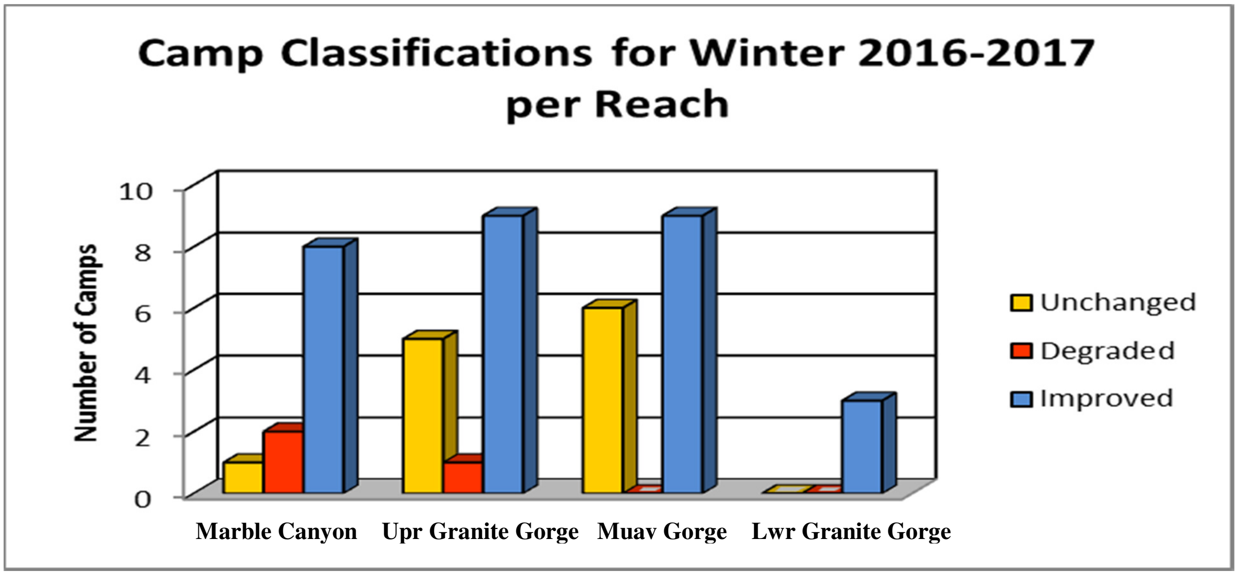


Figure 20. Graphic illustration for winter 2016 to 2017 evaluations

Conclusions

While this analysis is limited to reporting monitoring observations and presumptive factors affecting change, it does provide evidence of changes in the beaches and the effects on associated recreational camping. Both natural and manmade actions contribute to the acceptability of a beach as a desired recreational camp area. As reported in earlier studies by various investigations, fluctuating releases from Glen Canyon Dam are usually the agent of change most often associated with beach degradation, but it is certainly not the only, nor always the primary, factor.

It seems obvious and reasonable that the 29 beaches exhibiting an Improved condition in April 2017 are a result of the HFE that occurred the previous November, especially because this classification is largely attributed to a sizable increase of sand on the camp area. However, while the "through-winter" results could be attributed to the effects of the HFE, the number of 29 beaches could be very misleading. Given the time lapse between the late Fall event and the early Spring collection of photographs, it is impossible to determine how many additional beaches may have at first benefitted from the HFE, and how many camps may have subsequently Degraded through the winter, but not to a poorer condition than was found late summer 2016. Obtaining photos of the study beaches more directly after an HFE would greatly illuminate not only the more accurate results of the HFE, but also the true effects occurring during the winter.

Subsequent analysis using the results accumulated during the past twenty-two years of observations could perhaps consider the hierarchical role of these factors of change.

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Grand Canyon River Guides, Inc. would like to thank all of the adopters for volunteering the time to pull over and photograph their beaches and for their valuable observations and written comments. It takes time and effort to do this, and the dedication shown by guides has literally kept this program alive for twenty years. The result is the most comprehensive collection of repeat photographs of critical camping beaches in the Grand Canyon. An added benefit is the public outreach fostered by the volunteers' actions. By taking time to include guests as active participants and by answering their questions, volunteers can further explain how this resource in Grand Canyon is enhanced, degraded or maintained by the influence of man and technology.

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Appendix A

Results of Analysis in Tabular Form

Page 1 Table 2 Results of evaluations, late 2016 season to early April 2017

Camp name	Rvr mile	2016	TO	2017	Reason
		No change	Degraded	Improved	
Soap Creek	11.3 R			X	More sand along front. Post HFE event?
12.4 Mile	12.4 L			X	More sand though steep
Hot Na Na	16.6 L			X	Very significant beach increase
19.4 Mile	19.4 L			X	Very significant beach increase
Upper North Canyon	20.7 R			X	Very significant beach increase
23 Mile	22.7 L			X	More sand in camp but not at parking
Shinumo Wash	29.5 L			X	Very significant beach increase
Nautaloid	35 L			X	Slight improvement noticed
Tatahatso	37.9 L	X			No change found
Martha's	38.6 L		X*		General sand loss
Buck Farm	41.2 R		X		Erosion uncovers rocks in upper camp
Total per Reach	11	1	2	8	
Nevills	76 L			X*	Some interior rocks covered
Hance	77.1 L	X			No change found
Grapevine	81.7 L			X	Very significant beach increase
Clear Creek	84.6 R			X*	Improved parking
Zoroaster	85 L			X*	Very significant beach increase
Trinity Creek	92.1 R			X	Very significant beach increase
Schist	96.6 R	X			Slight, if any, improvement
Boucher	97.3 L	X			Camp increase but covered by driftwood
Crystal	98.7 R	X			No change found
Lower Tuna	100.2 L	X			Sand increase offset by steep access
Ross Wheeler	108.3 L			X	Gully in camp filled, but rocky parking
Bass	109 R		X*		New cutbank across front
110 mile	110 R			X	Gully in camp filled, much wood deposited
Upper Garnet	114.9 R			X	Significant beach increase
Lower Garnet	115.1 R			X	Significant beach increase
Total per Reach	15	5	1	9	
Below Bedrock	131.7 R			X	Some rocks covered in camp
Stone Creek	132.5 R			X	Very significant beach increase
Talking Heads	133.7 L			X	Modest but noticable improvement
Racetrack	134.2 R			X	Modest improvement with veg increase
Lower Tapeats	134.5 R	X*			No change found
Owl Eyes	135.2 L			X	Very significant beach increase
Backeddy	137.8 L	X			No change found
Kanab	144 R			X	Very significant beach increase
Olo	146.1 L	X			Sand increase offset by cutbank increase
Matkat Hotel	148.9 L			X	Significant beach increase
Upset Hotel	150.9 L	X			No change found
Last Chance	156.3 R			X	Lower shelf camp increase in size
Tuckup	165.2 R	X*			Bigger beach but cutbank in camp area
Upper National	167 L			X	More camp beach but bad parking
Lower National	167.2 L	X			Sand rearranged, but no improvement
Total per Reach	15	6	0	9	
Travertine Falls	230.6 L			X	Very significant beach increase
Gneiss	236.1 R			X*	Slight but noticable increase in beach
250 Mile	250.0 R			X	Very significant beach increase
Total per Reach	3	0	0	3	
Total Reporting	**44**	**12**	**3**	**29**	

* Indicates comparison used pre-August 2016 photos

Page 2   Table 3 Results of evaluations, April through October 2017 season

Camp name	Rvr mile	2017	thru	season	Reason
		No change	Degraded	Improved	
Soap Creek	11.3 R				No late season photos
12.4 Mile	12.4 L	X			Slight veg increase on camp periphery
Hot Na Na	16.6 L	X			No change
19.4 Mile	19.4 L	X			Some slight wind degradation possible
Upper North Canyon	20.7 R		X		Wind deflation, rain gullies, cutbank
23 Mile	22.7 L	X			No appreciable change
Shinumo Wash	29.5 L		X		Fluc flow recession, cutbank
Nautaloid	35 L		X		Rain erosion gully in camp
Tatahatso	37.9 L	X			Slight sand loss from foot traffic
Martha's	38.6 L	X			Parking/access fluctuate through season
Buck Farm	41.2 R	X			Slight veg increase
Total per Reach	11	7	3	0	
Nevills	76 L	X			Slight veg increase
Hance	77.1 L				No late season photos
Grapevine	81.7 L		X		Beach/sand same, huge veg ncrease
Clear Creek	84.6 R				No late season photos
Zoroaster	85 L		X		Fluc flow recession, cutbank
Trinity Creek	92.1 R		X		Fluc flow recession
Schist	96.6 R	X			No change
Boucher	97.3 L				No late season photos
Crystal	98.7 R		X		Fluc flow recession, cutbank
Lower Tuna	100.2 L				No late season photos
Ross Wheeler	108.3 L		X		Rain erosion gully in camp
Bass	109 R				No late season photos
110 mile	110 R	X			Slight veg increase
Upper Garnet	114.9 R				No late season photos
Lower Garnet	115.1 R				No late season photos
Total per Reach	15	3	5	0	
Below Bedrock	131.7 R				No late season photos
Stone Creek	132.5 R		X		Cutbank, rain erosion, human traffic, veg
Talking Heads	133.7 L				No late season photos
Racetrack	134.2 R				No late season photos
Lower Tapeats	134.5 R		X		Fluc flow sand loss, wood deposited
Owl Eyes	135.2 L		X		Fluc flow recession, cutbank
Backeddy	137.8 L				No late season photos
Kanab	144 R				No late season photos
Olo	146.1 L		X		Sand loss at lower end of beach
Matkat Hotel	148.9 L		X		Rain erosion gully, foot traffic slumping
Upset Hotel	150.9 L		X		Fluc flow cutbank, foot traffic slumping
Last Chance	156.3 R		X		Fluc flow recession, cutbank
Tuckup	165.2 R	X			No change
Upper National	167 L				No late season photos
Lower National	167.2 L	X			No appreciable change
Total per Reach	15	2	7	0	
Travertine Falls	230.6 L				No late season photos
Gneiss	236.1 R		X		Fluc flow recession, some wind deflation
250 Mile	250.0 R		X		Tributary flash event covers beach
Total per Reach	3	0	2	0	
Total Reporting	**29**	**12**	**17**	**0**	

 Table 4 Results of evaluations for beetle presence through October 2017 season

Camp name	Rvr mile	beetles
Soap Creek	11.3 R	n/a
12.4 Mile	12.4 L	n/a
Hot Na Na	16.6 L	Y
19.4 Mile	19.4 L	N
Upper North Canyon	20.7 R	n/a
23 Mile	22.7 L	Y
Shinumo Wash	29.5 L	n/a
Nautaloid	35 L	Y
Tatahatso	37.9 L	Y
Martha's	38.6 L	Y
Buck Farm	41.2 R	n/a
Total per Reach	11	6
Nevills	76 L	N
Hance	77.1 L	n/a
Grapevine	81.7 L	N
Clear Creek	84.6 R	Y
Zoroaster	85 L	N
Trinity Creek	92.1 R	N
Schist	96.6 R	Y
Boucher	97.3 L	N
Crystal	98.7 R	N
Lower Tuna	100.2 L	N
Ross Wheeler	108.3 L	N
Bass	109 R	n/a
110 mile	110 R	N
Upper Garnet	114.9 R	n/a
Lower Garnet	115.1 R	n/a
Total per Reach	15	11
Below Bedrock	131.7 R	n/a
Stone Creek	132.5 R	Y
Talking Heads	133.7 L	n/a
Racetrack	134.2 R	n/a
Lower Tapeats	134.5 R	n/a
Owl Eyes	135.2 L	N
Backeddy	137.8 L	N
Kanab	144 R	n/a
Olo	146.1 L	N
Matkat Hotel	148.9 L	N
Upset Hotel	150.9 L	N
Last Chance	156.3 R	Y
Tuckup	165.2 R	N
Upper National	167 L	N
Lower National	167.2 L	n/a
Total per Reach	15	9
Travertine Falls	230.6 L	n/a
Gneiss	236.1 R	N
250 Mile	250.0 R	Y
Total per Reach	3	2
Total Reporting	28	

An **n/a** designation indicates insufficient photographic evidence or volunteer comments available.

Appendix B

Adopt-A-Beach Data Sheet
Used by Volunteers to Record Comments

Adopt a Beach Data Entry Form

Guide's Name ______________________

Camp Name ______________________

Camp Mile ____________________

Date ____________________

River Flow (circle one) Low (5-12K) Med (12-18K) High (18-25K)

Photo Numbers: ______________ (remaining)

Any Comments about Beach Change? (describe in this space)

Change in Beach Size from Previous Visit (circle one): Increase Decrease Same

Dominant Cause of Change (circle one):

Spike Daily/Monthly Flow Rain Wind People Don't Know

Supporting Observations for Dominant Cause (check any that are appropriate):

- New cutbank
- Change of slope
- Bench in eddy
- Gully
- Trib/Debris flow
- Scour from wind or people
- Mounded sand

Secondary Cause of Change (circle one):

Spike Daily/Monthly Flow Rain Wind People Don't Know

Supporting Observations for Secondary Cause (check any that are appropriate):

- New cutback
- Change of slope
- Bench in eddy
- Gully
- Trib/Debris flow
- Scour from wind or people
- Mounded sand

Do you find evidence of tamarisk beetles currently in/near this beach? YES NO

Campsite Quality Compared to Last Visit (circle one): Same Better Worse

Supporting Observations for Campsite Quality (check any that are appropriate):

- Boat parking
- Rockiness
- Vegetation encroachment
- Steepness
- Trail erosion
- Open sand area
- Human impacts- ants, pee spots, litter (circle those that apply)

Any Comments about Campsite Condition? (describe in this space)