



# United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK  
P.O. BOX 129  
GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA 86023-0129

**FEB 17 2016**

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L34 (GRCA 8211)

Tom Martin  
River Runners for Wilderness  
PO Box 30821  
Flagstaff, Arizona 86003

Dear Mr. Martin:

Thank you for your letter of January 13, 2016 and your comments on behalf of River Runners for Wilderness. I appreciate you taking the time to address the issues important to you. I am also pleased to learn you recently enjoyed a November-December 2015 river trip in Grand Canyon National Park.

Regarding your comments on winter trips, we recognize there are many personal reasons a permittee might decide to back out of a trip at the last minute. Our goal is not to ensure the permit holder does not cancel, but to make the trips available, and encourage those who will cancel to do so with sufficient time for us to re-release the launches to other interested boaters. Our data does not support the idea that permit holders sit on a permit. For example, of the 96 winter 2015 cancellations, 89 were lottery cancellations (i.e., dates were claimed and then were cancelled before the permit was ever issued), and only seven of those were cancelled after the permit had been issued. Five of those seven were cancelled more than three weeks before the launch. The last two trips were cancelled the day before and the day of the launch. With only two winter cancellations occurring within one day of launch this year, we do not see a need for adding incentives or penalties.

We would agree that it is not ideal to schedule more than one launch per day in the winter months. However, the occasional double launch has again provided the noncommercial boaters the ability to enjoy trips during the low use months. Thank you for expressing your concerns on how this may affect other trips.

Thanks also for your suggestions on the potential alternate trip leader (PATL) rules. Lottery applicants have to identify PATL before the trip is won. When we do call-ins, they can identify PATL at that time. The new rule allows us to add family members as PATL up to the point of launch.

With regards to your comments on seasonal group size adjustments, we understand that you oppose the change. We expect that it take several seasons to observe how the change affects group size or numbers of trips. Currently, and in the past, there is no indication that concessioners have had any difficulty in booking end season motor trips.

Each year, the National Park Service (NPS) reviews the noncommercial and commercial operating requirements. Your comments and suggestions will be taken into consideration for this review. With regards to the Hance to Phantom camping restrictions, safety and Phantom congestion were the primary factors. The current regulations serve to decrease the likelihood of heat-related illness for exchange hikers.



River District Ranger Brian Bloom is currently researching Type IV throwable devices and the throw rope issue. Your observations and background information on this topic is understood and appreciated.

The NPS continues to consult with the Hualapai Tribe to address river management within the area along the 108-mile-long shared boundary. The consultations are conducted on a government-to-government basis and have involved a variety of topics including fees, river trip opportunities, and issues related to the Colorado River Management Plan. The NPS will continue to negotiate on issues that provide flexibility in management and that support the interests of both the park visitors and the Hualapai Tribe. The NPS does not currently collect fees from visitors on trips offered by the Hualapai Tribe. If you have collected specific data on river use near mile 262, we would appreciate having that information.

Thank you for your comments. Your dedication to the Colorado River and Grand Canyon National Park is appreciated. If you have further questions or concerns please contact Chief Ranger Matt Vandzura at (928) 638-7800 or my office at (928) 638-7945.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dave".

David V. Uberuaga  
Superintendent