

03-05-4

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Subj: Update on various CRMP matters  
Date: 4/5/02 10:21 :42 PM !!!First Boot!!!  
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Dear All:

This note provides an update on various CRMP-related matters that pertain to the on-going efforts of GCROA's CRMP Working Group.

#### **-Meeting Reminder**

The next CRMP Working Group meeting is scheduled for 10am on Thursday, April 11th at Canyoneers in Flagstaff. This is an important meeting. Please come if you can. The group will continue consideration of GCROAs Scenario 48, along with variations. We have asked each company to review its trip options worksheet and monthly launch allotments related to this scenario and to provide feedback. We will take up both the trip options and monthly allotment questions at Thursdays meeting. A draft meeting agenda is attached to this message which outlines a few other topics we'd also like to cover.

#### **Update on Grand Canyon River Group Discussions**

The Grand Canyon River Group met in Phoenix last week to continue its work. For those unfamiliar with this group, which we refer to informally as "Firewalk," it is comprised of representatives from the private boating community, the wilderness/environmental community, the GC guiding community, and the GC outfitting community. Garrett Schniewind, myself, and Les Hibbert are the outfitter reps who participate.

I serve as co-chair, along with Richard Martin, current President of the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association. Richard and I together organize and lead the meetings. Other noteworthy participants include Destry Jarvis, the Deputy Director of the National Park Service under the previous administration; Jason Robertson, Access Director for American Whitewater; and Tom Robinson of the Grand Canyon Trust. Linda Jalbert serves as our NPS liaison and we've been privileged to hear an occasional insight or two from her in the course of our discussions. The group's full membership list is attached to this message for your review.

Perhaps it would be useful for us to hear directly from Tom or Destry or Richard at one of our meetings? This is certainly something we could try to arrange if there was any interest.

The Grand Canyon River Group's purpose is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Colorado River management issues and to offer the NPS a joint recommendation as to how the CRMP should be revised in response to everything we've all talked and heard so much about in these last few years. Whether or not it

will be possible for such a diverse group to do this remains to be seen. Like GCROA's own internal discussions the Grand Canyon River Group process is advancing to an important stage. Our deadline for completing our analysis and recommendations document is August 1st of this year, timed so as to immediately precede the park's public scoping meetings kicking off their renewed effort to update the CRMP.

Next Thursday, Garrett and I will offer a more comprehensive update and will answer questions about how the Grand Canyon River Group discussions have proceeded to date. But after this last meeting, we can say for the first time that while we are a long, long way yet from the finish line, it is looking like it just might be possible to find an approach that will garner inter-constituency support. The general concept at the core of this process is the same that GCROA has discussed for several years now: justify an increase in the size of the pie by spreading use over a longer period of time, thereby providing improved visitor experience quality and resource protection, even as the cumulative level of use increases substantially.

It is the mutual desire to avoid a direct confrontation over user-days and the allocation issue that is driving us and the private boaters to work together in the context of the Firewalk group. If this sense of mutual purpose and potential benefit is lost, because we can't make our theory about how to add to the size of the pie work, GCROA should be prepared to go it alone, with every other participant in this process lined up against us. That would include the privates, of course, but also even the moderates within the wilderness/environmental community, a lot of the guiding community, and the NPS itself.

If, on the other hand, we can make our theory work, the challenges remain substantial, but there is some prospect that we could end up going into the public scoping sessions with at least some respected and influential voices from the private boater side, the wilderness/enviro side, the guiding community, and not out loud but internally up at the South Rim, all talking about a similar approach for getting to the other side of this set of problems. The core of this idea is to increase the size of the pie in a "responsible" fashion. Getting a diverse set of voices on the same page would be a significant development that should not be casually dismissed out of fear of thinking about the change that might be required.

The Grand Canyon River Group's next meeting is scheduled for May 8th and 9th. The agenda for that session is to decide on the guts of what the group thinks might work. The broad conceptual outline now under discussion is similar to GCROA's Scenario 48, but the Grand Canyon River Group members do not know that there is a GCROA Scenario 48. They are generally aware that the outfitters are looking at the CRMP situation and intend to put forward at some point a GCROA recommendation, just as we are generally aware that GCPBA is doing the same thing.

#### **Launch Pattern: 5/3/2/1**

Just as it has for at least some of us, the logic of the situation has driven the Grand Canyon River Group to look at a maximum daily launch rate of five per day. At our meeting last week, we debated increasing this number (the group concluded that is unworkable) and a variety of suggestions for how to divvy up the five launches per day. We are far from an agreement on this critical point, and Garrett and I (Les was not there) went head to head with the private boater contingent for an entire afternoon on this whole question. At the end of the day, the group decided to continue the ~ a decision in May.

If GCROA's members decide that a launch pattern of 5/3/2/1 is tolerable, Garrett, Les, and I would be in a position to go to work trying to convince the Grand Canyon River Group, and by extension the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association, the Grand Canyon Trust (and possibly other enviro groups such as NPCA that the Trust has substantial influence with), American Whitewater (and possibly other non-local private boater groups that AW has substantial influence with), and the former Deputy Director of the National Park Service under Clinton and Babbitt (and possibly scores of existing or former high ranking NPS and DCI officials that Destry has substantial influence with such as his old boss Bruce Babbitt, who just got involved in the local snowmaking debate here in Flagstaff) that 3/2/1 might possibly work, but nothing past it will.

If the park is to substantially increase the size of the recreational user-day pie, it will need political backing from groups and individuals of stature who have established credibility as protectors of the National Park

Service mission and vision. The park will not do it merely at the urging of a group of its own for-profit contractors alone, in the face of opposition from everyone else. If GCROA decides that 5/3/2/1 is not doable, it is more than likely that the Grand Canyon River Group process will fall apart, and that the slim potential that now exists for us to work successfully in concert with some moderates from the other interested groups will be lost. We'll need to prepare for a process where it will be the outfitters against literally everyone else.

I know that many are questioning why we need to go to such a radical launch pattern as 5/3/2/1. The answer is that going any higher on a daily launch rate destroys all hope for proving up our basic premise: that you can have your cake and eat it too, that you can increase the size of the recreational user-day pie even as you improve resource protection and visitor experience quality. A quick look at the chart on the other end of this link should demonstrate this point clearly enough:

<http://www.gcroa.org/Members/GCROA%20CRMP%20Alternatives/Scenario%2048/graphs/VerB.htm>

If the righteousness of this premise cannot be concretely demonstrated by objective, scientific findings, there will be no possibility to build the necessary coalition of support behind this idea. We will find ourselves right back where we started, at loggerheads with the privates over user-days with demand being the leading candidate to serve as the base allocation apportionment criterion on which all will depend, as imperfect as the demand thing is. We will have no scientific or otherwise credible evidence to support our contention that commercial demand constitutes 68% of the total and that private demand is only 32%. We will only have our intuition to offer, the intuition of a group with a clear profit motive at stake. This will continue to convince no one.

The park will be faced with the political imperative of solving the private boater access issue, and the only means left for them to do so will be to reallocate a significant portion of existing commercial user-days to the non-commercial sector. The process will dissolve into a yelling match between us and the privates on one front. And we already know we'll have another front to contend with in the wilderness/motors issue. We'll still ask, but unless the park dramatically over-reaches, it is unlikely that a senator, or high-ranking administration official, will come to our rescue on the allocation question if or when the park goes in a direction harmful to our interests.

Politicians do not like to choose sides unless they perceive a clear benefit to themselves for doing so. The fact is we don't offer a politician much in exchange for getting embroiled in our problems. If the Democrats retake the House of Representatives in the fall, the legislative escape route will be closed almost entirely, unless we earn bipartisan support, another unlikely prospect. Even if that doesn't happen, it's still pretty tough in the Senate even right now.

#### A Universal Reservations and Cancellation Policy

Another strong concern with what we have talked about so far is loss of scheduling flexibility. This is a major problem, and we've been thinking about ways to address it. One idea that might have merit, which would also have highly desirable implications on the non-commercial side when it comes to the permitting system and the need to reduce non-commercial demand to the level of available supply, would be to install a government-backed universal reservations and cancellation policy.

I have long thought that a universal reservations and cancellation policy could be part of the answer, and I'd like to ask everyone's help in thinking about this idea and helping to flesh it out. Basically, the idea is that there would be one government-backed reservation and cancellation policy, incorporated into both the CCR's and the NCOR's, that would apply equally to each company's customers and the non-commercial sector. This would help us force strict requirements on the non-commercials, a mirror of what our customers face, which would help in the effort to match non-commercial demand with supply, whatever that supply ends up being.

One possible feature that might help us on the scheduling flexibility issue, and the concern that under a system where all the commercial launch slots are full all of the time, is mandatory trip insurance.

I'd like to find out if we could, either by working with an existing carrier, or by self-insuring, set up a situation where each company, and their customers, were fully protected against most cancellations. In the event of a cancellation, the customer would receive some or all of their money back, depending on the structure of the policy we set up, and the company would be paid accordingly. An important added bonus could be that the company would often, depending on the timing, have the opportunity to rebook a trip for which they had already received some, most, or all of the trip fare. And who knows, if we self-insured, it might also even prove to be a modest profit-making enterprise.

### The Colorado River Corridor's Visitor Capacity

Another activity the Grand Canyon River Group is engaging in has to do with how to calculate the Colorado River corridor's visitor or human use capacity. On January 1st of this year, the Federal Interagency Task Force on Visitor Capacity on Public Lands submitted its final report to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. This report represents the current thinking among the professional federal land management community as to how to contend with visitor capacity questions related to federal resources. Contact me if you'd like a copy.

This task force was chaired by Dr. Glenn Haas, an academic and consultant at Colorado State University, and was largely the result of efforts by Destry Jarvis during his term of government service. Dr. Haas is now a consultant working with the organization Destry now heads, the National Recreation and Park Association. Through Destry, the Grand Canyon River Group has commissioned Dr. Haas to work on the visitor capacity question as it relates to the Colorado River corridor within the Grand Canyon.

Dr. Haas is one of the premier thinkers about visitor capacity issues on public lands. He has the professional stature and the relationship network necessary to be influential when it comes to determining or marketing a visitor capacity level for the river in the Grand Canyon that syncs with National Park Service legal mandates for unimpaired enjoyment.

Should the Grand Canyon River Group, with the assistance of Dr. Haas, be able to produce a compelling argument in support of the idea of increasing the size of the recreational user-day pie, it would be an important milestone, and could provide an air of academic and intellectual legitimacy to our have cake/eat it too working theory that goes well beyond what any of the self-interested constituency groups could offer on their own. At the very least, GCROA should keep its powder dry until it becomes clear where this effort by Dr. Haas might lead.

### Conclusion

I'd like to say that I know people are concerned about many of the ideas we are examining, just as people should be. Many of these ideas carry with them substantial risks and consequences. There's no question about that.

So why are we playing with this fire? Would it not be a lot easier to just putter around in the office, waiting for the park to do what the park will do, and not scare anyone with all this crazy talk? The answer is that not playing with this fire also carries with it substantial risks and potentially highly negative consequences.

The good news is that we have time. We are months away from any decision that represents a point of no return. I'll say that again. We are months away from any decision that represents a point of no return. Our opportunity now is to take advantage of the time to consider alternatives, to think, to discuss, and to continue to gather intelligence about the situation we find ourselves in and that we have no choice but to confront, in one way or another.

Please participate. We are dealing with important questions that have far-reaching consequences.

Thanks very much.

Mark