

RRFW Riverwire – Park Illegalities Cause Group to announce Fundraising Campaign
August 7, 2005

River Runners for Wilderness has learned that Grand Canyon National Park is planning to avoid public review of the need for and appropriateness of river concessions services on the Colorado River in Grand Canyon. The park is nearing completion of an environmental impact statement (EIS) for recreational river running in the park's potential wilderness. The EIS, called the Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP), only briefly looked at the spectrum of commercial services, and did not include a range of commercial services at all. RRFW has learned that the park is starting to draft a prospectus for its river concessions based on the EIS. In doing so, the park continues to allow river concessions services without a National Environmental Policy Review, which by law the Park Service is required to conduct.

According to TinaMarie Ekker of the Montana based Wilderness Watch, "The National Park Service can't rely on the CRMP as its needs assessment for the river concessionaires, the CRMP doesn't even address the issue!"

For the last two years, River Runners for Wilderness has pointed this deficiency out to the park through mostly unanswered written correspondence. "We clearly pointed out to the park they were amiss in their planning compliance, and they have done nothing" noted Jo Johnson, co-director of the Utah based River Runners for Wilderness. "With this in mind, we are starting a "Litigation Campaign" to raise enough funds to bring this issue to legal review."

Johnson points out "managers focus on trying to create loopholes in the law where none exist, and seem to have an infinite supply of excuses as to why Wilderness must always be compromised for this or that reason. While a group of family and friends waits 15 years or more to raft the river on their own, river concessions try to sell their empty river trips on Costco.com and eBay. Park planners try to concoct ludicrous interpretations of the Wilderness Act to allow this activity, as though Congress was only kidding about trying to preserve real wilderness.

For more information about RRFW's Legal Campaign, please visit www.rrfw.org