

# National Park Service Colorado River Parks

A string of nine pearls...along a river of  
opportunity

From the mountain headwaters...to  
Southwest desert canyons

And a river runs through them....



*“The Colorado...is the most legislated, Most debated, and most litigated river in the entire world...More people, more industry, and a more significant economy (depend) on it than any comparable river in the world”*

*--Mark Reisner, Cadillac Desert*



# Colorado River Parks

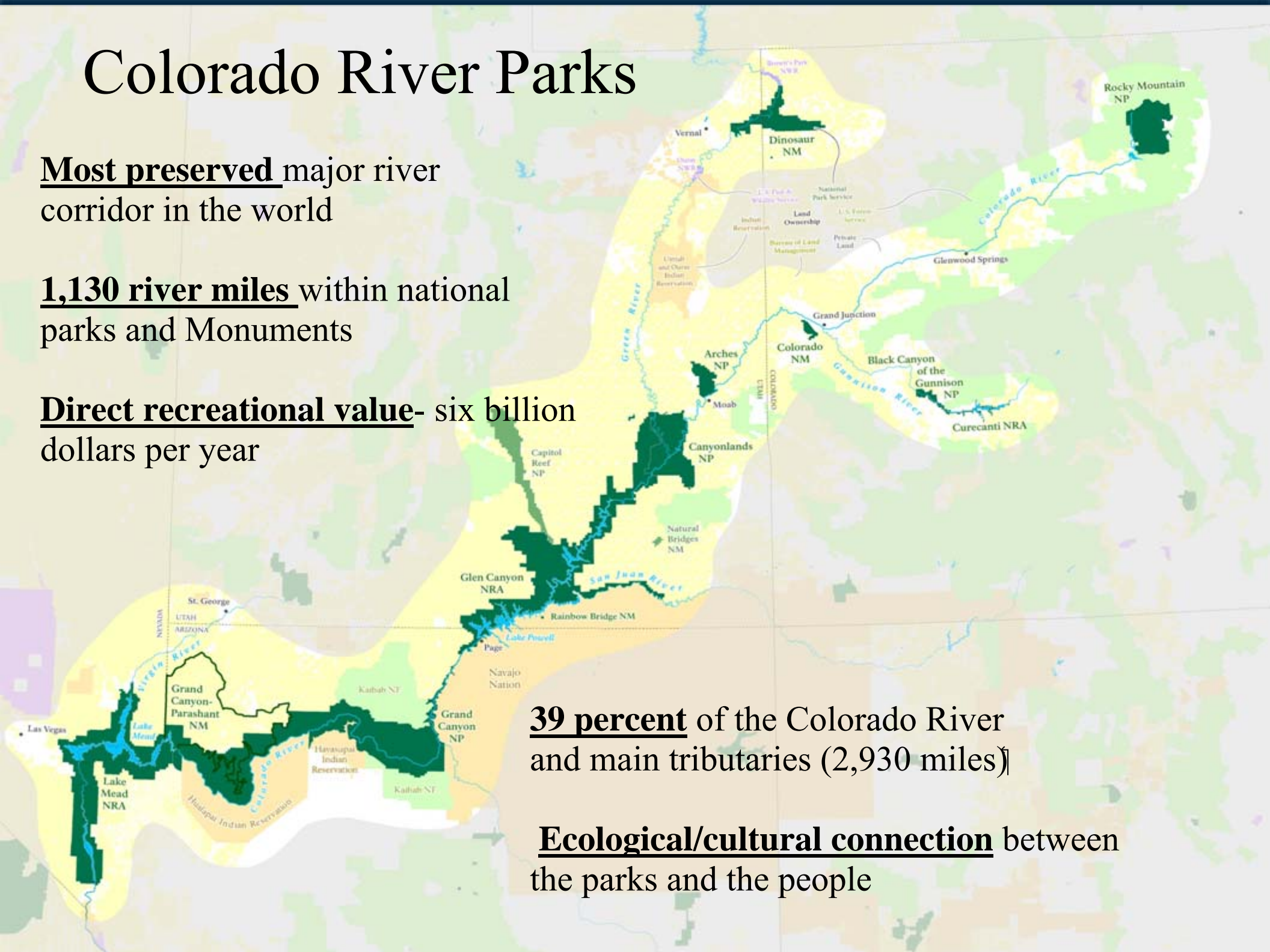
**Most preserved** major river corridor in the world

**1,130 river miles** within national parks and Monuments

**Direct recreational value-** six billion dollars per year

**39 percent** of the Colorado River and main tributaries (2,930 miles)

**Ecological/cultural connection** between the parks and the people

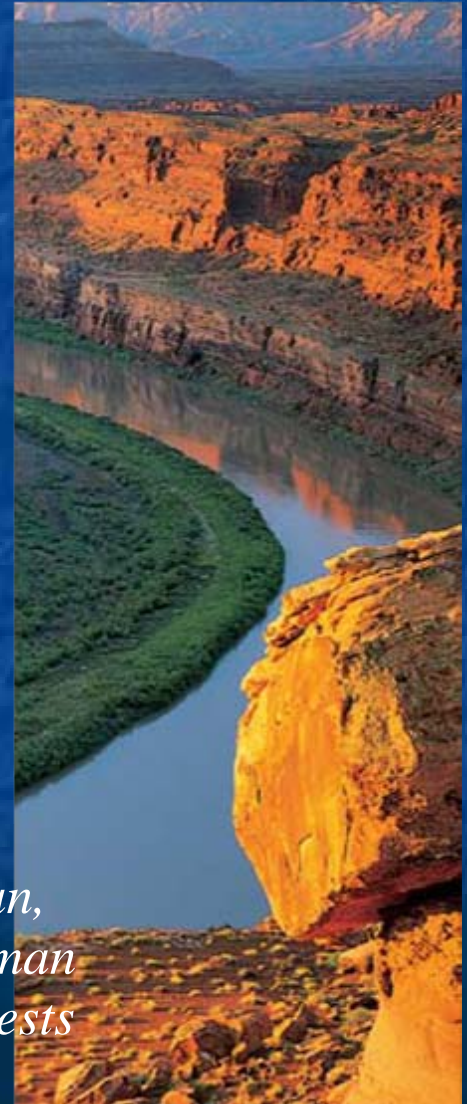


# National Park Service Colorado River Parks

The Secretary of the Interior has the authority to strike an appropriate balance between use and preservation to ensure both desires of the American people by upholding both the laws governing the operation of the dams and those protecting its national parks

**“...No law or policy diminishes the Secretary's Substantial responsibilities toward Grand Canyon National Park or the Colorado River environment...”**

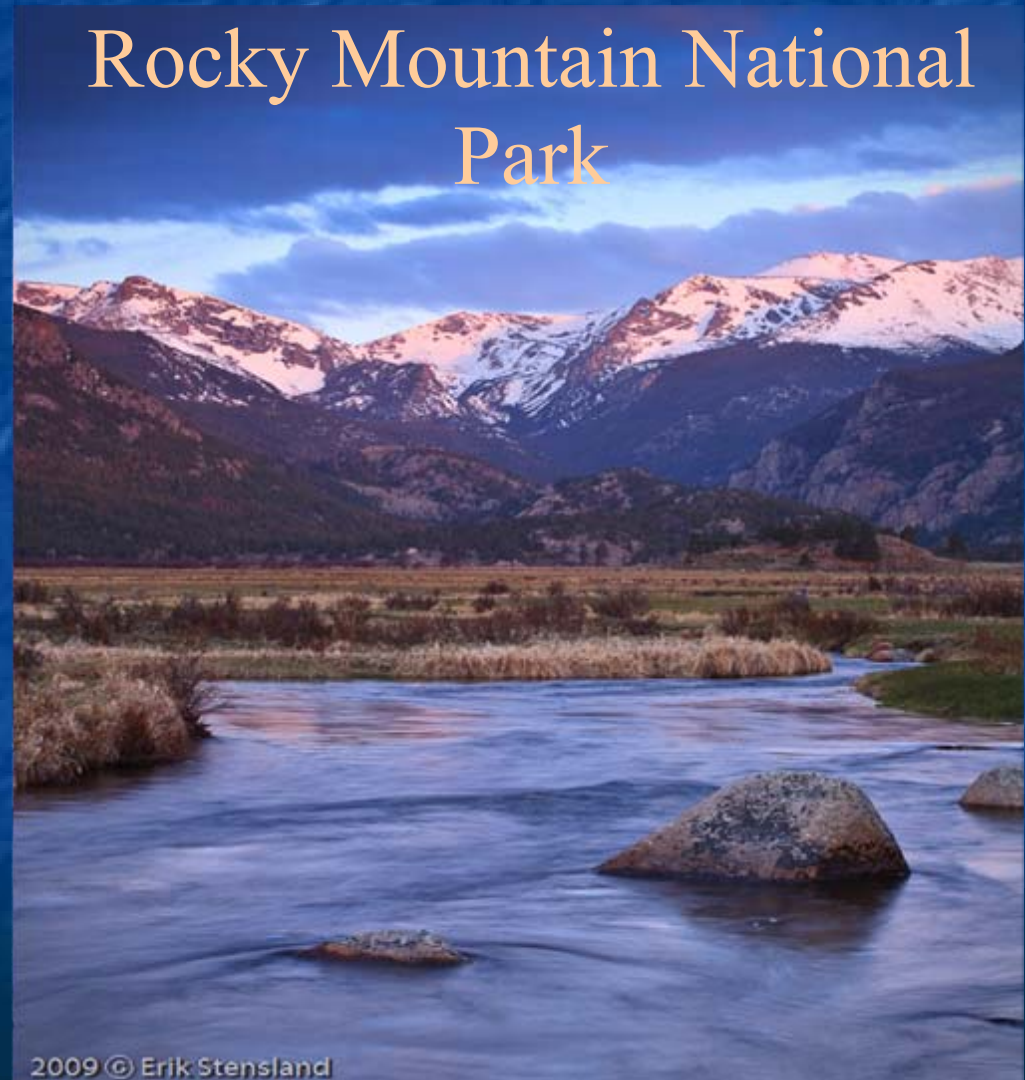
*– April 2, 1990 letter to Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan from Sens. Bennett Johnston and Dale Bumpers chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and chairman Subcommittee on Public Lands, National Parks and Forests*



National Parks along the Colorado River –  
a string of nine Pearls...  
one-third of the river and its tributaries

From high in the  
Colorado Rockies at  
the Continental  
Divide

Rocky Mountain National  
Park



# Through the high plateaus of Colorado and Utah

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park



Steepest/narrowest river gorge in North America

Size – 30,244 acres

Est 1933 (monument)  
1999 (park)

River Miles – 50  
(Gunnison River)

Curecanti National Recreation Area



High plateau redrock canyons

210,278 acres

Est 1915/38

River miles - 106 (Yampa/Green)

Dinosaur National Monument



Confluence of the Green and Yampa rivers

# Into the red rock country of the Colorado Plateau

Canyonlands and Arches  
National parks



Spectacular multi-colored  
canyons, wilderness, adventure

Confluence of the  
Colorado and Green  
Rivers

Size – 400,000 acres  
Est. 1929 and 1964

River miles - 102 miles (Colorado and Green)



# Glen Canyon National Recreation Area



Lake/river recreation, wilderness, adventure, sculpted red-rock canyons

1.254 million acres

Est. 1972

River miles - 230  
(Colorado/San Juan rivers)

Shoreline – 1,900 miles



# Grand Canyon National Park



World renowned river canyon sculpted by the  
Colorado River, wilderness, recreation

Acres - 1.217 million  
Est. 1908/19  
River miles - 277



# Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Features – World class lake recreation adventure, wilderness, spectacular desert scenery

Area – 1.5 million acres



Shoreline – 550 miles

River miles – 185 (Colorado above and below Hoover Dam)

# Park resources affected by drought and uncertainty

- Launch ramps – Powell and Mead
- Restricted access
- Concentrated use
- Hazards
- Water temperature
- Magnitude and frequency of high flows

# Current Operations Practices and National Park Service requirements

- Annual Operating Plan for the Colorado River –
  - Projects annual water deliveries and reports on monthly volume determinations and daily operations
  - 2001 Surplus guidelines EIS
  - 2007 Shortage guidelines EIS
- Stakeholder groups - NPS participates in Resource stakeholder groups to communicate water needs to protect resources
  - Adaptive Management framework and NEPA
  - Monthly volume releases
  - Bypass flows

# Current Operations Practices and National Park Service requirements

- Direct discussions (NPS and BOR)
- BOR 24-month study reports
- Monthly real-time adjustment of water releases based on hydrology
- Science - analysis of resource status and water needs
  - Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center
  - Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
  - Dinosaur National Monument

# How to effectively manage the Colorado River in a multi-agency environment

- Resource degradation - Current operations of Colorado River dams are leading to degradation of park resources and values (impairment)
- Recreation – Water levels for lake recreational access are not being given consideration in operational decisions
- Authorities - National Park Service laws and policies are not being given equal consideration with other interests

# How to effectively manage the Colorado River in a multi-agency environment

- Communication - consensus within DOI should be reached on operational issues affecting downstream resources
- Insufficient science – Lack of integrated science program (research/monitoring) to inform managers of consequences of proposed operations