

IF THEY CAN DO IT AT THE GRAND CANYON THEY CAN DO IT ANYWHERE!

By Ben Tennison,
Editor In Chief, Western Mule Magazine

Our American heritage is in jeopardy today. Who would have believed one of the great icons of our western heritage, The Grand Canyon Mules would be in jeopardy in our lifetime.

Western Mule Magazine broke this news of plans underway to do away with The Grand Canyon Mule trips within the Grand Canyon National Park back in September 2008. Western Mule readers' response to the article was tremendous, with phone calls, letters and emails to the park service and to government officials. This outcry of injustice by readers prompted a letter from Park Superintendent Steve Martin himself calling the article erroneous, with only a temporary diversion of mule traffic on the Grand Canyon National Park trails. Steve Martin's response was published before Superintendent Martin knew who Western Mule Magazine's source was. We have had no response from the Park Service since our source was publicly revealed.

I have sent along a pdf file of the entire set of articles published in Western Mule Magazine since September 2008 on the Grand Canyon and the famous Grand Canyon Mules. With a tremendous amount of research from Western Mule Magazine contributor, Terry Wagner, these articles will take you where this battle began, through an in depth history of the Grand Canyon and the mules, up to current operations of today.

Even though we here at Western Mule Magazine have known of the move to do away with the mules of the Grand Canyon for over a year now, we were of the belief everyone knew about it. It has recently come to my attention the equine industry, as a whole, knows little about what's taking place at the Grand Canyon National Park.

Even if you don't own a mule or want to own a mule, this affects you! Next they will go after all our National Parks and livestock use within them. It will spread next on to our National Forest trails and access, all done by the very agencies responsible for preserving these historic places and our American Heritage.

This is a bigger battle than any one entity of the equine industry can battle alone. It will take the entire equine industry to save this heritage, the icons of the Grand Canyon and any private stock use into the Grand Canyon National Park.

Please read the articles as they appeared in Western Mule Magazine, written by Ben Tennison, Editor In Chief, Western Mule Magazine and then "Mules and the Grand Canyon", a four part series, by Terry Wagner.

Our American heritage is in jeopardy. Livestock use in our National Parks is in jeopardy. This has gone way beyond "let's wait and see." December 2009 will be a critical month in the National Parks decision of the mules and livestock use in the Grand Canyon...No, December will be a critical month in detouring a decision I am of the belief, the Grand Canyon National Park Service has already begun to put into place.

From here to there,
Ben Tennison
Editor in Chief,
Western Mule Magazine

Them Mules

As seen in Western Mule Magazine
September 2008 (pages 12-13)

By Terrison

Photos by Western Mule Magazine



The Bright Angel Trail

Coming out of a meeting Wednesday, August 13th at the Grand Canyon, the National Park Service is making plans to close the historic Bright Angel Trail to the famous Grand Canyon Mules.

The plan is to rework the South Kaibab Trail and allow mule traffic to enter the Canyon there. As soon as work on the Kaibab Trail is completed mules will no longer be allowed on the Bright Angel Trail.

All of this is due to hikers wanting a trail they can hike on that is "Well Maintained". The reason the Bright Angel trail is there at all and has always been highly maintained is because of none other than the mules themselves. The National Park Service has heard this "Squeaky Wheel" (the hikers) and we know the squeaky wheel gets the grease. The mules will be forced to take dudes down a trail that is much steeper, and will cause many mules to have to retire before their time and the South Kaibab Trail is more treacherous, no place for the dudes that ride the Grand Canyon Mules.

There is plenty of history that goes with the Bright Angel Trail. Let me give you a quick review.

The Bright Angel Trail was originally built as a mining access trail for pack mules in 1891 by Ralph and Niles Cameron. They gave up on mining and turned to tourist rides into the Canyon in the later part of the 1890's. Tourists riding mules into the Grand Canyon has been going on every since.

The Camerons held a private deed to the trail. In 1919 the National Park Service took control of the canyon and immediately began trying to wrestle control of the Bright Angel Trail from the Camerons. The National Park Service finally succeeded when they built the Kaibab Trail in 1928. This put the Cameron's trail, the Bright Angel Trail out of business and Cameron became a "willing seller" to the National Park Service.

The Fred Harvey Company got the lease to run the mule rides down into the canyon by way of the Bright Angel Trail and out of the canyon by way of the Kaibab Trail. The Fred Harvey Company is today called Xanterra, who runs the mule rides.

The south Kaibab Trail is the trail the packers have used over the years supplying Phantom Ranch at the bottom of the canyon. The south Kaibab Trail is where rookie mules learned to negotiate the canyon trails packing in supplies and packing out anything that needed to come to the top. Not all mules passed the test, there have been rookie mules that have fallen to their death on the Kaibab Trail or have caused another mule to go over the side. When the mules have learned to negotiate the Kaibab Trail, then and then only were they considered for a dude mule. The reason the Kaibab Trail was used for coming out of the canyon by the dude mules instead of going down that way was because it was believed that the Kaibab Trail was too steep and treacherous for anyone but the best of riders. From what I've seen, the majority of folks who are going down on the mules to experience the Grand Canyon, (an experience like none other) are anything but experienced riders.

I've had the pleasure of sitting with Ross Knox (long time packer for the Grand Canyon) and listening to the stories and experiences he had over the years. I believe Ross Knox would be the first to mention the Kaibab Trail ain't for no dude.

Anyone I've talked with over the years who has had anything to do with the mule operations at the Grand Canyon have always felt the Kaibab Trail was too treacherous to be suitable for in-experienced riders to ride down. I don't know it but I'll bet my best hat that opinion hasn't changed.

Little does the tax payer know there are currently over 400 miles of inner canyon trails available to the hikers that livestock are not permitted on. Now the hikers want the Bright Angel Trail. Originally all trails in the Grand Canyon were stock trails. Today only the Bright Angel and the Kaibab Trails are allowed stock. Stock has been kicked off of the other trails one by one over the decades. We have allowed it. It's time to speak-up.

Some years back Western Mule Magazine heard they were fixing to shut down outside stock to the Bright Angel and Kaibab Trails. When we brought it to your attention Western Mule Magazine readers made the calls and wrote the letters to get that action stopped. Don't you think for a minute letters and phone calls won't cause another meeting. Please don't lead yourself to believe the next person will and you don't need to, it's important that you do make the contacts and express your opinion.

It needs to start with your Congressman, but don't stop there, we need to go straight to the top, to the Department of the Interior and to the National Park Service. We have provided you with phone numbers and addresses. The squeaky wheel does get the grease. We mule owners and those who believe that such a tradition as mules in the Grand Canyon, on the Bright Angel Trail should not cease, need to let it be known that the mules need to stay on the Bright Angel Trail.

Don't let some preppie with a backpack, that has no concern for the rich history, the tradition, no loyalty to the icons of the Grand Canyon, THE MULES, have the last word. These hikers are merely offended by mule poop.

We don't only need to squeak...**WE NEED TO ROAR!**


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CONTACT YOUR CONGRESSMAN!





Bright Angel Trail



GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK...UP DATE

As seen in Western Mule Magazine - December 2008 (pages 30-31)

By Tennison

Dear Editor:

This is in response to a recent article in your publication titled "Them Mules", written by Tennison, regarding mule use within Grand Canyon National Park. The article erroneously states, "The National Park Service is making plans to close the historic Bright Angel Trail to the famous Grand Canyon mules." The National Park Service is currently considering a major reconstruction project on the South Kaibab Trail that would significantly improve the condition of that trail for both hikers and mule users alike. The project is expected to take anywhere from two to four years. While this project is underway mule use would temporarily be diverted to the Bright Angel Trail. Once work was completed, mule use on the South Kaibab Trail would then resume. A similar project would then be considered for the Bright Angel Trail if funding is available. Likewise, if this project is approved, mule use would temporarily be diverted to the South Kaibab Trail until completion of the project. The National Park Service will soon undertake a revision of the Grand Canyon National Park's Backcountry Management Plan. This plan will cover park resources in the inner canyon as well as visitor experience and use. Future trail use, including mule and stock use, will be addressed in this plan. During this planning process, the National Park Service, under the direction of the National Environmental Policy Act, will encourage public participation. Members of the public that are interested in participating in this effort can ask to be added to the Backcountry Management Plan mailing list by calling Kirstin Heins, Resources Planning Leader at 928-638-7734 or by sending an email with their request to Kirstin.Heins@nps.gov. Being involved in the revision of the Backcountry Management Plan, and any planning effort undertaken by the National Park Service, is the best way for the public to obtain accurate information. It also gives the public an opportunity to shape how visitor experience and use will be managed while protecting park resources. We appreciate your interest and the interest of your readers in Grand Canyon National Park.

Sincerely,
Steve Martin
Superintendent

Editors Note,

I asked that you write or call concerning the closure of the Bright Angel Trail to the Famous Grand Canyon Mules and the response has been tremendous. We thank our readers for doing that. Your response has prompted the letter above from the Superintendent at the Grand Canyon National Park, Steve Martin. Upon Maureen Oibrogge's request, Public Affairs Officers, we are happy to print his letter for our readers.

At the time of the September 2008 article "Them Mules", by Tennison, by request we were not able to reveal our source of information which

longer has any ties with the Grand Canyon we can now tell you, Casey Murph, then Manager of the Grand Canyon Mule Operations, came to us concerned with the close sure of the Bright Angel Trail to mules forever. Casey Murph was at the August 13th meeting as Manager of the Grand Canyon Mule Operations and other meetings mentioning the closure of the Bright Angel Trail to mule traffic permanently.

Because of ongoing legal issues we cannot at this time mention why Casey Murph (after 20 plus years at the Grand Canyon) is the former Manager of the Grand Canyon Operations. If the closing of the Bright Angel Trail got you hot under the collar, when you do learn why Casey no longer has any ties with the Grand Canyon Mule operations, it will scald you. We will reveal that information when possible.

A request of notes or minutes of that August 13, 2008 meeting along with notes or minutes of the June 9, 2008, July 16, 2008, and September 17, 2008 meetings were applied for under the Freedom of Information Act by a reader. These notes would without doubt reveal what was said at those meetings. Taken from an official reply from Sara Scheblem, officer of the Freedom of Information Act for the National Park Service at the Grand Canyon, and I quote, "No formal meeting notes exist".

Susan Black in an email asked the question best.

Subject: Bright Angel Trail

"I called the number on page 13 of your September 2008 article about the Bright Angel Trail and was told to call Rebecca Rhea at the Grand Canyon. She is out of town until Thursday. I was told the Bright Angel Trail will only be closed for repairs, not forever. WHAT IS A MULE LOVER TO BELIEVE? Please advise. Thank you, Susan Black".

I would advise Susan Black and each and every reader to stay on top of this. Western Mule Magazine will report both sides of every story when information becomes available and when any information becomes hard to obtain. In those meetings is the information we all want to know. Why weren't notes or minutes being kept? Isn't this how the public knows what is being done with tax dollars? Didn't the Freedom of Information Act come into existence because of meetings behind closed door by our government? Susan Black, I hear your concerns, "WHAT IS A MULE LOVER TO BELIEVE?"

I am glad to report The Backcountry Horseman of Arizona has taken hold of this and we are now not alone in finding out what has been proposed, what has been said and what is being said. You have heard both sides of this story and Western Mule Magazine will remain committed to bring you all information as we receive reliable information. It would be easy for you and I to let down our guard here because Backcountry Horseman is involved. It is you who has a voice that will be heard and counted in any revision of the Grand Canyon National Park's Backcountry Management Plan, including mule stock use. You have got to ask yourself this question, "Why is this being visited at all?" Superintendent Steve Martin encouraged you in his letter to be added to the Backcountry Management Plan by request, either by email or phone, (call Kirstin Heins, Resources Planning Leader at 928-638-7734 or by sending an email with your request to Kirstin_Heins@nps.gov). I too encourage you to get on the list. There will be more information in the future and we will report accurately on that information.

Thank you, our readers again for expressing your concerns, (The Roar) was heard from Washington, to Denver, to Arizona, on to the Grand Canyon. The Tradition of Mules on the Bright Angel Trail, the rich history of the Grand Canyon calls for more than a mere squeak, your response was way more than a squeak!

Ben Tennison

Editor-In-Chief

Western Mule Magazine

"WHO WILL GO TODAY?"

Photo by Western Mule Magazine

...Wrangling Mules at first light, Grand Canyon National Park.

Harry Hudley in the silver belly hat and Casey Murph in the black hat.



GRAND CANYON ALERT!

By Tennison

As seen in Western Mule Magazine - June 2009 (pages 12-14)



May 12, 2009

RE Closure of canyon trails for mules

Dear Ben and Neta Tennison:

Thanks you for the article on the closure of Grand Canyon trails to mules.

The letter received from the Park Superintendent implied we have little reason for concern. However my visit to the park and overnight mule trek to Phantom Ranch indicates we have grave concern.

The current situation is that the South Kaibab Trail is closed to mules for an indefinite time for "maintenance". But there was no maintenance being performed on the South Kaibab Trail. Maintenance was being performed on the Bright Angel Trail. Due to the extra traffic on the Bright Angel Trail, the mule rides for the day are to be reduced to half a day, then instead of a trail ride inside the canyon; the rides are scheduled to be in the common pinion juniper habitat on top the canyon with perhaps a view or two from the edge.

The Park apparently ignores public input and uses Safety, Maintenance, and Funding excuses to pursue personal agendas. Several user groups have already been excluded from the park, and we could very likely see mules excluded within our lifetimes.

Number 1, Thank your for bringing this to reader's attention. It is great to be informed.

Number 2, I would like for you to encourage your readers to take a Grand Canyon Mule Trip; A) the price is reasonable and combined with the experience, is a downright bargain. B) It could be phased out, so it may be now or never. C) It is great to compare the 1 in 1,000 mules selected for Grand Canyon work to the spoiled Mules in our back yards. And D) on a mule trip, most of the pictures will turn out beautiful, because they tend to have mules in them.

Enclosed are a couple of copies of correspondence in case they contain comments that could compliment the cause.

Sincerely,

Danny M. Riddle

Las Vegas, Nevada

Collaborated with Molly Mary and Molly Patsy

Steve Martin, Superintendent

National Park Service

Grand Canyon National Park

P.O. Box 129

Rand Canyon, Arizona 86023-0129

May 5, 2009

RE Closure of canyon trails for mules

Dear Steve Martin:

Thank you for responding to my letter in October.

The eloquence of your correspondence is convincing. But my experience in the park two days ago convinces me the public need be concerned about closure of the park to mules.

The South Kaibab Trail is closed to mules for an indefinite time for "maintenance". There was no maintenance being performed on the South Kaibab Trail, it was being performed on the Bright angel Trail.

Due to the extra traffic on the Bright Angel Trail, the mule rides for the day are to be reduced to half a day, then instead of a trail ride inside the canyon; the rides are scheduled to be in the common pinion juniper habitat on top the canyon with perhaps a view or two from the edge.

If someone wished to administrate the closure of the park to mules without the public comment, there would be no better way than in the manner in which it is being accomplished with maintenance, safety and funding for excuses. Xanterra the concessionaire is not in a position to protest, because mule concession is inconsequential to the lodging, meal, bussing and other concessions.

The Grand Canyon is Grand enough that a mere glimpse of it is awe inspiring to merit a trip and many first time visitors will not realize they are being cheated of a more fulfilling Grand Canyon experience. However the cost of getting to the Grand Canyon in both money and time is considerable. I feel that my trip was compromised because I did not get to experience the South Kaibab Trail where there are drop offs on both sides and only a sturdy mule beneath. I will probably never have that opportunity again.

The loss of American tradition and heritage is bothersome to

me, so please include me with other members of the public on the Backcountry Management Plan mailing list.

The annual shortage of \$1 million for trail work is a national disgrace. When I write my congressional delegation about the loss of national treasures, I will for whatever meager benefit it may provide; mention the financial condition.

Sincerely,
Danny M. Riddle
Las Vegas, Nevada
cc:Kristin Heins, Resource Planning Leader

President Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

May 6, 2009
RE Loss of National Treasures

Dear President Obama:

I am writing about my concern about the loss of National Treasures, and an excellent way to unite our great country.

Loss of National Treasures

The loss of National Treasures is in general the deterioration of our National Parks, and specifically Mule Rides inside the Grand Canyon. Teddy Roosevelt rode a mule in the Grand Canyon. He established our National Parks, and in so doing, he helped identify America and he united Americans with reasons to take pride in our country.

The entire Park Service is under stress from under funding and too many demands. We are losing our parks a piece at a time. My major concern is the Mule Ride inside the Grand Canyon. The rides are being sacrificed under the quantity vs. quality equation and under the excuses of funding, safety and maintenance. The process is being accomplished administratively without public input, or congressional oversight.

Administratively, the Grand Canyon has millions of annual visitors. Their funding does not adequately provide for visitor needs, (the trails maintenance program is negative \$1,000,000 this year alone). Many of these visitors think the Park should accommodate more hikers and fewer mule riders. So, when the excuses of funding, safety or maintenance arise; mule riding operations are suspended in favor of hiking operations. Once done, the mule operations are lost and the sad reality is that they are unlikely to be recovered.

The current situation is the South Kaibab Trail is closed to mules for an indefinite time for "maintenance". There was no maintenance being performed on the South Kaibab Trail, it was being performed on the Bright Angel Trail. Due to the extra mule traffic on the Bright Angel Trail, the mule rides for the day are to be reduced to half a day and later they will be changed from inside the canyon; to above the rim of the canyon in common pinion juniper habitat. The day riders will have difficulty glimpsing the canyon and the overnight riders are likely to be phased out.

The trails within the canyon were developed by mules for mule riders. The tradition and the lure of the Grand Canyon National Park is all about mules. It is sad to see the deterioration of this National Treasure. It is like slowly becoming less American.

Unite the People of United States

The recent presidential election was the most polarizing event I have seen. The election was won on a relatively narrow margin with supporters on extremes with few in the middle.

A guiding example for this administration is Abraham Lincoln who undoubtedly was a great president. He maintained the union with civil war. I think a better method of uniting the country is Teddy Roosevelt's method giving all Americans pride in their National Parks.

For this reason, I suggest that President Obama and influential members of the congress take a mule ride in the Grand Canyon. You should not ride a helicopter, but should ride in the manner affordable by a common person and in the tradition of the past, on a mule. This would help instill pride of Americans in their National Parks. It would help the funding. It would help educate for tradition and value. It is part of the bond that makes Americans American. It would help unite the country.

Sincerely,
Danny M. Riddle
Las Vegas, Nevada
Copy: Nevada Congressional Delegation
Park Superintendent

Grand Canyon News Release

Release date: Immediate

Contact(s): Shannan Marcak
Phone number: 928-638-7958
Date: May 22, 2009

National Park Service seeking comments on mule operations and stock use in Grand Canyon National Park

Grand Canyon, Ariz. - The National Park Service (NPS) is now accepting comments on mule operations and stock use in Grand Canyon National Park as the agency begins to develop and environmental assessment. The presence and use of mules in and around the canyon is a longstanding tradition and one that the park would like to continue. The NPS is also interested in continuing to provide opportunities for stock use in a manner that is sustainable. This planning effort will address the following management objective identified in the parks 1995 General Management Plan: "Where livestock and visitors share the same trails and areas, minimize conflicts and resource impacts, and enhance safety."

The planning process will consider the following:

Commercial and private stock use (including horses, mules, and burros) throughout the park.

Appropriate levels of stock use on park trails.

Appropriate locations for stock use in the park, which may include:

Keeping commercial stock use on the North Kaibab Trail down

to Eupai Tunnel

Moving stock use to one of the South Rim corridor trails (Bright Angel or South Kaibab)

Keeping stock use on the Uncle Jim Trail, Whitmore Trail, and select corridor Trails

Initiation of a new concession operated day ride on the South Rim

The need for new stock facilities or modification to existing facilities on the North and South Rim including compliance with laws and regulations for mule health and safety.

The NPS encourages public participation through the National Environmental Policy Act (commonly known as NEPA) process during which the public has two opportunities to formally comment on the project - once during initial project scoping and again following release of the WA which is expected in fall 2009. The NPS is currently in the scoping phase of this project and invites the public to submit their comments in a variety of ways. Comments will be accepted for 30 days.

Three open house meetings are scheduled in June 2009 where Grand Canyon National Park staff will be available to answer questions and take comments on stock use in the park. Meeting dates and locations are as follows:

June 2, 4-7 PM (Arizona Time) - Flagstaff Public Library, 300 W. Aspen Avenue, Flagstaff, Arizona

June 3, 4-6 PM (Arizona Time) - Community Building, Room B, South Rim Village, Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona

June 4, 4-7 PM (Utah Time - Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument Kanab Visitor's Center, 745 East Highway 89, Kanab, Utah

Written comments may be submitted at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca> or mailed to: Steve Martin, Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, Attn: Mule Operations and Stock Use EA, P.O. Box 129 (1 Village Loop for express mail), Grand Canyon, AZ 86023 **by June 22, 2009**. The park expects to prepare an EA this summer, with a decision document for this project anticipated in December 2009. Additional information about this project can be found at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca> or by contacting Rachel Stanton, Project Planning Lead, at (928) 774-9612

-NPS-

Editor Note:

***The press release came out on May 22, 2009.
Not a publisher-friendly date for a monthly***

publication. Weather intentional or accidental we are under the gun for written comment to Park Superintendent, Steve Martin, to let him know you do or you DO NOT want to see the mules leave the Grand Canyon or have any trail closed to the mules. And that you want to maintain the ability to bring your own livestock and ride in and out of the Grand Canyon trails forever. Deadline for comment is June 22, 2009.

IT'S IMPORTANT!

Written comments may be submitted at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca> or mailed to: Steve Martin, Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, Attention: Mule Operations and Stock Use EA, P.O. Box 129 (1 Village Loop for express mail), Grand Canyon, AZ 86023 by June 22, 2009.

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MULES AND THE GRAND CANYON

(Part I)

By Terry Wagner

Authors Note: It is no secret to the readers of Western Mule Magazine that a controversy has arisen over the use of mules in the Grand Canyon National Park. The possibility of the mules being removed from, or a change in their use in the canyon has hit a raw nerve with many people. Whether removing stock use in the canyon is a possibility, real or imagined, remains to be seen as both accurate and inaccurate information has been reported. Some say it is a conspiracy by the National Park Service and environmental groups who want the mules removed from the canyon. People are pointing fingers accusing public officials with promoting personal agendas over public will, while others ponder the situation as being the result of over zealous comments made by uninformed individuals. Others say it is the uncaring owners of the mule concession at the park. Many people, at the same time, fear for the future of private stock use in the park. All of this is intertwined in a mass of Federal agencies and private enterprise, along with traditional and historic uses of the Grand Canyon National Park. Rest assured that Federal Laws and regulations are also a part of this equation, as well as contractual agreements between the National Park Service and commercial enterprises. Not to be left out are the agendas of the myriad of users of the Grand Canyon National Park.

I have attempted with this first installment to introduce concerned readers to a

brief history of the Grand Canyon National Park and mule use in the canyon. This essay in no way claims to provide a detailed history of the Grand Canyon. There isn't room in this issue of Western Mule Magazine to do that. What I have done is researched and provided a historical narrative that derives from the documented use of mules in the Grand Canyon. No doubt I have missed many mule tales from the canyon, but at the same time have highlighted mules in the canyon much earlier than many may realize. Many early accounts lack documentation, but it is realistic that mules were used much earlier than history notes. The image of the miner with his faithful donkey is well established much earlier than the first documented white settlers at the Grand Canyon. Doubtless, readers will know of many facts I have omitted. Anything those readers may have that pertain to the Grand Canyon and the mules, should be directed to the Letters to The Editor column. The Editor wants to know what you feel is important to the use of mules in the Grand Canyon and the continued use of private stock in the canyon.

Over ten thousand years ago, ancient Native Americans gazed into its depths, descended its walls and lived in the Grand Canyon. Constructing crude trails along the canyon face, descendants of ancient Indians made their way to Garden Creek for the life supporting waters that flowed there and

from other creeks in the canyon. The curiosity of these people probably played at least some role in exploring the canyon depths, but the dependable water supply continued to bring them back. Little did these early Native Americans know the chain of events that would follow what was to become the Bright Angel Trail?

Carved to a rough hewn perfection by the swirling, murky waters of the Colorado River, the Grand Canyon sits like an open chasm, still beckoning people from around the world to continue to explore its inner wonders. Man, in his eventual wisdom soon learned that his sweat and muscle alone could not improve on the trails of the ancients and long ago depended on the long eared cousin of the horse, called Mule, to explore and provide muscle for man's Grand Canyon ambitions. Mules are the creation of the genius of man. The culmination of man introducing donkeys to horses, resulting in an animal of great strength and the ability to survive the harsh conditions such as found in the inner Grand Canyon. Triple digit heat and lack of water was just a couple of issues when working in, or exploring the Grand Canyon.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EARLY GRAND CANYON

The first recorded European to gaze upon the Grand Canyon was Captain Garcia Lopez Cardenas. Dispatched in the company of Hopi Indian guides, by the explorer

Coronado in 1540, Cardenas looked into the Grand Canyon and greatly underestimated much of its size. He sent three men to descend its walls only to have them return saying they could not traverse the canyon. Thus, the Grand Canyon would lay dormant to man's explorations for nearly two centuries. For sure other explorers would follow and stand on the canyon's rim, many discussing the canyon's commercial value.

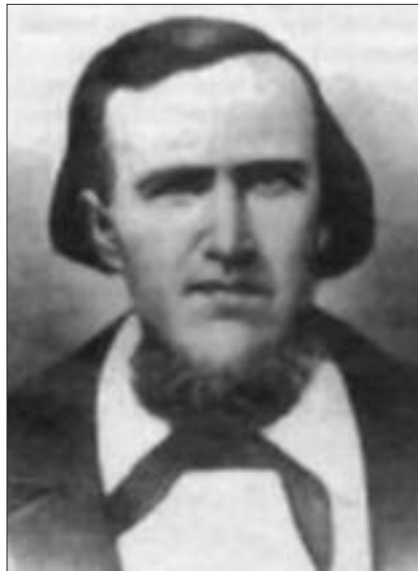
The Grand Canyon is located in northern Arizona about one hundred miles northwest of Flagstaff, Arizona, which is the county seat of Coconino County. Most early exploration of the canyon, beginning in earnest in the late 1860's was the result of those involved in mining, and those on church related missions.



Kolb Brothers photo of Lee's Ferry.

John D. Lee was the first person to cater to those headed to the Grand Canyon. Lee started Lee's ferry at the confluence of the Colorado and Paria Rivers in 1872, just a few miles from what is now Page, Arizona. The ferry crossing was funded by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS). Jacob Hamblin, a missionary for the church was an early explorer looking for successful crossings of the Colorado River and made forays to the canyon in the early 1850s. Jacob Hamblin discovered the crossing Lee would operate, as well as others on the Colorado River. Lee's Ferry is considered the beginning of the Grand Canyon as it applies to the Colorado River, and is today, the primary launch site for river adventurers traveling through the Grand Canyon.

With this in mind, it is difficult to talk about or write about the early exploration of any part of northern Arizona without including the travels of Jacob Hamblin. Sent by Brigham Young, on numerous excursions into Arizona on behalf of the LDS Church, Hamblin established himself as someone the Native American inhabitants of the day could trust, Hamblin was the first



Jacob Hamblin 1819-1886.

frontiersman to find a route completely around the Grand Canyon. Earlier missionaries from Santa Fe New Mexico had attempted to find a way around the canyon in an effort to find a more direct route from New Mexico to Monterey, California, but to no avail.

Accounts of Hamblin's adventures provide some of the earliest references to the use of mules in and around the Grand Canyon. In the definitive work, Mormon Settlement In Arizona, James H. McClintock makes reference to Hamblin's use of mules in a trip to the Grand Canyon area, in 1858, guiding a group of people interested in doing research on the language of the Hopi Indians. Sometime after crossing the Paria River, Hamblin's party had a mule wreck that resulted in the mules carrying their food taking off for parts unknown. Hamblin's party was rescued by a group of Hopi Indians that Hamblin convinced to help them with food and water till the wayward mules could be rounded up.

C. Gregory Crampton, in his book Standing Up Country, the Canyon Lands of Utah and Arizona, makes reference to Jacob Hamblin and John Wesley Powell, arriving in 1870 at what would become Lee's Ferry, "with lumber on mule back." In Powell's second trip down the Grand Canyon, he would leave from this location in 1872. Jacob Lake, Jacob Ranger Station and Jacob Lookout are all named in honor of Jacob Hamblin.

History gives John Hance, businessman, rancher and former military officer credit for being the first settler on the south rim. Hance arrived in 1883 and if not the first resident, was the first to make permanent

improvements. Hance was quick to realize the tourist potential of the Canyon and opened his ranch to guests and eventually built the first hotel at the south rim. In 1887 John Hance would offer the first commercial mule ride into the Grand Canyon, departing from a trail head located at Grand View Point, about fifteen miles east of the present Grand Canyon Village. Hance ran his first ads for his mule ride in a Flagstaff newspaper on January 1, 1887. Hance Creek is named after John Hance.

Many started hearing of the great canyon in Arizona and as the area became more settled, tourists of the day wanted to see what the Grand Canyon was all about. Stagecoach service started between Flagstaff and the Grand Canyon in 1883.

Ralph Cameron started pursuing his mining interests in the Grand Canyon as early as 1883. He quickly realized the commercial potential of the Grand Canyon, and he settled at the south rim of the Grand Canyon in 1890. Cameron filed mining claims that covered the area containing the old trail to Garden Creek. What was to take place was called free enterprise and competition and Cameron would be the lightning rod that sparked its arrival at the Grand Canyon. Cameron quickly realized that tourism would be the big money at the Grand Canyon. An ambitious sole, Cameron would later become a U.S. Senator for Arizona.



*Early canyon trail riders.
Kolb Brothers photo.*

Cameron and his associates would eventually complete the trail from Garden Creek to the bottom of the canyon, and after agreements with local Indian tribal members, established a campground and guest facilities at that location, now called Indian Garden. Once the trail was completed, Cameron charged people a one-dollar toll to use the newly completed Bright Angel Trail. Cameron's mining claims would give him control over the Bright Angel Trail till 1924.

A lot of early publicity was given to the canyon by the published works of George Dutton, and Thomas Moran, one a geologist and the other a painter, respectively. Their portrayals of the wonders of the Grand Canyon helped put the Grand Canyon on the front page of tourist maps in the late 1800's.



First Grand Canyon Railway passengers.

Competition for Cameron and Hance, arrived in the form of William Wallace Bass, who in the same year that Cameron became a permanent resident at the canyon, opened a tent campground at the south rim, complete with kitchen and dining hall. Bass opened a second camp at Shimuno Creek and operated a cable car system that spanned the bottom of the canyon.

Competition was about to heat up for everyone at the south rim, with the completion of a railroad line, in 1901, from Williams Arizona to the south rim of the Grand Canyon. By the turn of the new century the railroads were the big gun in the tourist industry throughout the country, and had been in the west for a number of years.

Prior to the railroads, traveling in the west had numerous dangers. Stagecoaches, wagons and saddle animals were the mode of travel prior to the railroad and the trails were plagued with unhappy Indians of the day, outlaws and dried up water holes. One thing for certain, the railroad did not arrive at the south rim with the idea of losing money.

In 1902, Ellsworth and Emery Kolb arrived at the south rim and opened their photo studio on the very edge of the south rim near the start of the Bright Angel Trail. The Kolb brother's bread and butter consisted of taking photos of the tourist going down the Bright Angel Trail on foot and on the Grand Canyon mules. Using a special and very modern camera of the day, the Kolb brothers would have the photos ready for the tourists to pick up when they returned to the south rim. The Kolb brothers made a photographic exploration of the canyon in 1911. Over the years, charging an admission fee, the brothers would show their movies to the public at their Grand Canyon studio.



Kolb Brothers Studio built in 1904.

I first visited the Grand Canyon in 1964 and had the privilege of watching the Kolb brother's movies while they were personally narrated by Emery Kolb. Emery stood before the small audience and introduced the movie, then explained that he normally narrated the film from the front of the theatre, but due to a recent medical problem he now narrated the film from the projection room located upstairs. At that, the 83 year old gentleman took the stairs two at a time to hasten his ascent to the projection room. During this same trip I first visited the El Tovar Hotel and the mule barn located nearby.

The railroad built the magnificent El Tovar Hotel in 1905. The El Tovar brought permanency to the tourist trade at the south rim of the Grand Canyon. A luxury hotel by any standard of the day and a first class restaurant, it provided every travelers service that one could want at the time. The hotel, built at a cost of \$250,000 and an additional \$50,000 for the stable that accompanied the hotel.



El Tovar Hotel 1905.



El Tovar Hotel Front Desk 1905.

Along with the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, came the Fred Harvey Company. Fred Harvey immigrated to the United States in 1850. Hailing from an English and Scottish background, Harvey worked for several years in both the food service and railroad industries. Harvey and a partner opened a restaurant near a railroad depot in Topeka, Kansas, and his service

greatly impressed the railroads. In 1875 he made a hand shake deal with the then head of the Santa Fe Railroad to open Harvey House Lunch Rooms along the Santa Fe Railroad routes. Harvey would eventually list over a half dozen railroad companies as clients; however, he would construct a Restaurant or Hotel, every one hundred miles along the lines of the Santa Fe Railroad, including the Grand Canyon. After completing the El Tovar Hotel and stable, the railroad turned the hotel and stable over to Fred Harvey to operate.

The Fred Harvey Company had a sweet deal with the railroads, one that would probably never happen again. The railroads hauled all of the supplies necessary for Fred Harvey to operate his hotels and restaurants, free of charge. Add to that a little good service, good food, and a friendly atmosphere and you have the ingredients for great success in the hospitality industry of the day. The El Tovar Hotel and Fred Harvey realized the drawing card of the Grand Canyon Mules, and mass marketed the mule rides down the Bright Angel Trail as a major attraction for tourists.

The railroad was taking Cameron and others head on when it came to trails into the Grand Canyon. Originally an ancient Indian trail and later utilized by miners, the Hermits Trail was improved by the railroad around 1911 in an effort to provide tourist a trail that was toll free as opposed to the toll collected by Cameron for passage on the Bright Angel Trail.



Hermits Rest built in 1914.

Along with developments on the south rim of the Grand Canyon, things were progressing in the bottom of the canyon at the same time. Named Phantom Ranch by the National Park Service in 1922, the area was first visited by a non-Indian explorer, John Wesley Powell in 1869, then by miners in the late 1800's, utilizing mules to retrieve their diggings from the canyon bottom.



Great Fireplace at Hermits Rest Studio built by the Santa Fe Railroad in 1914.

First designated as a Forest Preserve in 1883, Teddy Roosevelt's trips to the canyon added prominence and the push for greater protection for the canyon. Roosevelt was a frequent visitor to the canyon. Roosevelt led a hunting party to Phantom Ranch in 1913. For lack of a better name at the time, after Roosevelt's hunting trip the area became known as "Roosevelt's Camp". Roosevelt's trips to the bottom of the canyon utilized mules, and his trips into the canyon by mule back were well documented by photographers of the day.

Teddy Roosevelt took special interest in the Grand Canyon. His mule back travels to the bottom of the canyon made him realize that the canyon deserved special protection. Already designated a National Forest Preserve in 1883, Roosevelt designated the Grand Canyon a National Monument in 1908. Long before that time mule travel in the canyon was a daily event.

The National Park Service was created within the Department of Interior in 1916. There were national parks in existence prior to that year and they were administered by the Department of The Interior and other Federal agencies. This haphazard form of administration lacked consistency, created budget problems and made it difficult to fix responsibility for the continuation of the parks. For instance, some parks administered by the Department of Interior, were patrolled and protected by various branches of the military. The National Park Service (NPS) was charged with centralizing the administration of the National Parks.

Shortly after Roosevelt designated the Grand Canyon as a National Monument, efforts were made to designate the canyon as a National Park. This resulted in various private interests stopping the park movement for eleven years. Finally in 1919, the Grand Canyon received National Park status when the bill designating it as such, was signed by President Woodrow Wilson.

Not too long after becoming Grand Canyon National Park, mules again showed their worth in managing the Grand Canyon. In the 1920's, the Smithsonian Institute explored the canyon with a focus on the geology of the region. During the course of these studies, mules packed out over 1700 pounds of rock slabs from the canyon, containing prehistoric animal tracks.

No history of the Grand Canyon, no matter how brief, would be complete without mentioning the most famous animal to ever negotiate the steep walls of the canyon: Brighty, or Brighty of the Grand Canyon, as the story was titled, was a true inhabitant of the canyon. A faithful donkey found waiting for over a year for his lost owners to come back for him. Marguerite Henry made Brighty the hero of her books, as Brighty would regularly save his owner from one possible unhappy ending after another. A full length motion picture would further spread the story of Brighty and the Grand Canyon.

Grand Canyon Village began to take shape as the Fred Harvey Co. alone had 300 employees living in the area. Not to mention the hundreds of tourist who were starting to arrive by automobile. Some accounts describe Grand Canyon Village as looking like "any other western boom town". Visitors were starting to arrive by automobile as early as 1902. Many of the impromptu visitors arrived to find no accommodations for them except the front seat of their cars or sleeping under trees, as there was often no place for them to stay. Many entities, both private and public, began to push for some form of organization in the area.

The National Park Service took over the management of the Grand Canyon in 1919. In 1922, with the urging of the National Park Service, the Fred Harvey Co. was made the official concessionaire at the Grand Canyon. Fred Harvey bought out William Wallace Bass and embarked on a long and prosperous run as the main and often only hospitality entity at the canyon. Cameron would hold on for a short time then lost control of the Bright Angel Trail in 1924. This period of time would see a host of controversial issues surface regarding the canyon. Some of these included access to the Bright Angel Trail, control of the roads leading to the canyon, and the providing of services in the area. Those involved in these issues included, County,

State and Federal agencies including the National Park Service, and various private enterprises. The Grand Canyon is not new to controversy.

The north rim of the Grand Canyon would see its own development during this same period. Plagued by terrible winter weather and because of that, limited access during several months on the year, the north rim would originally close during the winter months and even now provides limited services during that time each year. The Grand Canyon Lodge would be completed in 1928 and become the primary focus of tourism near Bright Angel Point.

Three primary trails would come together that would eventually become the primary or “corridor trails” of the present Grand Canyon. The South Kaibab Trail, built by the National Park Service on the south rim, intersects other trails on its way to the bottom of the canyon. The North Kaibab Trail, a fourteen mile long trail that connects the north rim with the bottom of the canyon, and The Bright Angel Trail all come together to provide adventurous travelers with access to Phantom Ranch, and the Bright Angel Campground. There are commonalities to the folks who use these trails in that they all arrive at Phantom ranch either by

foot, boat, or mule back, and it’s been that way for one hundred and fifty years.

Continued.....

Photos provided by the National Park Service and the Kolb Brothers.

The National Park Service’s cooperation with provision of photos for this article, is not to be considered an endorsement of the contents of this article.

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MULES AND THE GRAND CANYON

(PART TWO)

By Terry Wagner



INTRODUCTION

In our first installment we explored the history of the Grand Canyon and made an effort to document the early use of mules in the canyon. Historically, mules in the Grand Canyon have proven their worth in commercial use, trail building and maintenance, and most certainly as a traditional, famous and internationally recognized symbol of the Grand Canyon. Also, in the first part, we explored, although in general terms, the historical development of the tourist business at the Grand Canyon. In this essay, we will explore the current tourist trade at the canyon and those private and government agencies that most affect the mules of the Grand Canyon.

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The National Park Service has administered Grand Canyon National Park since 1919. Make no mistake about it; the National Park Service is a political organization, whose administration is always subject to change. A new National administration will appoint new department heads and those new administrators will promote

new agendas and new policies. The NPS has its detractors, those who say it does not do enough and it most certainly has its promoters who want to see it do more. The NPS may often times find itself caught in the middle of these two forces and not able to please either side and is at times accused of pushing its own agenda.

In an effort to provide continuity for an extended period of time, the National Park Service operates under the guidance of a General Management Plan. In this case, a NPS General Management Plan is basically an outline, a timeline and a vision for the administration of various segments that make up the Grand Canyon National Park.

THE 1995 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The current Grand Canyon General Management Plan (GMP) was signed into existence in August of 1995. In keeping with past plans, the current GMP was intended for a shelf life of about fifteen years. The plan sets out in detail, the historical uses of the Grand Canyon National Park, the current operating procedures of the park and plans for current and future improvements and operational upgrades. The plan will generally identify a given entity, and if a

change is recommended, give a timeline for completion of the change, identify the source of revenue to pay for it, and the estimated budget needed to effect the change. The current General Management Plan is available on the Grand Canyon National Park website, totaling 91 pages if you include the eleven pages of maps at the end. The proposed time period to complete the ambitious plans as set forth in the 1995 GMP is the year 2010.

The current GMP was formulated after public hearing and input, environmental impact studies and an abbreviated version being made available to the public before it's signing. As stated in the plan, unlike previous plans, this management document was directed to three specific areas that were identified as the main focus for the coming management period: transportation issues, administration of Grand Canyon Village, and the management of the main corridor trails. The focus of the trails necessarily includes the major users of the trails: hikers and concession mules and/or private stock use.

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES IN THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The transportation problems are pretty self explanatory when you consider you have between four and five million tourists a year descending on the park and you're trying to figure out how all these folks are going to get a peek at the Grand Canyon. When you cut to the chase in this issue, it comes down to traffic control. We are a nation of individual drivers. The roads to the Grand Canyon are not exactly expressways, and this yearly assault by automobiles creates a world-class traffic jam. On top of all those arriving by car, add several hundred thousand arriving by plane, trains and tour buses. The plan specifies various solutions to handling the crowding at the park. The GMP addresses everything from extensive parking areas, shuttle buses, and bicycle and foot traffic and how do we get people where they want to go, in a safe manner and still preserve the grandeur of the Grand Canyon. Adding to the traffic are several thousand people who go to work there everyday.

The quote below, from the General Management Plan, sums up the direction the National Park Service was directed to take in order to manage the crush of annual visitors to the Grand Canyon.

"To preserve resources and to ensure a quality visitor experience, most of the park's developed areas will be accessible only by public transit, hiking, or biking. Private vehicles (tour buses, cars, and RVs) will only be allowed in specific areas. The public transit, bike-way, and pedestrian system will be expanded."

GRAND CANYON VILLAGE IN THE 1995 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Grand Canyon Village and its various buildings and infrastructure are mentioned throughout the plan. Various buildings some vacant and some currently being used are cited for upgrading, or the current use of the building to be changed. Most of the changes from current use will list a date for the tenant to vacate, and a proposed date for a new tenant to move in. Along with all of these changes are the proposed costs and the origin of the funds to effect the change. The funds may be from a private source, or your tax dollars at work.

The GMP, as signed in 1995, earmarked the mules to be moved from their current barn, to a new facility at the west end of the village. The mules were scheduled to be in their new facility by the year 2000. Below, I have quoted this proposal as it appears in the General Management Plan.

"Relocate the mule barn and corral to a new facility on the west edge of the village."

Year Estimated: 2000

Cost: \$1,802,600.00

Funding: Concessioner

In 2001, Joseph Alston, then superintendent of the park, put out a scoping letter to generate responses to the construction of the mule barn, corrals, and trail from the new barn to the trailhead at the Bright Angel trail head what side tracked that effort in 2001, one can only guess. With the appropriate request, I am sure the results could be determined.

The mule barn at the Grand Canyon has been the focus of concern for individuals and groups who want to see the mules continue at the Grand Canyon. Some have voiced opinions that the mules should continue in the historical barn where they have been for over "one hundred" years. The history of the mule housing at the Grand Canyon is interesting. Originally built by the Fred Harvey Co, in 1906, as a support service for the El Tovar Hotel, and designated the Fred Harvey Transportation Co, it consisted of a livery stable, combination black smith and saddle shop and a mule barn.

Sometime in the 1940s, more room was needed for the growing mule population, and the mules were moved from the historic mule barn to the livery stable, as it had more room. The mules have been in the livery stable ever since. The historic mule barn became a carpenter shop as well as a storage area. Under the 1995 GMP, the historic mule barn was to become an "interpretive center" complete with an education office and theater, while the current livery stable/mule barn, is scheduled to become a Native American Cultural Center.

All of this is part of the plan to create a Heritage Education Campus in Grand Canyon Village, "that when, completed will offer visitors in-depth opportunities for interpretive and environmental education."



Four Grand Canyon shuttle busses.



Hopi House Cultural Center 1910.

TRAILS UNDER THE 1995 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Grand Canyon National Park has 588 miles of trails. The NPS only maintains about 144 miles of these trails. Out of this figure, 44.5 miles of trails are considered corridor trails. These trails receive the heaviest use throughout the year and as such suffer the

greatest impact from hikers and stock use. The GMP considers the following trails to be corridor trails: Bright Angel Trail, North and South Kaibab Trails, River Trail, Old Bright Angel Trail (north rim) and the Tonto trail between the Bright Angel Trail and the South Kaibab Trail. These trails receive the bulk of the maintenance efforts in the canyon, and facilitate the rim to rim crossing of the canyon. Most of these are old trails, over a hundred years old or close to it. The newer ones were built by the National Park Service, the older ones were created by improving trails made by ancient Native Americans.



Bright Angel Trail.

1/4 page ad

These corridor trails are also part of the Arizona Trail. The Arizona Trail is the result of an ambitious eight hundred mile undertaking that establishes a trail from Mexico to Utah, bisecting the entire state of Arizona. The corridor trails of the Grand Canyon are included in that trail system. The Arizona trail was intended for the use of equestrians, hikers, mountain bikers, and cross-country skiers. Obviously, not all intended users are allowed on all parts of the trail.

To use the back country trails of the Grand Canyon, a hiker or equestrian must obtain a back country and overnight permit issued by the National Park Service. This has been a requirement since 1964. In that year, over one thousand happy campers arrived at the bottom of the canyon to spend a holiday weekend at Phantom Ranch and the nearby Bright Angel Campground. At that point, the Park Service decided it was time to get a better handle on the back country use of the Grand Canyon.

The General Management Plan of 1995 recognizes the contribution of mules in the betterment of the canyon and emphasizes that the use of mules should continue:

The corridor trails are the main transportation routes for most visitors into the inner canyon. Rustic facilities have historically been provided along the trails to meet visitor needs. For over a hundred years mules have carried visitors into the canyon, hauled supplies, and helped with trail maintenance.

The traditional character of the trails should be maintained, and mule use should be allowed to continue. However, crowding, visitor use conflicts, and resource impacts should be minimized."

The above highlight from the GMP would lead one to believe that visitor conflicts, crowded trail conditions, and resource impact problems on the trails, had been documented prior to the signing of the General Management Plan

Management objectives were outlined in the General Management Plan of 1995 and outlined as follows:

"Where livestock and visitors share the same trails and areas, minimize conflicts and resource impacts, and enhance safety."

Other parts of the GMP also identify the fact that trails are often crowded and this detracts from the overall experience of visitor, hikers and mule riders alike. Whatever might be the readers concern for the mules in the Grand Canyon, both privately owned and concession owned, the 1995 GMP directed the National Park Service to address issues of the trails and the use of those trails by hikers and stock users.

The GMP has been in effect for fourteen years, as this is written, and the NPS is just now getting around to following the above cited management objective. Obviously, the GMP is not written in stone. Over the course of fourteen years circumstances can change, new problems not identified in 1995 can crop up, and as such the priorities of the GMP have gone through a maturing process. The assignment of new NPS personnel naturally brings forth new interpretations of the GMP and as such may broaden or narrow the interpretation of the GMP.

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK CONCESSIONERS

One thing I have come to conclude, no matter the era, the Grand Canyon has and always will be about money and big business.

Early on, pioneers realized the monetary treasure that was the Grand Canyon. A concessioner is a company or entity that provides a service to the public, at the Grand Canyon, under a contract with the National Park Service. In 2008, there were twenty-two concessioners at the Grand Canyon and they ran \$140,000,000.00 through their cash registers in one year. The preservation of the natural resources of the canyon may be the priority for some folks; however, making a little money along the way is also a major priority. But, this may not be a negative thing, because if you can't make a profit you can't stay in business and provide services to park visitors.

The major concessioner at the Grand Canyon is Xanterra Parks and Recreation Inc. With 7500 employees in ten states, Xanterra is the largest park concessions management company in the United States. Xanterra is currently the owner and operator of the mule concession at the south rim of the Grand Canyon. Xanterra has operated at the Grand Canyon under the subsidiary name of "Xanterra South Rim LLC," since December of 2003. However, Xanterra is not new to Arizona having had a presence in the state, under various names, and reorganizations, since 1987.

Xanterra is the major concessioner at six state parks in Ohio, and several major private resorts and conference centers in the United States. Besides the Grand Canyon, and operating the Grand Canyon Railroad, they are also the major concessioner for the Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona, Bryce and Zion National parks in Utah, Crater Lake National Park in Oregon, Mt. Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota, Everglades National Park in Florida, Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado and Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming.

Under the leadership of CEO Andrew Todd, Xanterra has won numerous awards for its environmental management form of stewardship in the parks where it's a concessioner. According to information published by Xanterra it is totally committed to environmental concerns in all of its endeavors. Xanterra is the "first company in the tourist industry to create and utilize measurable environmental performance metrics specific to the hospitality industry," and is totally committed to the reduction of greenhouse gases in the tourist industry. It is obvious that Xanterra is a major company that is almost totally intertwined with the National Park Service.



*Andrew Todd CEO,
Xanterra Corporation.*

I have heard several individuals express concern that the National Park Service might remove the mules from the Grand Canyon immediately if something drastic isn't done.

At this time, the Xanterra Company is under contract to the National Park Service to provide a public mule ride concession at the Grand Canyon. At least for now, the mules will obviously remain at the canyon, or at least as long as that contract is in effect. However, I understand that the contract between Xanterra and the NPS will be coming up for review and renewal sometime in the next two years.

The north rim of Grand Canyon National Park is entirely different from the south rim. The Grand Canyon Lodge located on the north rim is operated by Forever Resorts, a company headquartered in Scottsdale, Arizona, with 70 resort locations in the United States, Europe, and Africa. However, Forever Resorts does not operate the mule concession on the north rim. The mule concession on the north rim is a family run business owned by the Pete Mangum family. Pete also has mule concessions at Bryce and Zion National Parks in Utah. Pete has been taking riders into these areas for twenty years, and is famous for his Red Rock Ride that takes place for a week and goes through the major parks in southern Utah and the Grand Canyon.



Grand Canyon Lodge on the North Rim.

TOURISM AT THE GRAND CANYON

Tourism at Grand Canyon National Park by necessity has to be looked at from a statistical viewpoint. I am not a big fan of statistics because the method of counting can affect the statistics. In this case,



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www.westernmulemagazine.com**



Pete Mangum Mule Concessioner for North Rim Mule Ride.

you find conflicting numbers when it comes to back country overnight stays. The figures range from 97,000 to over 300,000, depending on which tables you use. Several people have raised the question of why is the NPS looking at the mule concession now, and what has changed since 1995 when the current GMP came to life.

One of the things that have changed is the number of visitors. One set of tables shows the total overall visitors dropped, but the backcountry users increased. One of the best gauges for backcountry trail use is the number of overnight campers for the backcountry areas. These figures and the total visitors to the Grand Canyon National Park for the years 1995 and 2008 are shown in the chart in the following column:

1995	Recreational visitors	4,557,645
	All Backcountry overnight	256,799
	Recreational visitor hours	1,322,447,687
2008	Recreational visitors	4,425,374
	All Backcountry overnight	314,304
	Recreational visitor hours	1,213,734,050

These figures are pretty easy to interpret. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that gasoline in 1995 was considerably cheaper than in 2008 and the whole economy was doing better. However, at no time since 1995 has the visitor numbers dropped below four million people. These figures were taken from the NPS Stats Website.

Actual overnight use on the trails is another matter, these figures are noted below.

2006:	Total	84,919
	Corridor Trails	48,225
	Other Trails	36,694
2007:	Total	87,100
	Corridor Trails	48,648
	Other Trails	38,452
2008:	Total	87,981
	Corridor Trails	51,571
	Other Trails	36,410

1/2 page ad

At least during the above years, that statistics are available for, overnight, back country trail use has remained fairly stable. The above statistic for trail use, were taken from annual Profile Reports for the Grand Canyon.

Not everyone sees the Grand Canyon from the ground. An alternative method of seeing the Grand Canyon, and in turn avoiding the crowds is from the air. There are a number of air service companies stationed either at the Grand Canyon Airport, or in the surrounding cities of Arizona and surrounding states, that provide sightseeing tours of the Grand Canyon. In the year 2008, these air service companies made 90,000 flights over the Grand Canyon and hauled a total of 642,000 passengers along for aerial views of the Grand Canyon. It is a multi billion dollar a year industry, on top of what is run through the coffers of the concessioners at the Grand Canyon itself.

These flights are traded like a New York Stock Exchange commodity, and work under a cap and trade system. A given flight company can sell or trade their flight shares over the canyon to various companies, and in turn buy them from other companies. There is a cap on the number of flights per year or any given time, noise restrictions on the flights and strict corridors where they can go. As I said earlier, the Grand Canyon is big business.



Phantom Ranch Canteen.

Another popular method of exploring the Grand Canyon is by boat on the Colorado River. This can be done using your own river craft or under the close scrutiny of an outfitter. Combined commercial, and non-commercial river use resulted in a total day use of 219,509 people viewing the inner canyon by boat in 2008.

The use of mules in the canyon is perhaps the most highly profiled of all the ways of seeing the Grand Canyon. Mules have been used for sight seeing since 1887, when John Hance started the first commercial mule rides in the canyon. Although the mules accommodate the least number of tourists in any given year than any of the other modes of travel in or over the canyon, yet, the mules have become the symbol of the Grand Canyon. You'll find the mule ride highlighted in travel brochures, web sites, and certainly in person at the Grand Canyon.

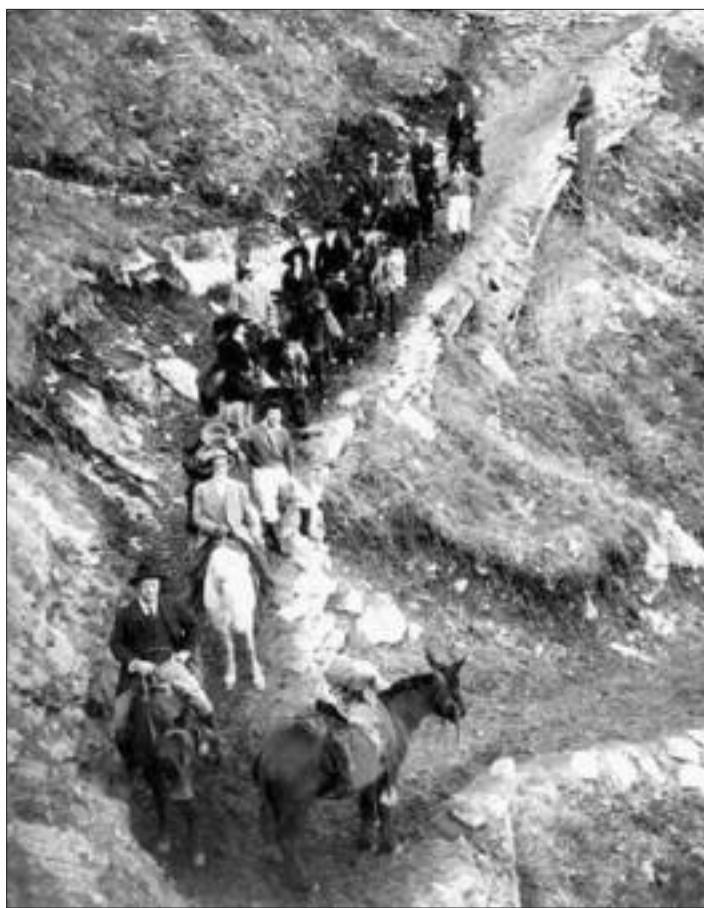
Between the North Rim and the South Rim, in 2008, according to NPS figures, 17,834 people rode a mule into the Grand Canyon. This number is a total figure that includes less than half day rides, half day, full day and overnight rides to Phantom Ranch. These were riders being guided into the canyon by the North Rim and

South rim mule concessioners. During 2008, twenty-four private parties received back country permits that included livestock. The twenty-four parties consisted of 80 people and 83 head of livestock, and eight of the 24 parties camped overnight at Bright Angel Campground near Phantom Ranch.

To put the mule ride more into perspective, I have been told by the former manager of the Xanterra mule concession, to his recollection, the mules were grossing "about a million dollars a year."

At a public meeting in Flagstaff, Arizona, on June 2, 2009, I had the opportunity to speak with Bill Allen. Bill is in charge of trail maintenance at Grand Canyon National Park. I asked Bill a number of questions, two in particular. The first question was how many complaints, per year, involving conflicts between hikers and mule riders are made to the NPS. His reply was "very few, about 10-12 a year." I then asked him how much impact does private stock use have on the trails in the canyon and he replied "zero, none."

Continued.....



*Teddy Roosevelt on Grand Canyon mules 1906.
Kolb Brothers Photo.*

Photos provided by the National Park Service and the Kolb Brothers.

The National Park Service's cooperation with provision of photos for this article, is not to be considered an endorsement of the contents of this article.

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MULES AND THE GRAND CANYON

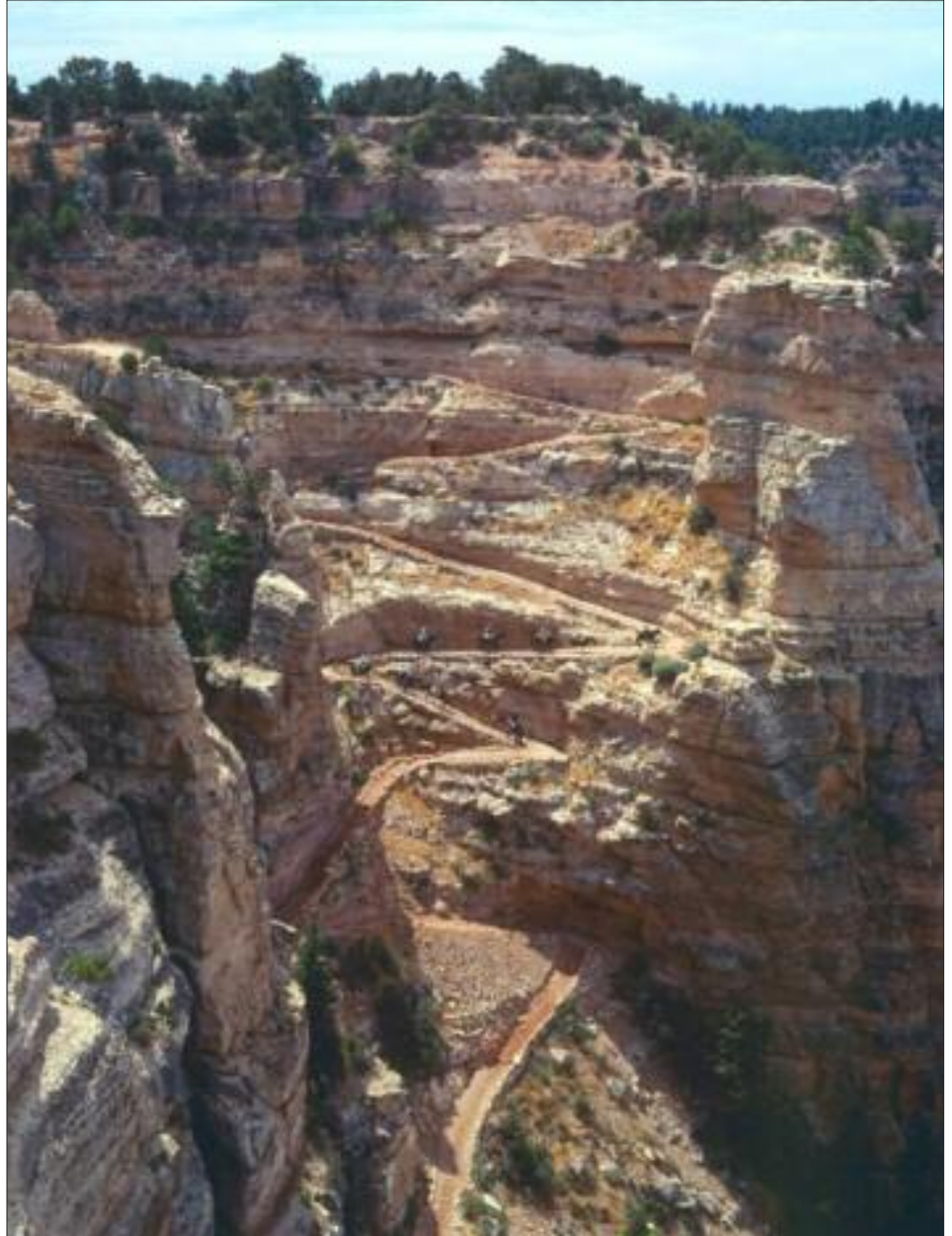
(PART THREE)

By Terry Wagner

As of this writing the National Park Service is reevaluating the use of and number of mules in the Grand Canyon. Proponents of the mules staying in the canyon, with no changes, and those wanting the mules removed completely, form the two ends of the argument. The National Park Service is in the early stages of preparing an *environmental assessment* of mule and stock use in the Grand Canyon National Park. An environmental assessment is different than an *environmental impact statement*. An environmental assessment is a predecessor to an environmental impact statement, and less formal.

The environmental assessment is a study to determine a given project or entities possible impact on natural resources, and any mitigating circumstance regarding the project or entity. If the environmental assessment identifies an impact, then a more formal and in depth environment impact statement must be prepared. If the environmental assessment finds no impact is apparent, then it leads to a *Finding of No Significant Impact*. The entire process calls for public input at strategic places during the progress of the assessment. Public input can be made by submitting written comments on forms provided by the NPS, emails, and attending *scoping meetings* held by the NPS to gather comments from the public about any subject under the scrutiny of an environmental assessment. The members in attendance at those meetings, from the NPS are there to hear the comments and feeling of the public. Also, they encourage the public at these meetings to submit their ideas and concerns in writing. If you don't submit it in writing, it doesn't count.

On June 2, 2009, the NPS held one of three scoping meeting regarding the use of mules in the Grand Canyon National Park. The meeting I attended was held at the main public library in Flagstaff, Arizona. Normally park service personnel want to get as much information as possible from the members of the public in attendance. I, however, had just the opposite in mind. I wanted to get as much information from the members of the park service as I possibly



Mule Riders on South Kaibab Trail.

could. This fact was brought up by Douglas Lentz, the NPS Deputy Chief of Concession Management. After a lengthy discussion wherein he assured me there was no back room NPS conspiracy to eliminate the mules in the canyon, he noted that he seemed to be providing more information than he was getting. I noticed that Lentz was wearing a rather well worn set of cowboy boots. Some would consider this a good sign.

To my surprise, the majority of those in

attendance appeared to be from the livestock side of the aisle. I noticed a large number of ten gallon hats and obvious stockmen present. I also noted people baring *Back Country Horsemen of America* on their shirts. I saw only a few that were obviously from the *hiker and hooper* side of the debate. These folks are obvious from their wearing of non brand denim jeans worn well above the waist, high water bottoms, Eddie Bauer canvas belt and Birkenstock sandals. Call that profiling I guess.

One of the people I wanted to talk to was Barclay Trimble, the deputy superintendent of the Grand Canyon National Park. Unfortunately he seemed to be constantly besieged by members of the press and other media. I am afraid I had to resort to a little eavesdropping on one of these sessions and learned that the NPS is behind in trail projects to the tune of \$20,000,000.00, more on this later. I overheard comments about trail user conflicts between hikers and the mules and that mules contribute to deterioration of the trails.

One gentleman I spoke with was Harry Hadley. Harry spent eleven years as a mule wrangler taking tourists on mule rides in the Grand Canyon and let's just say Harry isn't shy. If you don't want to hear the truth, don't ask him a question. Harry made it plain that he felt the only answer to the hiker mule conflict, real or imagined, is to take the mules off the Bright Angel Trail, and designate the South Kaibab trail for livestock use only. There obviously were others in agreement with this idea. Harry punctuated this idea with what he felt was the obvious lack of common sense on the part of Hikers when they encounter mules on the trail.

I also spoke with Casey Murph, who worked for a number of years as a wrangler on the south rim mule concession and before his departure from the Grand Canyon; he was in charge of the mule concession for Xanterra. Casey said that at the time he left Xanterra, less than a year ago, they were taking about 40 people a day, on mules, into the canyon. Casey also said there was a real need for more information to be made available to hikers about mules in the canyon, with an emphasis on what to do when they encounter them on the trails. I asked Casey about the proposal to take at least some of the mules off the inner canyon trails and creating rides along the rim. Casey said that at one time they had a ride along the rim of the canyon but it was almost impossible to sell enough rides to make it pay. People want to go into the canyon, not peer at it from the rim.

I had a somewhat lengthy conversation with Bill Allen, from the NPS. Bill is responsible for trail maintenance in the Grand Canyon. One of the questions I asked, was how many hiker, mule conflict complaints did he handle a year. He indicated that he handled only about 10-12 a year, and when queried, said personal stock

use in the canyon had no impact on the canyon or the trails.

I asked Allen why it was going to take two to four years to complete repairs to the South Kaibab trail. Allen referred me to several photos on the wall near where we were standing. Let me just say that what I saw was not your normal trail project as I have been a party too. The rebuilding of the Grand Canyon trails is a lot more than rolling rocks out of the way, trimming brush and installing a few water bars.

The repair of the trails is a major construction project that can cost as much as \$400,000.00 per mile to complete. During the rebuilding of the South Kaibab trail, mules and livestock have been barred from using the trail. I have to agree that the removal of livestock during these repairs is a necessity. Park Service personnel will be using motorized rock drills, and other special equipment in order to affect the necessary repairs and rebuilding of the trail. It is obvious that it would be all but impossible to get livestock up or down the trail safely, while these repairs are under way. I think that you always have to keep in mind that other than the wranglers on a trip into the canyon, the tourists are not much more than

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a passenger on a loose mule. Most have very little riding skills. Likewise, hikers have been notified that they will experience delays on the South Kaibab Trail while the repairs are underway.



Note the photos of the trail repairs that accompany this article. The repairs shown were done to the South Kaibab Trail in the O'Neil's Butte area. This series of photos was taken as reconstruction of the trail progressed in 2004. Photo #1 shows a portion of the trail and the condition to which trails can deteriorate over a period of time. Photos #2 and #3 illustrate the involved bed rock that must be created in order to hold the top finished layer of material in place. Photo #4 shows the completed reconstruction. Reconstruction of these trails is obviously a laborious task and besides the fact that it is all hand labor, it also involves special skills as illustrated in photo #5. Photo #6 depicts two trail crew members using a pick axe and a motorized drill to prepare

the trail bed. The drill is also used to basically make little rocks out of big rocks, to lie in the trail bed, as illustrated in photos 2-3. Photo #7 illustrates the personal touch that these repairs require.



Although I learned this type of construction is not new to the Grand Canyon, it does take a long time to complete. Bill Allen lamented the lack of funds for trail maintenance saying he needed twice his current budget, each year, for trail maintenance. Allen said his budget was about two

million dollars a year. Out of that he had to pay all of his permanent and seasonal employee salaries, as well as all the other expenses for trail maintenance in the park.

Following my talk with Bill Allen, I met Shannan Marcak, who is a Public Affair Specialist with the NPS. Shannan is a very well spoken lady who understands her specialty and was a wealth of information. She introduced me to Gordon Taylor, who is the manager for all of the Xanterra concessions at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. We discussed the attendance at the meeting and the mules in general. I made the comment that a number of people there were interested in whether or not there was a "back room deal" already made in an effort to remove the mules from the GCNP. Shannan was adamant that nothing of the kind was going on, and Gordon Taylor made the comment that "we love the mules."

Shannan advised the NPS was following the guidance and intent of the 1995 General Management Plan in "scoping" the mules at this time. I asked Gordon Taylor why Xanterra has not requested public support in keeping the mules on the trails of the Grand Canyon. Taylor said it simply was not Xanterra's way to seek public comment on its private business affairs. I asked Taylor if Xanterra would try to remove itself from the mule concession if it was not making money. Taylor replied by saying that Xanterra had a contract, with the NPS, to provide the mule rides at the Grand Canyon, and that contract was in effect at this time and would be honored by Xanterra.

The room where the meeting took place was lined with large pieces of white paper to allow the members of the public that were present, to write their comments on the mules. It was interesting to note the comments and the polarization they represented. I saw one comment that said "get the mules out of the canyon now." Another I saw read, "get the eco terrorists out of the canyon." In between these two extremes were comments such as "give the mules their own trail," and "leave the mules alone."

Throughout the time the meeting took place small groups of like minded people would gather for a moment or two to exchange ideas. Depending on the make up of the group the conversations would range from accusing the NPS of pulling a fast one, demands for a dedicated mule trail,

proportionately limiting the hikers as well as the mules if that is to be the case and continued doubts about the time necessary to complete the trail maintenance. Many of those in attendance were convinced that once the mules were removed, even for a stated temporary basis, they would never be allowed back on the restricted trail. I also noted distrust among some, for Xanterra. Many former Xanterra employees felt that the wranglers who ran the mule concession were at the "bottom of the pecking order" in the eyes of Xanterra.

All of this adds up to a very complex set of circumstances that surround the mule concession at the south rim of the Grand Canyon. Meantime, the mule concession at the North Rim, continues to take at times, as many as one hundred riders a day on rides into and on the rim of the Grand Canyon. Family owned and operated, the north rim mules appear to be spared the corporate intrigue of the south rim. However the North Rim has not been ignored by the 1995 general management plan, as noted in the below quote from the 1995 General Management Plan:

North Rim

The mule ride concessioner, in conjunction with the Park Service, will begin immediately to reduce resource impacts and user conflicts now occurring on the North Kaibab Trail. This will be accomplished by hardening the trail from the rim to the tunnel (using cobbling or similar material), and by educating all trail users about mules on trails.

Because trail use could increase as a result of use at the nearby CC Hill orientation center, a monitoring system will continue until new use patterns are established. If resource damage and visitor use conflicts are not adequately mitigated by using these measures, then the number of mules allowed on the trail will be reduced to a level comparable to that on the Bright Angel Trail.

The Old Bright Angel Trail will be slightly upgraded from route/wild trail standards to primitive trail standards, as defined in the park's Backcountry Management Plan. A signed trail connection will be established from a small pullout next to Six Rock Meadow to the trailhead. Stock use will not be allowed on either of these trails.

The volume of information that revolved around the meeting in Flagstaff was enor-

mous. Personal opinions and experiences regarding the mules in the canyon were expressed by many who were there. When it ended, I sat in the lobby of the library and made notes on what I heard and what I thought I heard being said by all those I met with. After that private session I realized that I had overlooked a number of items that I really wanted answers to. Later, I contacted Shannan Marcak, the Public Affairs Specialist I had met at the meeting and asked her if it would be possible to talk again, with Bill Allen. I explained that I had additional questions I wanted to ask him in the preparation for this set of articles. Shannan said it might be difficult to speak in person with Bill, as he spends a lot of his time in the canyon on trail projects. However, she encouraged me to submit my questions to her office and she would see to it that Bill received them.

The questions I had for Bill, and his answers, verbatim, appear below:

Questions for Bill Allen from Terry Wagner

Note: The questions noted below are in reference to the corridor trails only.

What is your official title and how long have you been involved in trail maintenance work? **William Allen, General Maintenance and Operations Supervisor (Trails), and I have worked at Grand Canyon since 1992 in the trails maintenance program.**

You mentioned at the meeting in Flagstaff that congress only provides \$400,000.00 of the trail maintenance budget each year. What is the total budget for the trails and what is the source of the balance? **We are appropriated a little over \$452,000 in ONPS (Base money), we also receive \$1,000,000.00 from our Federal Lands and Recreation Enhancement Act that is collected in the park from entrance fees and other fees from visitors to the park, this money is occasionally supplemented by cyclical and repair/rehabilitation funds issued from special funding initiatives from the Washington Office. The average budget for trail operations for the last few years has been approximately \$2,000,000.00 from all funding sources. A Park Asset Management Plan, completed in September 2006, identifies over \$24 million in deferred maintenance on Grand Canyon trails, and a yearly shortfall of \$1 million to perform trail maintenance.**

Many people are questioning the length of time stated to rebuild the South Kaibab trail. The timeline has been stated in years when many seem to feel it should be done in only a few months. Why the long timeline? **Most of the trails involved with this initiative have not had any major work done to them since they were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930's and 1940's. The work methods and numbers of people that were utilized during this initial construction were much different than what we have available today. The CCC crews numbered some-**

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where near 1,000 people, utilizing dynamite to blast the trails out of the walls of the canyon. Current NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) regulations would not allow for this type of resource interaction. The work is very labor intensive and logistics required to bring materials to the work site as well as the need to construct materials on site to create the trails extends the time frame for the repairs. Our crews utilize construction methods that preserve the appearance and original alignment of the trails and provide for a sustainable trail system that can be maintained with fewer personnel and less money. Our intent is to reconstruct park trails in a manner to create a sustainable, safe trail for both stock users and hikers alike. In doing so, it may take longer initially, but in the long run it is a much more economical and sustainable approach.

You mentioned that for a number of years the maintenance on the trails has been basically a “paint job.” If that’s true, has that necessitated a major reconstruction of the trails in order to create a sustainable, safe trail for stock use and hikers? As mentioned above, we are reconstructing the South Kaibab Trail in a manner to create a sustainable, safe trail for both stock users and hikers alike. We currently have identified over \$262 million in deferred or unaccomplished maintenance needs in the park, of which approximately \$24 million in attributed to trail deferred maintenance. We identify the most critical needs and utilize our available funds to manage the park’s 1,600 assets, worth roughly \$1.2 billion.

How many actual employees do you have working the trails and how many volunteers, on the average, do you get to help with trail work? The park’s trail crews consist of 30 National Park Service staff, which are employed in both a temporary and permanent positions. The park also utilizes crews from the American Conservation Experience (ACE) and Coconino Rural Environmental Corps (CREC) to accomplish a lot of the work being performed on the trails. These temporary or seasonal crews range in numbers from 60 up to 130 people at any one time. These crews are not volunteers and there is a cost to the park to employ them. We traditionally do not get a lot of volunteers to do trail work in the park, mostly because of the extreme intensity of the work and the environment in which they work in. Of those who volunteer, they are normally local residents

(GRCA to Flagstaff areas) who have a special admiration/interest for the park and its trails.

How many mules does the NPS own and use for trail work, and where are they housed? We currently have 30 mules in our trails stock program. They are cared for at two different locations on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, one being at Grand Canyon Village and the other at the South Kaibab Trailhead/Yaki Point area off of Desert View Drive on the East Rim.

Are mules a necessity in the NPS trail maintenance? Yes, they are inherently the most efficient means of transporting materials to the worksites along the trails and within the inner canyon. Other methods are utilized periodically for material delivery when haste or special circumstances present themselves, i.e. helicopter sling loads and human backpacking, these methods are very expensive, impractical and not always the best use of limited dollars or personnel.

Are there any economical alternatives to the use of the mules in the maintenance work? There are alternative methods for the performance of the work, but they are not the most economical in nature.

People have written to the editor of Western Mule Magazine complaining that during a mule trip down the canyon, they saw no work being done on the South Kaibab Trail, even though the trail is closed to stock use for that purpose. What’s the reason for this? The trail crews currently work on a schedule whereby they are on site for nine days then off for five days. Due to the environmental conditions and the remoteness of the work we have found that this is the most productive work schedule for the crews. After being in the inner canyon enduring temperatures well over 100 degrees, we have found that that after a nine day shift it takes an extended period of time to recoup and refresh before completing another difficult shift. (Also note: that mule trips were suspended on the South Kaibab Trail on May 1 and rerouted to the Bright Angel Trail, if they were on a mule trip on the South Kaibab Trail – it was prior to the start of the reconstruction effort).

At the meeting in Flagstaff, I saw photos you displayed showing what I would call major construction of a trail bed. Pneumatic hammers were being used in these photos and a base of rocks with retainers every so many feet to hold the base tread in place. I have never seen trail work like that. Is this a new form of trail construction, and if so is that being done with safety in mind for stock use in particular or for everyone, stock users and hikers alike? This method of trail construction is not new. There are many design and construction publications that have for some years, accepted the standards that we are using in the reconstruction of Grand Canyon trails. Most of these standards have been researched and designed to provide both the mule and hiker with the safest and most sustainable trail surfaces that can be provided in this environment.

Is it safe to assume it was designed by engineers, and is there a “life expectancy” for that type of construction based on the amount of use the trails get? Yes, the methods being used are vetted through if not designed by construction engineers utilizing the latest research for this type of construction.

As far as I can find, no one has ever been killed taking the mule ride down the canyon, although some mules have died and wranglers have been injured. I have been told that not long ago, a tourist, on a mule ride down the canyon received life threatening injuries when the mule he was on fell down a steep hillside with him. I have been told that accident was blamed on the condition of the trail. What was the approximate date of this incident and did that have any bearing on the current trail rebuilding? An accident occurred on May 5, 2009, when a mule stepped on the down hill side of a liner stone along the Bright Angel Trail causing the mule to lose its footing. The loss of footing caused the mule and the female rider to fall approximately twelve feet to the trail below, resulting in injuries to the rider. This particular incident was not a factor in the decision to rebuild the trails to make them safer for all users this need was identified long before this incident occurred.

The GCNP General Management Plan provides guidance for the resolution of conflicts between stock users and hikers and indicates an endorsement of continued

stock use in GCNP. You indicated to me at the Flagstaff meeting that these conflicts are a very minimal number each year. The reconstruction of the trail will, I assume, result in a wider trail where possible. Is this being done in part to prevent stock user/hiker conflict and make hiker/stock user encounters safer, and if so is the new trail an indication of the NPS planning for stock use in the future? **The park's 1995 General Management Plan identifies the need to lessen conflicts between hiker and the mule riders. It is our intention to maintain the historical alignment and appearance of the trails as much as possible, so for the most part, the trails will not be widened. There may be areas that will require modification, but these will be handled on a case by case basis. The work that is occurring on the South Kaibab Trail is only the beginning of a program to rehabilitate the corridor trails within the park. We will be conducting similar work on other trails in the future as funding becomes available. Our goal is to provide a safe, sustainable**

and enjoyable trail system for all visitors to the park.

As the person charged with the maintenance of the trails in the GCNP, what are your goals in that regard, and what is your overall vision of the trails for the future? **My goals for the trails of Grand Canyon National Park are to provide a trail system that is safe, easily maintainable and protects the resources of the park in the most cost effective manner that I can.**

Is the standard to which the trails are now being rehabilitated going to be the standard in which all of the corridor trails are going to be brought up to? **Yes whenever possible.**

Bill and the NPS I believe have provided answers that identified problems with the trails that many of us have never given thought too. In particular is the \$24,000,000.00 backlog of trail projects floating around the Grand Canyon. The NPS refers to these as "deferred projects." Basically they had the idea, but not the money.

The issue of mules and stock use in the Grand Canyon is now under the guise of the National Environmental Policy Act. The environmental assessment is expected

to be out in December 2009. At that time another period for public comment will follow. When cutting to the chase in this issue, the process is going to consider the commercial and private stock use in the Grand Canyon, and the appropriate level of such use on the trails throughout the park. If you would like to be added to the Backcountry Management Plan mailing list, you can request it by phone or e-mail. Call Kristin Heins, Resources Planning Leader at 928-638-7734 or by sending an e-mail to Kristin_Heins@nps.gov and ask to be added to the list of folks who want to be kept up to date on the progress of this assessment.

Continued

Photos provided by the National Park Service and the Kolb Brothers.

The National Park Service's cooperation with provision of photos for this article, is not to be considered an endorsement of the contents of this article.

To contact Terry Wagner for information on this article or prior articles, e-mail: threebellsmules@yahoo.com

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MULES IN THE GRAND CANYON

(PART IV)

By Terry Wagner

Author's note: In the three previous installments I have attempted to explain the status of the environmental assessment that is currently underway regarding mules and stock use in the Grand Canyon National Park. I focused on the historical significance of the mules in the canyon and the general management plan under which the NPS is currently under taking the environmental assessment and tried to show how the mules fit into the tourist spectrum of the Grand Canyon.

The Grand Canyon mules are more than just a tourist attraction; they are part of our American heritage. People have often said that America has no culture. To support this they say that America is a melting pot of people, coming from all races, all countries and all religions. To be sure, we are still a young nation when compared to those countries that developed centuries ago in Europe, Asia and Africa. But, our ancestors all arrived here, wherever they were from, with the idea of building a new place in this world where freedom was to be the human foundation for a new nation.

Building America was done with conviction, sweat and hard work, and it could not have been done without help. Those hardy pioneers had no machinery to help them, so our ancestors looked to mules, horses and oxen to do the work they were not capable of doing with their bare hands. Those animals, and the work they performed and the fruit of their labor for man, became part of our American heritage. They themselves had famous individuals among them; the Justin Morgan stallion is a case in point.

The Grand Canyon mules are surely part of our great American heritage in the southwest. I have documented their use in the Grand Canyon back 150 years. Now the National Park Service, an agency responsible for preserving our historic foundations, is on an obvious path to destroy mule and stock use in the Grand Canyon. They have made press releases to the contrary, but they don't walk that talk. Without a National advocate for stock use in the Grand Canyon, both commercial and private use, I fear another part of our American heritage will be wiped out forever by organizations both private and public, by their managers, as they press forward with their personal agendas

THE FIRING SQUAD

Those who most support the mule rides in the Grand Canyon and the use of private livestock in the canyon need to understand that these historical practices are in front of the firing squad. Once the NPS gives the order to "fire," the use of livestock in the Grand Canyon will change forever.

Some might question the timing of this process, as the current General Management plan is about to be put to sleep. Why not "defer" this process on the mules like so many other park programs that do not hold the historical significance the mules

do. This question has been asked and everyone quotes the General Management Plan. There has been no outward sign of environmental organizations working behind the scenes to bring about the microscope being placed on stock use in the canyon. However, those elements are certainly looking at the canyon mules and some would like to see them gone.

Jim McCarthy, the Flagstaff City Planning and Zoning Commissioner, and Sierra Club member, according to a story in the *Arizona Daily Sun*, a Flagstaff newspaper, was quoted as saying the, "The Park Serv-

ice should consider removing the mules from the canyon entirely." Although I am sure Mr. McCarthy does not speak for the entire membership of the Sierra Club, it most likely is the opinion of many environmentalists.

A recent article that appeared in the *Arizona Republic* newspaper, on the mules in the Grand Canyon, [On Shaky Ground](#) (September 27, 2009), written by John Faherty starts out: "Their hooves hit the ground like a pickax. The hardened earth crumbles. The paths erode more quickly." I have to take exception to this description.

Mr. Faherty is obviously promoting the view that the mules are responsible for the poor condition of the trails in the Grand Canyon. In reality, everything and everybody who touches the trails has some impact on them. This trail impact has been going on since the very first ancient Native American set foot in the canyon. The entire canyon was formed from the day one by erosion.



In a previous article I showed a photo graciously provided by the NPS. The condition of that section of the trail showed an extreme lack of maintenance. The photo is repeated here for purposes of illustration (photo #1). In the same breath above, Faherty quotes the NPS saying that the current rebuilding of the South Kaibab trail is “the trails first significant improvement in nearly 80 years.” Ladies and gentlemen I would like to point out that the NPS has been running the Grand Canyon National Park since 1919. That means the NPS hasn’t done any meaningful maintenance on the South Kaibab Trail since ten years after they became responsible for it. Where has congressional oversight been in this matter? After all, congress is responsible for our National Parks. Yet, the photo mentioned above was taken as part of a major rebuilding of part of the South Kaibab Trail in 2004. **There is a real credibility gap here!**

All of a sudden, the mules are the major cause of all the trail problems. Eighty years of neglected maintenance sounds more like the culprit to me. Not to mention millions of hikers who have gone up and down the trail, and eighty years of erosion caused by snow, hail, rain, and spring thaws, and the fact that some parts of the trail have as much as a 22% down grade. Such grades are the fast lane for natural erosion, without the help of man or beast.

I have ridden more than just a few miles on mules, as I am sure a lot of this publica-

tion’s subscribers have. I have yet to see a mule’s hoof strike the ground hard enough to crumble the earth, even on a mule’s best day and neither has Mr. Faherty. But, this lack of responsible rhetoric adds fuel to the fire of those who want to see the mules removed from the Grand Canyon. Faherty goes on to mention all of the other issues, such as lack of maintenance funds that add to the woes of the canyons trails. Those woes are real to be sure.

Mr. Faherty also quotes a NPS employee, Rachel Stanton, an environmental protection specialist who is doing the administrative work on the current environmental assessment. Reviewing public comments and “erosion studies” of the trails, Stanton flatly states there will be changes.” If the environmental assessment is still in progress, how can Stanton come to the collision that “there will be changes”? The assessment is supposed to be an impartial investigation that looks at public opinion, and scientific findings. The first proposals of the assessment are at least two months away as this is written and we have been told that changes are coming.

This can only lead to the conclusion that “the” changes were preconceived before the onset of the NEPA process and the entire proceeding is nothing more than eye-wash dumped in the face of the public. And, in the middle of all this, Faherty has the director of the park, Steve Martin, his assistant director Barclay Trimble and Tim Jarrell, chief of the parks facilities management division, bowing before the alter of

the almighty hiker. Faherty quotes the NPS, “Hikers are good for the trail, as they compact the soil.”

NO OPTIONS

Make no mistake about it; the land management agencies in the U.S., National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest service, are sued on a regular basis by environmental groups of all kinds. A big share of the budgets of these land agencies goes toward defending these agencies in various Federal District Courts. Because of this a certain amount of the policies followed by these agencies are the result of court decisions. Also impacting these agencies is the intent of Congress. The National Park Service was created when Congress passed the 1916 Organic Act. Congress has several times reemphasized the intent of the above act. Portions of section 1.4 of the 2nd Edition of the NPS Management Policies and is quoted below:

The “fundamental purpose of the national park system, established by the Organic Act and reaffirmed by the General Authorities Act, (an act of congress) as amended, begins with a mandate to conserve park resources and values. This mandate...applies all the time, with respect to all park resources and values, even when there is no risk that any park resources or values may be impaired...

Continued on page

The laws to give the service the management discretion to allow impacts to park resources and values when necessary and appropriate to fulfill the purpose of a park, so long as the impact does not constitute impairment of the affected resources and values.

An impact to any park resource or value may constitute an impairment. An impact would be more likely to constitute impairment to the extent that it affects a resource or value whose conservation is:

Necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park;

Key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for the enjoyment of the park; or Identified as a goal in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents.

1.4.7 Decision-making Requirements to avoid Impairments

Before approving a proposed action that could lead to impairment of park resources and values, an NPS decision maker must consider impacts of the proposed action and determine in writing, that the activity will not lead to an impairment of the park resources and values. If there would be an impairment, the action may not be approved.

Cutting to the bottom line of these policy statements, it would appear that any impact (use) that constitutes an impairment would not be allowed. Is this the reason for the environmental assessment currently underway??

TOO OFTEN REPEATED

Tawn Mangum whose family takes almost a hundred riders a day into the north rim country, was quoted in the Arizona Daily Sun, saying, "The mules built the trails. We're kind enough to let the hikers use them and now they want to kick us off the trails."



Mules on Bright Angel Trail. (photo by Howard Schwatz 4-29-09.

There may be some truth in what Tawn says. In the past, in more than one location, equestrian groups and organizations have been instrumental in the building and maintenance of public trails only to find themselves banned from using those very trails. In the Grand Canyon, the mules are the only logical means of transportation in maintaining the trails, and the cross canyon corridor trails are the means by which users of the Arizona Trail can cross the canyon on their way to the Utah border. How this would be resolved has not been made

known to the public. Logic would dictate that a permit system would remain in place for these trail users, as Bill Allen has said that private stock use is not an impact on the canyon trails.

FREE ENTERPRISE

The mule concessions on both the north and south rims are a private enterprises. Granted they do operate under a contractual agreement with the NPS, they are still privately owned. As such, public opinion may be on the side of the mules and private stock use in the canyon, however, these concessioners have not made a general appeal for the public to support them in any way with the fate of the commercial mule use in the canyon. The contract for the south rim mule concession comes up for review and renewal sometime in the next two years. If Xanterra decided to get out of the mule business, the concession would be put out to bid or perhaps closed forever.

In light of the private enterprise status of the mule concessions, individuals may only have the private use of livestock in the canyon to be concerned about. If commercial livestock concessions are removed, private stock use in the canyon must be left unchanged. All efforts to retain private stock use in the Grand Canyon must be brought to bear on the NPS.

OPTIONS

The NPS is considering several alternatives in the mule use issue. The one word



Mule riders on a cliff.

that is threaded throughout the issue is “sustainable” use. There is a certain irony in all that has transpired so far. The NPS has stated it wants to continue mule use in the canyon. Along these lines, they have backed themselves into a corner, as they need the mules for maintenance and administrative chores. As Faherty points out in his article, in not so many words, everything heavy goes in and out of the canyon is on a mules back.



Unidentified mule riders in the Grand Canyon.

The NPS is considering moving the commercial and private stock use to the South Kaibab trail, or to the Hermits Trail west of the Grand Canyon Village. The Hermits Trail is a seven mile round trip to an area known as Dripping Springs and descends less than 1700 feet into the canyon and is considered by some as not the most scenic route in the canyon.

Another option the NPS has available is to limit the stock use in the canyon to its own needs, such as trail maintenance, hauling supplies to Bright Angel campground, etc. Limiting the public mule rides to trails along the rim has been suggested. People want to ride the mules into the canyon, not along some token trail through the Juniper trees and rocks that line the flat edge of the Grand Canyon. Casey Murph, who ran the mule concession on the south rim, told me that such a ride existed at one time, and it was not “sustainable” as it was almost impossible to sell tickets for the ride. However, this would most certainly allow the mule rides to die their own, slow, death.

REAL OPINIONS

During the course of writing these articles on the mules in the Grand Canyon, I have read in excess of over 200 articles on the mules in the canyon. Those authoring these articles include reporters, magazine writers, equestrians, hikers, conservationist

and environmentalist. The overwhelming number of these folks favors the mules remaining in the Grand Canyon. Certainly there were detractors who want everything but the flowing Colorado River removed from the canyon but they are certainly in the minority when it comes to the articles I have read. These articles were strictly picked at random on the Internet and made for very interesting reading. One author, who was obviously from the environmentalist community, made it clear that he did not appreciate the mule leavings on the trail, but at the same time was willing to accept it as the mules were such an historic symbol of the canyon. Another complained about the close timing of three mule trains he encountered on the north rim, but felt he could live with it if the timing of the mule trains into the canyon were better managed. One rather interesting fellow gave forth the concern that he might catch tetanus by falling in mule poop on the trail. I really think that not engaging in taste testing would be a good preventative for this issue.

Scores of other folks commented about how the mule ride into the Grand Canyon was the biggest memory of their trip to the Grand Canyon. Numerous others made it plain that they could never hike to the bottom of the canyon but could, did, and would take again, a mule ride to the bottom of the canyon. One website that I will note here is the National Parks Traveler site. It is published on the web by the National Parks Advocate Inc. (www.nationalparkstraveler.com) it is a site dedicated to publishing National Park issues on a daily basis. Following their story on the mules and the NPS scoping meetings on the mules, nineteen blogs were posted and they were overwhelmingly in favor of the mules remaining in the canyon. There were a few who agreed with reviewing safety issues in the canyon and there were a large number of people who expressed negative con-



Mule train to Phantom Ranch.



Mules taking a break on the Bright Angel Trail.

cerns, but felt that their issues with the mules could be resolved with better planning of the mule trips into the canyon. A couple of folks expressed the opinion that the mules use in the canyon would definitely under go some changes but it was their wish that the mules not be removed from the canyon. Many people expressed the historic symbolism of the Grand Canyon mules and the need to preserve mule use in the canyon. I found this to be pretty much the same no matter where I searched.

TRANSPARENCY

The current National Administration has promised “transparency” in its dealings with the American public. This applies to all of the elected and appointed officials, National department heads, and those within these agencies charged with implementing the “Freedom of Information Act.” When Western Mule Magazine first announced the possibility of the mules being removed from the Grand Canyon, it was noted that this information was brought out in meetings at the Grand Canyon between members of the NPS and an employee of Xanterra. Casey Murph, who at the time ran the mule concession for Xanterra attended four meetings that took place on June 9, July 16, August 13 and September 17, 2008. Casey said the NPS personnel present at the meetings, with some variations, included Bill Allen, Laura Nelson, and Randy Carol. At those meetings it was announced by NPS personnel that the South Kaibab trail would be shut down for repairs for two to four years, and that during that period, mules and other stock would not be allowed on the South Kaibab trail. Following the completion of the repairs on the South Kaibab trail, the Bright Angel trail would be rebuilt, and at that

time the mules would be removed permanently from the Bright Angel and south Kaibab trails.

One reader of this publication, David Robart, an Arizona resident, undertook his own effort to gain some insight into the situation. In accordance with current statutes, he submitted a Freedom Of Information Act request to the NPS at the Grand Canyon requesting information about the above four meetings. Mr. Robart received what was essentially a denial of his request, stating that it was being denied as no records, or notes were kept of the four meetings. The NPS did not deny the meetings took place, only that no records were kept of what transpired during those meetings and that any personal notes kept by the participants were not subject to a Freedom Of Information Act request.

It is inconceivable that four meetings took place between essentially the same members of the NPS and no record, no matter how informal was kept, on a matter as important as removing from the park, the most recognized symbol of the Grand

GET INVOLVED

I would hope that organizations such as the Back Country Horsemen of America and other such groups, and those who advocate unfettered access to public lands, are watching to make sure the NPS is following the NEPA process to the letter in dealing with the Grand Canyon mules. Neither the NPS nor any other Federal land management organization is allowed to skip any part of NEPA. They can't perform steps one and two, then skip three and go to step four. If the NPS doesn't follow the process it's not Kings X, it's back to square one.

One situation that plays into the hands of those who would deny stock use to the public is the lack of organization on the part of equestrian organizations and individuals. To be sure, organizations like the Back Country Horsemen of America, Equestrian Trails Inc (California) and other state, regional and National equestrian organizations are in the trenches when it comes to the denial of livestock use on public lands. However, there are numerous groups that ride public trails, but don't get involved.

what is taking place it's too late to do anything about it.

By the time you read this, the first proposals, under the NEPA process, will be published, or will be close to publication. At that time there will be another period for the public to submit comments on the proposals from the NPS. Regardless of your feelings on the mules in the Grand Canyon, please take the time to read the proposals and submit written comments to the NPS. If at all possible, attend what will be further public meetings on the subject once the proposals are published. Talk to the members of the NPS that are in attendance at these meetings. Keep in mind that the majority of these folks are honest, hard working people like the rest of us and are simply doing the job they were hired to do. Most do not have a personal agenda to promote and honestly want to hear what you have to say.

One thing is certain, if the NPS gives the order for the firing squad to shoot, it will be the second famous shot heard round the world.

GET INVOLVED!!!

LATE BREAKING NEWS

A new mule ride at the Grand Canyon replaces the Plateau Point Ride

October 5, 6:28 p.m. - Grand Canyon National Park Examiner - Linda Updike

Starting today a new mule ride tour is being offered to guests at the Grand Canyon South Rim. The new Abyss Overlook Mule Ride will replace the Plateau Point Ride. The new ride is along the rim of the canyon and takes three hours. The Plateau Point Ride descended into the canyon along the Bright Angel Trail to Plateau Point and took seven hours. By moving the mule trips to the rim there will be fewer mules along the BA Trail which is always a popular request of canyon hikers.

Photos provided by the National Park Service and the Kolb Brothers.

The National Park Service's cooperation with provision of photos for this article, is not to be considered an endorsement of the contents of this article.

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