

The GRAND PLAN (part 4 of 6)



An essay by [Ray Wheeler](#)

A Scale to Fit the Landscape

Upon its completion in 1935, the Boulder Canyon dam was the largest hydroelectric dam in the world. It was also the largest federally financed construction project in U.S. history.

The Navajo power plant was, upon its completion in the mid-1960's, one of the largest coal-burning power plants in the world.

Either the proposed 5,000 megawatt Kaiparowits Power Plant or the proposed 3,000 megawatt Intermountain Power Plant (had they been built according to plan as proposed in the mid-1970's) would have been the largest coal-burning power plants in the world.



Kaiparowits Power Project site plan. The proposed 3,000 megawatt plant would have burned coal taken from four underground mines on the Kaiparowits plateau in the center of what instead became the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

The hypertrophic scale of Colorado Plateau development projects has been a natural byproduct of the extreme isolation and fierce impenetrability of the land. Due to formidable transportation and engineering costs, industrial development has always been far more costly on the Plateau than in most other parts of the world. To justify enormous infrastructure costs each new scheme must be large enough to generate proportionately huge returns on investment. Natural selection tends to favor summo-sized projects.

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