

The GRAND PLAN (part 3 of 6)



An essay by [Ray Wheeler](#)

The Environmental Costs



Bullfrog Marina on Lake Powell. The little dots out in the water are houseboats. Photo © 1999 [Ray Wheeler](#).

While the benefit of the Hoover dam went primarily to southern California, the environmental cost—the flooding of 115 miles of Colorado river bottomland—fell squarely upon the Colorado Plateau.

It was natural and logical for the industrial giants of the New West to export environmental impacts from urban areas to the uninhabited wildlands at the heart of the Plateau region. The coal-burning Navajo Power Plant, constructed near Page, Arizona in the mid-1960s, would include the strip mining of up to 65,000 acres of coal on Navajo and Hopi Indian lands on Black Mesa, and the pumping of 1,415 tons of fly ash

and sulfur dioxide into the clear Four Corners atmosphere daily—an amount surpassing the daily emissions of New York City.

The 1950's uranium mining boom on the Plateau provided economic benefits to the manufacturers of nuclear weapons and to the owners, operators, and clients of nuclear power plants clustered along the nation's east and west coasts. The environmental costs—including extreme scarring of the land, radioactive poisoning of rivers and aquifers, and the premature death of hundreds of miners due to radiation poisoning—were born primarily by the Plateau.

Click [here](#) for a selection of photographs illustrating the environmental costs of industrial development on the Colorado Plateau.

Follow these links to:

[A Scale to Fit the Landscape](#)

[Boom and Bust](#)

[Fragmented land—Fractured Politics](#)

[References](#)

Environmental costs of the Grand Plan.

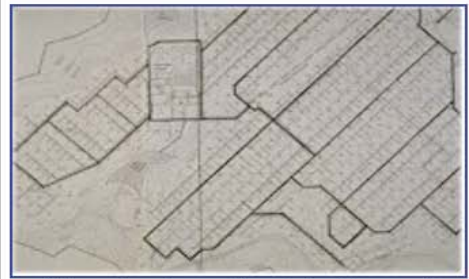
-- All photos © [Ray Wheeler](#)



Hydroelectric dam on the Virgin River.



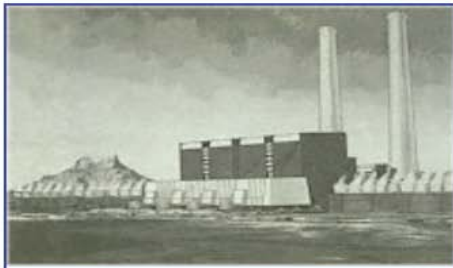
Kaiparowits Power Project site plan. Area now protected by Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.



Map showing a few injection and recovery wells for proposed Gordon Flats tar sands development field, near Canyonlands National Park.



Atlas Uranium Mill tailings pond along Colorado River in Moab.



Proposed Intermountain Power Plant, southcentral Utah.



Potash ponds below Dead Horse Point, near Moab, Utah.



Keep out sign on public lands, site of an exploratory well, proposed Box-Death Hollow Wilderness Area, Utah. Photo © 1987 [Ray Wheeler](#).