

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

**CONTACT:**

Jo Johnson

River Runners For Wilderness

303.443.1806

Marc Ross

Rock the Earth Executive Director

303.454.3304

[marcr@rocktheearth.net](mailto:marcr@rocktheearth.net)

**Groups Battle to Protect the Grand Canyon**

*Coalition effort to save the Grand Canyon experience with an improved management plan*

**(DENVER)** Four groups have announced their intention to challenge the National Park Service's recent decision to allow motorized, commercial rafting tours and helicopter passenger exchanges to continue through Grand Canyon National Park. Currently, the ear-splitting sound of motorized boats and helicopters dominates the limited access to the Park's Colorado River world-class whitewater experience, ruining trips down the river that many wait decades to have. The four groups, River Runners For Wilderness, Rock the Earth, Living Rivers and Wilderness Watch, are defending this crown jewel of the National Park system and every visitor's right to a pristine wilderness experience of the park. The groups are represented by Julia Olson, of Wild Earth Advocates, and Matthew Bishop of Western Environmental Law Center.

"After consulting with a number of partners and citizen groups, we feel that the recent park service ruling fails to properly fulfill the National Park Service mandate that the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon must be managed as wilderness," stated Rock the Earth Executive Director Marc Ross. "We're fighting to make sure the National Park Service does the duty all Americans entrust them with: protecting this beloved natural treasure."

In addition to the Park Service's failure to remove motorized uses in a qualifying wilderness area, the agency's decision to perpetuate the inequitable allocation of river running permits, is also at issue. Currently, commercial tours receive priority over public opportunities for do-it-yourself rafting and kayaking.

"It is inherently discriminatory that river runners have little or no meaningful chance of certainty to experience a Grand Canyon whitewater adventure, while tourists can buy their way onto a high-priced tour almost immediately," notes Jo Johnson, Co-Director of River Runners for Wilderness.

"Dangerous national precedents for the commercialization and privatization of public lands and wilderness areas are at stake here," said Julia Olson, of Wild Earth Advocates, one of the firms handling the case. "We hope they finally address these vital concerns now that we've filed notice."

A third concern of the group is the Park Service's failure to properly address and mitigate degradation of the Grand Canyon's river ecosystems by human use and the ongoing depredations of Glen Canyon dam, including the lack of planning for drought related river flows.