

GREEN RIVER: DIVIDED WATERS  
FINAL SCRIPT

THE GREEN RIVER HAS CARVED ITS WAY THROUGH THE HEART OF THE AMERICAN WEST. IT WAS THE LIFESOURCE FOR GENERATIONS OF AMERICAN INDIANS -- A BOON FOR FUR TRAPPERS, A MYSTERY FOR EXPLORERS. THE BIRTHPLACE OF MODERN RIVER RAFTING, AND THE LAUNCHING POINT FOR THE MODERN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT.

JERRY SPANGLER

Rivers are important to every culture. Uh we write poems about them, we write songs about them, even at-i our culture today, there's something magical about rivers

TODAY THE GREEN RIVER IS VITAL TO THE WEST. IT CONTAINS THE LAST WILD STRETCH OF THE COLORADO RIVER SYSTEM. ENVIRONMENTALISTS, RIVER RUNNERS, FISHERMEN, AND HUNTERS, LOOK TO THE GREEN FOR RECREATION -- WHILE CITIES AND FARMS RELY ON IT FOR DRINKING AND IRRIGATION WATER.

BUT -- MORE EYES ARE TURNING TO THE RIVER. AS DEVELOPMENT AND POPULATION EXPLODE THROUGHOUT THE WEST, MORE DEMANDS ARE BEING PLACED ON THE GREEN. WATER MANAGERS AND ENERGY COMPANIES NOW LOOK TO IT AS THE BEST HOPE FOR AN UNTAPPED RESOURCE. THE PRESSURE BETWEEN CONFLICTING INTERESTS IS MOUNTING. EVERYBODY WANTS A PIECE OF THE GREEN RIVER.

ZACHARY FRANKEL

The Green River is really at a crossroads today. The future of the Green is very threatened by energy development and water diversions, and if we don't act quickly, there may be nothing left of the Green.

MIKE NOEL

So, you say, leave it in the stream, uh fine we can leave it all in the stream, but we'd have to cut down our population significantly to do that. And so every

person would - they can make that statement, but they're contributing to the problem of the use too, everybody is.

FRANK JAEGER

We clearly understand how important water is to the entire West. In order to survive we have to provide water, we have to develop water.

DENNIS WILLIS

There's so many demands because we're looking at the river from so many different perspectives. And we can't really have a decent conversation about the river until we can agree that we're talking about the totality of the thing itself, and not just a water column. But it's many different things.

BEFORE 1869, FEW AMERICANS HAD HEARD OF THE GREEN RIVER. IT WAS AN OASIS IN A DRY, HARD LAND FOR THE UTE AND SHOSHONE WHO LIVED BESIDE IT. IT WAS A MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION FOR TRAPPERS AND ADVENTURERS WHO EXPLORED THE WESTERN WILDERNESS. BUT IT TOOK A DISABLED CIVIL WAR VETERAN - AND SELF-TAUGHT SCIENTIST - TO BRING THE GREEN TO NATIONAL ATTENTION.

HE WAS DETERMINED. CURIOUS. JOHN WESLEY POWELL LOST HIS RIGHT ARM IN THE CIVIL WAR BATTLE OF SHILOH -- A DEVASTATING LOSS THAT COULD CRUSH ANY MAN. BUT POWELL WAS DRIVEN TO EXPLORE THE GEOLOGY, GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT OF THE WEST. SCRAPING TOGETHER FUNDS, HE FORMED AN EXPEDITION AND IN MAY OF 1869 – HE DOVE OFF THE MAP.

ROY WEBB, River Historian

People speculated that the river ran into a tunnel, or there were giant waterfalls, or even that the lost tribes of Israel were living along the valley of the Green River, and the Colorado, and nobody really knew. So Powell was very much going into the great unknown.

THERE WERE NO EXPERIENCED RIVER RUNNERS, NO COMPREHENSIVE MAPS, NO TECHNOLOGY SUITED FOR THE TASK.

POWELL AND HIS MEN SET OFF EQUIPPED ONLY WITH CUNNING,  
DETERMINATION AND A SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE --

BUT THEIR ENTHUSIASM TURNED TO DREAD. A MASSIVE NARROW  
CANYON LOOMED AHEAD. INSPIRED BY A POEM, POWELL LABELED IT  
"THE GATES OF LODORE." THEY WERE SOON IN ITS GRASP.

ROY WEBB

The boat goes through big waves and then fills with water, and so it sinks down,  
and then it-the next wave it hits a big rock, and knocks a hole in it, and starts to  
sink, and just a minute later it hits a big rock and breaks in half.

So what to do? Now you've lost a third of your supplies, and uh-inadvertently all  
the barometers, which were vital to the scientific needs of the expedition, had  
been put in that boat. So Powell worries, he paces the beach all night

They get up in the morning and the men look into the rapid and there's half of the  
boat, it survived, it's stuck in the rocks

The first thing they pull out is the barometer case, and they're undamaged, and  
the men say, "Huzzah! Hooray!" and then uh they reach a little farther into the  
the hatch, and they rummage around and they pull out a small three gallon keg of  
whiskey. And the the men really go, "Huzzah!" because Powell had told them  
they couldn't bring any spirits on the trip.

POWELL AND HIS MEN FACED HARDSHIP AND EXHILIRATION, AS THE  
EXPEDITION PUSHED FORWARD. AND THIS UNKNOWN CORNER OF THE  
AMERICAN WEST REVEALED ITSELF.

POWELL RETURNED FOR TWO MORE TRIPS BEFORE PUBLISHING HIS  
FINDINGS. HIS TALES OF ADVENTURE DOWN THE GREEN AND  
COLORADO RIVERS CAPTURED THE IMAGINATION OF A COUNTRY, BUT  
IT WAS HIS OBSERVATIONS ON WATER AND THE WEST THAT WOULD  
BECOME HIS LEGACY.

ROY WEBB

Powell, besides his feats as an explorer, was also very much a visionary, as he uh thought deeply about the future of the West, and he saw that um it couldn't be developed the way that the popular conception was, the milieu of the "rain follows the plow," that there was always going to be enough water for agriculture, and it just isn't the case west of the hundredth meridian.

BRUCE BABBITT, Former US Secretary of the Interior

That is a reality that the West had been slow to accept. It's still kind of caught up in the myth of, you know, perpetual abundance. It's an important lesson--it's one that we have begun to assimilate, but by no means completely.

140 YEARS LATER THE BATTLE OF WATER AND DEVELOPMENT  
ENDURES. NEARLY 30 MILLION PEOPLE -- FROM DENVER TO LOS  
ANGELES -- NOW DEPEND ON THE COLORADO RIVER SYSTEM AS THEIR  
PRIMARY SOURCE OF WATER.

DAMS HAVE ALTERED THE RIVER'S FLOW, ALLOWING FOR  
AGRICULTURE AND GROWTH. YET, WITHIN THIS SYSTEM, THERE IS  
STILL A REMNANT OF THE RIVER OF YESTERDAY.

JACK SCHMIDT, Professor Geomorphology USU

Within this watershed that has more dams and its waters are more diverted than any other, the Green River is the least altered, and the most natural watershed within the Colorado River system. It stands out as the one relatively wild part of the river that is left.

THE GREEN RUNS 730 MILES FROM ITS WYOMING HEADWATERS IN THE  
WIND RIVER MOUNTAINS -- THROUGH COLORADO AND UTAH -- UNTIL IT  
FINALLY MERGES WITH THE COLORADO RIVER NEAR MOAB.  
IT IS A RIBBON OF LIFE.

WALT GASSON, Director, Wyoming Wildlife Federation

What we're talking about is an extremely arid region where water is extremely limited and where it is absolutely essential for life. Now, there's a whole host of species that depend on the systems that that are interwoven around that water, the Green, and every tributary from it's very head in the Wind Rivers...to it's confluence with the Colorado.

WALT GASSON KNOWS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GREEN RIVER BASIN TO WYOMING'S WILDLIFE. HE HAS SPENT MOST OF HIS LIFE HUNTING AND FISHING ALONG ITS UPPER REACHES.

WALT GASSON

My family goes back on the Green for four generations, and I can literally say that I have had my feet on the little rivulets that come off the high mountain passes above Green River Lakes, and I've been on the Green the entire length through Wyoming, and I have a personal relationship with this-with this river. It's my river. It's my family's river. It's our home place. I was on it before there were dams, before we worried about the anticline.

THE "ANTICLINE" IS A SECTION OF LAND SOUTH OF PINEDALE, WYOMING THAT IS RICH WITH OIL AND NATURAL GAS.

PAUL METHANY, V.P. Rockies Region, Questar Exploration & Production Co. It's the second largest gas field in the US and there's enough gas to heat about 30 thousand homes for ten years. You know, we need to develop oil and gas, because our country consumes a great amount of oil and gas. I think we consume about 25 percent of the world's daily consumption. You know, most Americans would agree if we could produce it domestically and keep the jobs and the income and the security here at home, that's a desirable thing to do.

WALT GASSON

When I went to the anticline with my dad in the sixties deer hunting, and sometimes just enjoyin the country...it was it was choice beyond belief, it was it was the opportunity to see maybe a thousand deer in a day, and maybe to see never another human being. You could imagine yourself as being there with the mountain men, with with with the early day cowboys of the Upper Green. It was a link to that history, that heritage. And that link's gone now, that freedom's gone, that wildness is gone and...I I can't go there anymore.

PAUL METHANY

Well, yeah, I understand that concern, because I'm a hunter myself, and a lot of the folks in our company and in our industry are hunters and fishermen, so those concerns are real. It's not like oil and gas folks just look for special rivers and places to go drill wells. They just happen to coincide once in a while with where the gas happens to be, and when that happens, in fact always, we do our best to minimize the amount of disturbance, if we can, avoid it entirely. And when our activity is finished, we restore the land to its original function, to its original

appearance, and you'd never know we were there.

IT'S AN EPIC STRUGGLE—A NATION WITH ENORMOUS ENERGY DEMANDS – A NATION WITH A PROFOUND LOVE OF WILDERNESS.

WALT GASSON

Water runs downhill, and really the Green is not just a river, it's a thousand different little streams and water courses, some of which don't even have names.

The Little Mountain area is a kind of a jewel in a vast sea of very arid very difficult habitats for a lot of different wildlife, but here, like I say, we got habitats that doesn't exist for miles in any direction, and i-it's just tremendously valuable to these deer, and to and to a host of other species.

The most immediate threat in the greater Little Mountain area is gas development. I think it's time for us to take another look, another approach, another paradigm for gas development in Wyoming. The gold rush mentality that's characterized gas development over the last decade in Wyoming, it's not sustainable, it's not good for communities, it's not good for wild lands like this. It's time to take a breather, and take a more planned approach.

PAUL METHANY

The approach to developing natural gas is changing. It's always evolving, we always look for ways to do things better. I do my business, and our company does its business, so that those generations will have a place to hunt, they'll have animals to hunt, they'll have fish to catch. I think it's just incumbent on them to try and understand that sometimes there's more than one use of the land at any given place, at any given time, and that we all have a social responsibility to not deprive the public owners of that natural gas of the ability to benefit from it, to have a cheap, clean source of energy for heating and for manufacturing and so forth, as opposed to just, "I want my hunting."

WALT GASSON

I'd like for my little eight grandchildren to be able to live and love and enjoy the Little Mountain and the Green River and this system the way I've been blessed to be able to. Do I think they'll be able to? I hope so, I pray so, but I worry. I worry.

CONFLICT IS NOT NEW TO THE GREEN RIVER. IN THE 1950'S, IT BECAME THE FOCUS OF DEBATE OVER DAMMING, A DEBATE THAT STILL LINKS THE RIVER TO ENVIRONMENTAL AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS.

ROY WEBB

There was a movement afoot to uh change the Colorado River, and they um the phrase they used was to 'turn a natural menace into a national resource--and so um the Colorado Riv-Storage Project was born, and that would have put dams um several dams up and down the Green River, um dams on the Colorado, even in the Grand Canyon, uh dams on all the tributaries. And the whole basin would have just been plumbed basically, so that um you could divert the water and use it for agriculture and electricity. One of the facets of that, was the Echo Park Dam. That was up in Dinosaur National Monument, right below the confluence of the Green and the Yampa.

MARTIN LITTON, Conservationist

Well, Dinosaur National Monument contained a lot more than just a quarry for fossilized dinosaur bones. It also contained a beautiful area--a flat-floored valley with cliffs around it somewhat reminiscent of Yosemite, which was known as Echo Park because when you called across the river the cliffs would echo your sound, and unmatched, nothing else existed like it anywhere, so it was something we should have been careful to save. It just wasn't known. Along came this gentleman named Devereaux Butcher and he noticed it and he began to publicize it at the time when the dam threat was imminent.

ROY WEBB

And so uh a grassroots campaign started and uh the most um, it really became active when David Brower, who is the famous environmentalist at the time, was head of the Sierra Club, and he went to the Sierra Club board and said, "this is happening in a national park, and we should fight this." And so the Sierra Club started writing letters and started sending out uh groups of people to go down the river, and they would in turn see it's a beautiful place, it's a national park, we shouldn't destroy it with a dam, or fill it up with water. The first real grass roots movement of an environmental cause, uh started right here on the Green, up in the Echo Park Dam, and it was successful. They finally defeated the dam, much to the amazement of the bureau and the local industry leaders, and local government leaders as they had no idea that this could actually be defeated, but it was.

NO DAM WOULD BE BUILT IN THE PARK. INSTEAD -- GLEN CANYON DAM WAS EXPANDED ON THE COLORADO RIVER NEAR PAGE, ARIZONA. BUT ONE BATTLE MERELY LED TO ANOTHER.

ZACHARY FRANKEL, Founder, Utah Rivers Council

It was at that point that conservationists in the sixties realized that they needed some kind of act, some kind of law to protect rivers alone without establishing national parks, and that's where the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act came from in

1968 to protect rivers and have a nation-wide policy of river protection that complimented the nation-wide policy of dam building.

The genius of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is that a river doesn't have to be completely wild and remote, there can be development, there can be roads, there can be diversions, there can be farms and ranches, there can be cities and towns. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is designed to protect the river as a whole and it's sad that the birth place of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Green River, still does not enjoy Wild and Scenic River protection forty years after the original passage of the act.

MIKE MCKEE, Commissioner, Uintah County, Utah

Utah is the second most arid state in the nation, and being able to develop water is essential to our communities. The problem with a Wild and Scenic River designation is you cannot put in a pipeline, you cannot put in new type of diversions, which makes it very difficult in any way to ever develop your water. There could be no hydroelectricity, it just would totally preclude any type of development and so something a little less restrictive would be valuable.

ON THE GREEN, THERE'S A THORNY BALANCE BETWEEN THE NEEDS OF WATER DEVELOPMENT, THE ENVIRONMENT AND RECREATION.

SOMETIMES, THAT BALANCE CAN BE MET.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FLAMING GORGE DAM HAD A PROFOUND EFFECT ON THE GREEN RIVER FROM THE FLAMING GORGE RESERVOIR TO THE CONFLUENCE WITH THE COLORADO -- RIVER FLOWS THAT HAD ALWAYS BEEN SUBJECT TO NATURE, NOW HAD A MEANS OF CONTROL.

THE SECTION OF THE RIVER BELOW THE DAM WAS FOREVER CHANGED. TRANSFORMED FROM A SILTY WARM-WATER RIVER, IT NOW RUNS WITH COLD CLEAR-WATER; THE CHANGE MADE THIS SECTION OF THE GREEN ONE OF THE WORLD'S BEST RECREATIONAL TROUT FISHERIES.

STEVE SCHMIDT, Owner, Western Flyfishers

It rivals a-anywhere I've ever been, and you know, I haven't been to all places but this place, I mean, every time I come back to it, I just look at it. I mean this canyon is un-the wildlife, the canyon, uh the clarity of the river, a-the whole habitat, the whole ecosystem is unique and that's what makes it such a world attraction.

EMMETT HEATH, "Dean of the Green"

The neat thing about the river is how clear it is, and that's one of the major draws that really does pack in people here is just being able to see all the fish, and and the cl-true clarity of the water. Uh and it also teaches people how to fish so much, because they can watch everything happening. I think it's the best uh teacher there is for uh learning fly fisherman really

STEVE SCHMIDT

Well, originally y'know with the cold water, you had very little diversity, you actually didn't have enough aquatic life in in the system to support a good fishery, and then when they were able to regulate the temperatures - the wider your temperature range you have the greater the diversity of aquatic life you have, and the trout fishery blossomed after that.

BUT WHAT WAS GOOD FOR BLUE RIBBON TROUT PROVED DEADLY FOR  
NATIVE, WARM WATER FISH DOWNSTREAM.

FEDERAL LAW PROTECTS ENDANGERED FISH – SUCH AS -- THE  
COLORADO PIKE MINNOW AND HUMPBACK CHUB.

IT'S ONE OF THE RARE PUBLIC LAWS THAT *ALSO* PROTECTS WATER  
FLOW AND TEMPERATURE ALONG THE RIVER. THE GOAL OF  
REGULATING THE RIVER BECOMES *BALANCED USE*.

STEVE SCHMIDT

Even though we look at this river here and and its beauty, it's all the little tributaries that are significant um it's this part, it's the part above it, it's the part below it, it's all the little pieces that make it whole. Um and and selfish we look sometimes at at what they do to protect endangered species that affects what happens to us up here, but in the grand scheme of things, what's important is the overall health of the whole fishery. I mean, we aren't the only ones that are usin it, and and need it.

BESIDES CREATING A WORLD CLASS FISHERY, THE REGULATED FLOW  
FROM FLAMING GORGE ALSO CREATES A LONGER RAFTING SEASON.

ROY WEB, River Historian

You know people have been running rivers for thousands of years, but not recreationally like they do here. And it really started here on the Green and the Colorado. But it's really got its start in the 1930's, on the Green in uh-with Bus

Hatch taking people for um, just for pleasure, because he wanted to go. He liked to go, he didn't have the money, he found people who did, and they paid for the trip, and uh he built the boats and took em down the river.

THE FIRST RUNNERS NAVIGATED THE RIVER IN WOODEN BOATS, BUT THEY WERE HEAVY AND FRAGILE. THEN, IN 1938, THE WORLD TOOK NOTICE WHEN FRENCH NEWLYWEDS RAN THE GREEN IN EIGHTEEN-FOOT KAYAKS WITH A RUBBERIZED CANVAS SKIN STRETCHED OVER THE HULL. THEY ALSO BROUGHT THEIR OWN SPECIAL MODIFICATIONS.

THE FRENCH WERE AHEAD OF THEIR TIME. RUBBER WAS THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE FOR RIVER RUNNERS, ESPECIALLY AFTER WORLD WAR II WHEN SURPLUS INFLATABLE RAFTS BECAME AVAILABLE BY THE THOUSANDS.

ROY WEBB

And uh a lot of people at one time realized here's a way to go down the river. This thing, if you hit a rock, it just bounces off. If uh, you can easily repair it, you can hold four or five people there. The progenitors the rafts are on now and uh, so river running really took off.

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TODAY, NEARLY 100,000 PEOPLE FLOAT THE GREEN EVERY YEAR. THE MOST REMOTE AND POPULAR STRETCHES ARE THROUGH LODORE AND DESOLATION CANYONS. ONCE THOUGHT THE MOST DEADLY-- BY JOHN WESLEY POWELL -- THEY ARE NOW CELEBRATED AS THE MOST SPECTACULAR IN WILD RAPIDS AND BEAUTY.

JACK SCHMIDT

Parts of the Green river, especially in Desolation and Grey Canyon, feel much more like the river of old. I probably feel like my boat is a time machine, and that I can go back and-I'm sort of running a river that's not all that different from the river that people fifty years ago or a hundred years ago floated.

THIS RAW FEEL IS DUE TO THE CONFLUENCE OF THE YAMPA RIVER WITH THE GREEN AT ECHO PARK. THE YAMPA IS THE LAST UNDAMMED

RIVER ON THE COLORADO RIVER SYSTEM – AND ONE OF THE FEW  
REMAINING IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY.

LOIE BELKNAP EVANS, River Guide Author

It's the Yampa that keeps the Green really um a free flowing river, y'know, where it-you have the wonderful highs and the lows, and you have driftwood coming in and you uh the river's just doing what the river should be doing. Um and a y'know a dam controlled river it just-it acts very differently when you have nothing but controlled flows, it changes the whole ecology, and and up here this is really been allowed to um remain pretty much a free flowing river because of the Yampa. And uh I think that's one-one thing that makes it incredibly special, just the wild wild feeling out here, just that you really feel like you're out in the w-truly in the wilderness ... I don't know the river just gets in your-gets in your blood, y'know just, it keeps calling.

DEE HOLLADAY, Founder, Holiday Expeditions

For me it's kind of a - like a spiritual e- experience coming down on-on the river. When I was a young boy what-what drew me to rivers was Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

I-I think it was just sitting in the middle of a body of water that was alive and moving. It was that self-propulsion.

ROY WEBB

I always loved the possibilities, it seemed like it's always going somewhere and it's always coming from somewhere, and there's always a question-there's always this intriguing mystery behind it. What's the river seen in its path? What is it gonna see in the future?

JIM ATON, Author

There's just something about being on the water, uh you're off your secure land base, you're in a different element. Almost everyone who comes down the river experiences the same thing, lives are changed. I've seen marriages come about, I've seen marriages break up.

LOIE BELKNAP EVANS

I think the river's a great equalizer, especially if you're learning to row your boat, and it really doesn't care, y'know who you-who you were in that other life, it doesn't care if you were important or famous when you're learning to row your own boat.

And I think especially people coming from cities, I mean to be out here where you have this incredible quiet.... just does magic for your soul.

SHARRON MUNSON

The scale of this place is amazing. I asked how deep are we in the canyon? And, I thought it was about a thousand feet, they said it's a five thousand foot canyon wall that we were in, and you-your mind literally can't fathom it. ...you just realize you're just a really tiny part of a great ancient system.

MOLLY KISSNER, Guide

You-you go from a billion year old rock to, you know sixty six year old million rock in the manner of four days, and that's pretty cool (laughter) pretty cool.

JIM ATON

One could learn pretty much everything from the river if you just spend some time here.

MODERN MAN ISN'T THE FIRST TO LEARN FROM THE GREEN.  
CENTURIES BEFORE JOHN WESLEY POWELL, INDIGENOUS  
PEOPLE DISCOVERED THEIR OWN WISDOM ABOUT LIFE IN AN  
ARID LAND.

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JERRY SPANGLER, Archaeologist

The river was virtually unknown archaeologically, we know a lot about Nine Mile Canyon, and we're starting to learn a lot about Range Creek Canyon, but hardly anything was known about Desolation Canyon, how people lived along the rivers.

And it's very uh exciting because this area has not been studied, and because of its inaccessibility by road, um there are still a lot of cultural materials here that are intact, and and right for study.

KEVIN JONES, Utah State Archaeologist

I think learning from the people of the past is very important for us of any generation, to understand our place in the world, to understand what happened in a place before us. It helps us have a sense of our own lives.

ON THE GREEN, WRITTEN HISTORY GOES BACK OVER 200 YEARS.  
FREMONT INDIAN HISTORY— NEARLY A THOUSAND. BUT FOR BOTH,  
THE WATER AND THE RIVER IS A SHARED STORY OF SURVIVAL,  
PROGRESS, AND LOSS.

KEVIN JONES

One of the things that I'm always struck by is a-a thousand years ago, during Fremont time, there were probably hundreds of people living in this canyon. Well, how many people are living in this canyon now between Green River and-and the Uintah Basin? None, hardly any. And why? I mean we use the canyon but we bring our food in a hundred twenty quart big coolers and-and we have boats and, y'know, all kinds of things that we need, but we couldn't make a living here. You know there's uh the few attempts at farming in this canyon have-have been short lived kind of, it's a very tough place, yet the-during the Fremont period they thrived in this place.

KEVIN JONES

Now, one of the things that we know happened during the the later years of the Fremont period was it was getting warmer, and the population was was getting larger. Well, I don't know about all the causes that we don't have the Fremont culture around today, but those two things are are definitely a part of it. If we can learn from studying what happened to them a thousand years ago we might be able to apply some of those things to understanding our own circumstance today with warming temperatures, and growing populations.

JERRY SPANGLER

How were they using the environment? Did the Fremont population grow so big so quickly that it exceeded the carrying capacity of this very fragile and limited landscape, and what happens when you have too many people in a desert. Um not enough water to grow enough food to feed all the people that are there. I think those are very similar issues that we face today in the desert southwest. How do we allocate our water? What's the highest and best use of that water?

FORREST CUCH, Executive Director, Utah Division of Indian Affairs

Water is sacred to the Ute people. Most of our most sacred ceremonies revolve around water. The Green River was central to the region our people occupied, eastern Utah and western Colorado. And of course it's a resource that has been there for thousands of years. It goes back to the Fremont people, which the Ute people consider their ancestors. It was always recognized as a source of water and a source of life. Whether we were camping along its shores or passing through, it was always part of our existence, part of our culture.

The Indian people have a different understanding and regard for water than the dominant culture. The dominant culture sees it more as a resource. The Indian people see it more as, not only a resource, but something that is central to their life, in that it's something you shouldn't have to mess with. It's something that just should not be manipulated in any degree. It's there for a reason, and so our people have always struggled with dams, whenever water has been captured. We struggle with that.

The Ute people have rights to the Colorado River. They have a first water right to that resource, and it's being ignored by most, most states and municipalities, as if we have no presence whatsoever.

Florence Creek and Desolation Canyon are very, very special places. That is a very powerful area, not only in terms of wildlife, vegetation, but the spiritual elements, and the geological elements that are there. It – I can't say enough about how powerful an area it is.

JIM ATON, Author

The first people down here were the outlaws, uh Butch Cassidy, Joe Walker, Flat-nose George, Curry, uh Tom Dilly, Elzy Lay, and they came in here because it had grass, it had water, and it was a good place to hide stolen livestock.

Desolation was sort of a last chance place, uh last resort place, it was uh of of all the other places in the west the land was taken up.

TATE JENSEN, Rancer

The story that was passed down through our family is that uh these early homesteaders, the McPhersons, and then the Seamounts came into this canyon largely because of John Wesley Powell's diary. When he first came through here in the 1860's, or whenever that was, he'd take notes and mention the clear water streams, and river bottoms that might be suitable for farming.

TATE JENSEN IS A FIFTH GENERATION COWBOY. HIS GREAT GREAT GRAND-FATHER, JIM MCPHERSON, MADE HIS WAY INTO DESOLATION CANYON IN 1887 AND BUILT THE FLORENCE CREEK RANCH.

OVER A HUNDRED YEARS LATER, THE JENSEN FAMILY CARRIES ON THE TRADITION OF COWBOYING IN THE CANYON -- UPSTREAM AT ROCK CREEK RANCH, THE LAST PRIVATELY OWNED LAND IN DESOLATION. TATE JENSEN'S DAD, BUTCH, GREW UP HERE.

BUTCH JENSEN, Rancher

Our folks would send us down here, we'd come down with the cowboys to gather cattle and we were just on our own down here. You know, you'd come down and help the cowboys all you could, but you know when you're ten years old, I don't know that you're a lot of help, but we had a lot of fun here.

We'd go down and fish for catfish, and it was a good place to grow up.

Desolation Canyon, Rock Crick are trail system in this country, it's so unique, there's just a, to my knowledge there isn't a place like it in the United States that's still this remote.

TATE JENSEN

To me it's just a simple pleasure to be, you know fifty miles, eighty miles from the nearest town, and you're down here punching cows, moving horses. The same way your great grandfather was in the 1880s, I mean, to be living in the same place and making a living the same way that that your great grandparents did is is got to be something special

BUT THE ESCALATING DEBATE OVER PRESERVATION -- VERSUS USE -- HAS TRANSFORMED RANCHING IN THE WEST, PROBABLY FOREVER.

BUTCH JENSEN

But in the last uh forty years things have changed, y'know you get a lot of uh Desolation Canyon is world famous now for the river-running, and so you have all the people running the rivers and uh, uh y'know there's some controversy there with cattle along the river corridor, and so um uh it was just better that we moved, y'know, in time we just started moving out.

TATE JENSEN

They just have a dream of of no cattle, no-no human contact anywhere but, but uh but when you're-when you're taking care of the land you're not hurting it, and you can make it better by grazing it.

The cattlemen are the original environmentalists, I mean, they're-they're the ones living on the land, and and if they don't take care of it, they're out of a job.

BUTCH JENSEN

(laughter) Seems like we've in a drought all of our life (laughter). I think there's a lot more droughts than there are g-good times, but uh we got to have something to complain about.

TATE JENSEN

But water-water is the life blood, if you don't have it, whether we're talking rain or aquifers or snow, I mean its, where the river right there it-it's what you live and die by in these Western states.

We're far enough up the river, we've never suffered. You know those down river guys they-they're the ones that struggle and-and those guys in Nevada and California, they're the ones that really want it too. I hope the, I hope the day won't come where ya can't irrigate up here. I hope it all doesn't go to the-uh big

water fountains down-down south.

BUTCH JENSEN

We have a lot of concerns, y'know the, first of all, it's the only private land left, y'know and and uh, been in our family fo-for so long, y'know, when you go back, and uh, yeah y-you worry what the future can hold for this place, and uh, y'know, what's going to keep happening with the river corridor, and the uh, y'know, the water issues that-that we're talking about.

Yeah, uh course our ancestors uh, y'know that was always their intent, y'know, for family to keep it going an' everything, yeah that's our intent, y'know for next generation, Tate (cough) god I'm going to break up here, but uh..That's the whole thing you do it for is your kids, yeah.

CHRIS DUNHAM, Farmer

Unique desert climate, hot days, cool nights. That uh lets the melons store more sugars.

FOR CHRIS DUNHAM, THE ROOTS OF FAMILY AND LAND RUN DEEP. HE LIVES JUST DOWN RIVER FROM DESOLATION CANYON.

THE FOLKS IN GREEN RIVER, UTAH, WILL TELL YOU IT'S THE HOME OF THE WORLD'S BEST MELON.

FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS, FARMERS LIKE DUNHAM HAVE BEEN GROWING MELONS ALONG THE BANKS OF THE GREEN RIVER. THE FIRST PIONEERS USED WATER WHEELS TO IRRIGATE THEIR FIELDS, BUT EVERY JULY AND AUGUST THE RIVER RAN LOW AND THE DITCHES RAN DRY. A PERMANT SOLUTION WAS NEEDED.

CHRIS DUNHAM

They built the dam here, they cut down cottonwood trees, they made wooden cribs, they floated em into place, and sunk em and filled em with rocks. Those logs and that rock is still there. That's what's held for over a hundred years. The engineers today would say that's impossible, you could never make a dam hold doing it that way. B ut they did it a hundred years ago with no money, just a lot of hard work.

This valley they're our life blood, uh we have to have this dam uh for for our gravity canal systems.

As farmers, y'know, without water we're just uh, y'know we'd be out of business, for sure, right-real real fast. They say there's been more uh more men killed over water than than uh then men killed over women. That's not hard to figure out, you can always go get another woman but you can't get more water.

TODAY'S WATER WARS ARE USUALLY SETTLED IN COURTS, NOT WITH GUNS. BUT THE BATTLES NONETHELESS SPARK THE SAME PASSION.

CHRIS DUNHAM

Our attorney said that uh they had somebody beating within an inch of their life last year, up in in uh in the Carbon County area, over water, people stealing water. Uh, y'know, you only have so much water, and people come along and and take water out of turn or like that, and it's just huge issues in the west over water.

THE DUNHAMS SAY THAT THEIR WATER RIGHTS HAVE BEEN VIOLATED.

CHRIS DUNHAM

It'd be like having ten people show up at your house and y'know use one of your bedrooms without permission, y'know when you own land, and that's all you have, your father worked for it, and your grandfather worked for it, y'know that's yours, y'know it's supposed to be yours. Uh those kind of thing aren't, y'know that's not really supposed to happen. You feel-you feel like you've been betrayed when uh y'know somebody comes in and uses your land, uses your your waterways, and your facilities without having the proper uh rights and agreements to do that.

WATER RIGHTS AREN'T THE ONLY CHALLENGES FACING FARMERS. CONSERVATION AND SALINITY ISSUES ALSO AFFECT THEIR CROPS. IN UTAH, ROUGHLY 80% OF WATER IS USED FOR AGRICULTURE. RIVERS DEPEND ON A STEADY RETURN OF WATER TO THE SYSTEM THROUGH RUNOFF OR GROUNDWATER. BUT PESTICIDES AND SALTS OFTEN POLLUTE THE WATER AT ITS SOURCE.

CHRIS DUNHAM

That's always a struggle, to get water out on the desert, and get enough water on the desert, and do it cost effectively. I mean it seems like we're always working on irrigation pumps, and on ditches and on sprinklers, and it takes a lot of, a lot of

expense and time and all to make the desert blossom. If we didn't have the river we wouldn't be here, I'm sure of that.

BUT THE DUNHAMS AREN'T THE ONLY PEOPLE VIEWING THE GREEN RIVER AS THE WELLSPRING OF LIFE.

AARON MILLION, Entrepreneur

I've always considered Green River home. Eventually I'm sure they'll plant me in the alkali there.

AARON MILLION SPENT HIS SUMMERS WRANGLING COWS IN GREEN RIVER, UTAH, BUT TODAY HE IS AN ENTREPRENEUR IN FORT COLLINS. AS A GRADUATE STUDENT, HE WAS STARING AT A MAP OF THE COLORADO RIVER SYSTEM, WHEN HE HAD AN IDEA – AN IDEA THAT COULD HAVE FAR REACHING EFFECTS ON WYOMING, COLORADO, AND UTAH.

AARON MILLION

I saw a little loop coming into the state and even I didn't recognize it at first, and I looked closely and saw it was the Green, and it was literally like a light bulb went off, and started looking at whether the Green could be utilized as an alternative water resource for the region um and still keep the benefits of the Green River intact,

THE PLAN IS TO BUILD A 560-MILE PIPELINE FROM FLAMING GORGE RESERVOIR TO COLORADO'S FRONT RANGE. THROUGH IT, ENOUGH WATER WOULD BE DIVERTED TO SUPPLY 650,000 HOMES FOR A YEAR. BUT THIS IS NOT THE ONLY PLAN TO CAPTURE THE GREEN.

EXPANDING URBAN AREAS ARE ALSO HOPING TO TAP INTO ITS WATER. ALL THIS IS POSSIBLE DUE TO A 1922 AGREEMENT WHICH ALLOTTED WATER TO STATES BASED ON ASSUMPTIONS THAT CRITICS SAY WERE OPTIMISTIC AT BEST, FICTIONAL AT WORST. IT WAS KNOWN AS THE COLORADO RIVER COMPACT.

FRANK JAEGER, District Manager, Parker Colorado Water & Sanitation District

Right now we're looking at the Green River, and we're looking at Flaming Gorge Reservoir. Number one reason, there's already a reservoir there, it's already capturing water, it has water that is available under the 1922 compact, Colorado River Compact, that is available for both Colorado and Wyoming.

When you-when you look at the Colorado River the uh headwaters of Colorado had been highly developed to where they've been depleted down to-there are times when there's very little flow left in the stream. As a water manager you look for what is gonna impact the environment the least, what is gonna impact dollars the least, what's gonna impact the local residents the least. All of those things have to be taken into account before you can ever think about building a project.

So, you almost have to look at where is some relatively clean water that you can treat conventionally, and there's not a lot of that available.

AND AGAIN, THE GREEN RIVER IS OFFERED AS A SOLUTION TO A THIRSTY AMERICAN WEST.

AARON MILLION

We took the view from day one, and we hired probably one of the best water teams in the western US, not to push a bad project forward but to make sure that the underpinnings were solid projects, environmentally, from a greater good standpoint, and from a conservation and municipal supply standpoint.

WALT GASSON, Director Wyoming Wildlife Federation

The history of the west is is replete with mistakes made with water. It seems to me that on about a ten year cycle we somewhere in the West get the idea to do something incredibly stupid with water. I think this is one of those.

FRANK JAEGER

The reason we're looking at the reservoirs to take it off an existing reservoir, they're still releasing water, and they have to release water downstream because they're generating power off of that reservoir, ok? So the water's gonna continue to be released, and if you take a hundred and sixty five thousand acre feet, that's been mentioned, uh off of three million acre feet of water, and you do that over an entire year, it's gonna be a miniscule effect on the river, miniscule.

ZACHARY FRANKEL, Founder, Utah Rivers Council

The argument that water developers make that they're only diverting a little bit of water is absolutely ludicrous, as if the river wouldn't notice water being diverted into a sterile canal is is foolishness. Having a little bit of water pulled out of a

reservoir, or upstream the reservoir, has major consequences downstream. It has major consequences to the endangered fish in the Green and Colorado River Basin. It has major consequences to the million-dollar trout fishery below Flaming Gorge. It has major consequences to other Colorado River basin water users.

ERIC KUHN, General Manager, Colorado River District

I'm more concerned about how much water Colorado has left to develop, uh under the 1922 and 1948 compacts, and right now, we think it could be anywhere from four or five hundred thousand on an optimistic scenario down to maybe a hundred thousand or less on a more realistic or a climate change scenario. Uh so they're ty-talking about taking almost all of Colorado's remaining compact entitlement with one project, an-and that really bothers us.

AARON MILLION

What's interesting about Mr. Kuhn's argument is that the state of Colorado should stop development of its beneficial use um and um th-the the downside to that, is if Colorado does not move forward towards development its water resources, uh that other states certainly will and are, and that includes Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico.

THE CLOCK IS TICKING. WESTERN STATES HAVE SEEN ENORMOUS GROWTH. IN COLORADO ALONE, BY THE YEAR 2035, THE POPULATION IS EXPECTED TO INCREASE ALMOST 50% ALONG THE FRONT RANGE.

FRANK JAEGER

I tell people that if I built a twenty foot high fence around Parker, and said 'no more growth, we're not gonna sell another house', it wouldn't save us, because I'm tied to the Denver Basin aquifers, they would go outside the fence and drill a well and suck the water right out from under us. We would still have to go somewhere and get water, it's being depleted whether we're taking it or our neighbors are taking it, it's still being used. So it doesn't leave us much option, we have to be looking, always looking for the long term future.

ZACHARY FRANKEL

It's true that people need a place to live, but the idea that we have to dry up or divert yet more water out of one of the most incredible aquatic ecosystems in the American West to do it, is ludicrous. There's tons of water in Colorado for growth. At some point Westerners need to learn to live within their means.

FRANK JAEGER

I think it's a human attitude, it's a uh not in my backyard uh no growth, uh all of those things that in a sound bite, sound good. Yeah, no growth, I don't have to worry about there's gonna be ten more people out there in my fishing hole, but the reality of it is you're affecting your own property rights when you take that

attitude, and are you gonna be able to sell your home? Are you gonna be able to move to another-a nicer home, are you gonna have a job? All of those things have to play into the overall context of wh-what we're talking about here. Uh it's real easy to to fold your arms and say, 'boy not in my backyard, don't-don't interrupt my way of life'. The reality of it is, your life is gonna be interrupted one way or another, and we're talking about maintaining your lifestyle. And doing nothing is backing up. Your lifestyle isn't going to get better if you do nothing.

BUT INCREASING POPULATIONS NEED MORE THAN WATER. PEOPLE NEED ENERGY TO FUEL THEIR BUSINESSES AND THEIR HOMES.

OIL SHALE, FOUND DEEP IN THE ROCKS ALONG THE GREEN RIVER BASIN, HAS GAINED RENEWED INTEREST. A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL OIL COMPANY HAS FILED FOR WATER RIGHTS ON THE YAMPA TO DEVELOP THE TECHNOLOGY TO EXTRACT THE OIL.

THE POTENTIAL OUTPUT OF OIL SHALE IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES COULD BE ENORMOUS – POTENTIALLY THREE TIMES THAT OF SAUDI ARABIA'S RESERVES. BUT THE PROCESS REQUIRES WATER, FURTHER, LARGE SCALE OIL EXTRACTION IS STILL IN THE RESEARCH PHASE.

ERIC KUHN

Energy development is uh is the unknown question in Colorado. With the spike in oil prices, both companies and Congress and others, have shown a renewed interest in oil shale. An-and oil shale is a very, uh it's not like oil, i-you've got to essentially heat the rocks, or crush them and heat them, or heat them in place in order to release the kerogen and make it-turn it into a carbon fuel, and uh-that takes heat, and any-any industrial process that takes heat is going to require water to uh to remove the heat from the system.

The significance of that for other water users is very simple. Within Colorado we have a fixed amount of water, uh and climate change is suggesting that in the future we may have less water. Uh so it's-what it's done is it's created a little um tug of war between the Front Range, which is realizing, you know, if we don't stake our claim to some sort of future supply, we know the oil companies are there, um so it's-it's sort of escalated the tension between is Colorado's remaining water gonna be used to meet the Colorado Front Range uh population boom, or is it gonna be used to meet energy.

My impression is that the folks in Wyoming and Utah have been sort of shocked or not so pleasantly surprised by a renewed interest in the Green by Colorado Front Range. For example, Utah also has a potential for a large energy industry in very eastern Utah, and they have the same needs that Colorado will have, if an energy industry goes.

AT TIMES, THE LIST OF NEW DEMANDS SEEMS ENDLESS.

RAFTERS, RANCHERS, FISHERMEN, AND HOUSEHOLDS USE THE GREEN. BUT THERE ARE NEW INTERESTS LOBBYING FOR A NUCLEAR POWER PLANT TO BE COOLED BY ITS WATER.

AMERICAN INDIAN TRIBES ARE DETERMINED TO CLAIM THEIR PLACE AT THE TABLE FOR A RESOURCE THEY HOLD ESSENTIAL AND SACRED.

EACH GENERATION RE-INVENTS THE WORLD THROUGH NEW TECHNOLOGIES. YET THE ISSUES - SEEN BY THE ONE-ARMED MAN ON THE BANKS OF THE GREEN IN 1869 - REMAIN.

DENNIS WILLIS, Former Recreation Manager, Bureau of Land Management  
I think we need to go back to some theory that that John Wesley Powell was espousing on the development of the West, and we need to pay more attention to water sheds, and be realistic about what water sheds are capable of producing and handling and making the people that are living within those water sheds responsible for their health and well-being.

TED WILSON, Executive Director, Utah Rivers Council  
I'm an optimist about the future, and the reason I am is that uh I've spoken to both sides on these issues, and it's maybe too bad we have sides. If you talk to the ranchers upstream on the Green, they'll say 'we love that river as much as you do' we-but we do have to have to grow our hay. If you talk to environmentalists they'll say 'it's a holy place, it's a wonderful place, it's part of our spirit, our soul, but in order to protect it we're willing to give a little bit away' and I still believe in the compromise process.

PAUL MATHENY, VP Rockies Region, Questar Exploration and Production Co.  
There are a lot of consequences that go along with the idea of ceasing to develop our natural resources. It's absolutely do-able to have multiple uses of the Green River basin or any other place. It just has to be well thought out, it has to be done responsibly, with an understanding of all the values – the wildlife

value, the clean air value, and the resources that are underground. And done in a way where all those values are conserved.

#### ZACH FRANKEL

The Green River is owned by the American public, it is their river, they're the ones that elect the uh officials who'd make the decisions, they're the ones that have the power to reign in the special interests. They're the only ones that can reign in the special interests. If people care about the Green River, they need to come to the table, they need to pick up the phone, and they need to call their congressmen and demand that the Green River is protected as Wild and Scenic.

#### FRANK JAEGER

The reality of it is i-with the limited resources that we have in the West, we have to be good water managers, and we have got to figure out how to share, how to treat our water properly, and how not to waste it, and that's everybody's responsibility, not just water managers. It's the guy who's watering his lawn out there, or washing his car, and letting the hose run. Its re-a responsibility that we all share.

#### ROY WEBB

The river is not just uh-a source of water, it's not just a place to mine, it's not a place to run cattle, its a-it's only living entity, it's the heart of this whole region and it really needs to-the be given that respect. So that's what I hope the future holds, my own future on the river, I just hope to keep doing this as long as possible (chuckles). As long as I can possibly make it, and then at the end, throw my ashes in the river and let me go on down.

IN 1869, JOHN WESLEY POWELL SLIPPED A WOODEN BOAT INTO THE GREEN RIVER. HE WONDERED, WHAT NEXT? IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, THE QUESTION ENDURES.