

Roy Webb, River Historian Transcript

Nancy Green

Roy, I'm going to start with a question that came up last night around the campfire -- how did the Green River get its name?

Roy Webb

Well, the Green passes through the lands of many Native peoples so the Utes, the Navajos, the Shoshones, and of course they all had their names for it. The Shoshone, that we knew of, called it the *Seeds-kee-dee-Agie*, the 'prairie hen river'. The Utes called it 'pah-na-kuitz' which meant 'bigger river', to distinguish it from the Strawberry and the White River. And the trappers who came into the area in the 1820's called it the 'Spanish River' because at the time this was all Spanish territory. And they had another name, they called it the 'Colorado River of the West'. So when William Ashley came down in 1825 on the Spanish River, they floated from up in Wyoming down to the Uintah Basin, and there they ran into a party of trappers, led by a guy named Anton Robidoux, a Frenchman who lived in Santa Fe, and came up in here to trap. They joined forces, they went back over the Uintahs and created the Rendezvous for fur trappers. Ashley went back to Missouri, where he's from, and he wrote a long newspaper account of his adventures in the far West, and in that he mentioned that he had asked the trappers, the French Canadian trappers, what they called the Green River, they called it the 'Rio Verde', Green River. And so that was the first printed use of the term Green River, and then that's where the name has stuck ever since.

Green

The earliest users would have been the American Indians in the region, the Ute and Shoshone, but give us a sense of the different non-indigenous people who have used the river.

Webb

The first ones were the trappers, the first Americans who came across were the trappers, and that first party was William Ashley. Ashley came in 1825, floated from the Sweet Water crossing up in Wyoming, down into the Uintah Basin, and started the rendezvous system. The next trapper, that of note, that was on the river was a guy named Denise Julian, and it there-his inscriptions are up and down the river "DJ", it's actually a kind of French style 'J', and there's one in Desolation Canyon down in Chandler Creek, there's one up in Whirlpool Canyon, and then the most famous ones are down in Labyrinth Canyon, that are very elaborate with a boat and a like-a representation of a bird and so on. So Julian and the trappers, they were probably all over this country, but none of them really left any marks or any accounts of it. After, Julian was in the 1830's, his inscriptions in Labyrinth are 1836, and after that was William Manley, who came down, again-he didn't come into Desolation, but he came to the Uintah Basin from the crossing, and he was just looking for a quicker route to the gold fields in

California, he was a 49-er. And so he had started out in an old ferry boat, and the boat was wrecked in Red Canyon, and then they built, they chopped down trees and made dug-out canoes, made kind of a catamaran arrangement, and then took those all the way down the river. And that was really the last one that anybody knows about. Manley actually mentions finding evidence of other people trying to go down the river, but there's no way of knowing who they were, but he had seen, when he got into Red Canyon, there's a big rapid there and they stopped and he saw where Ashley had left his name 'Ashley 1825', that gave it the name Ashley Falls, it was the biggest rapid on the Green, it's under water, under Flaming Gorge now.

Green

So is Ashley pretty much the first-credited man to run the Green?

Webb

He's the first one that anybody knows about, yeah. Ashley, nobody, the only other people who actually even mention the Green were the Spaniards in 1776, in Escalante, but nobody else and nobody knew anything about the Native Americans. When Powell came out, getting ready to run the river in 1869 he asked the Utes, 'did anybody ever go down the river, did they have any kind of things about it?' and one of the Utes told him that it was too dangerous, he said that 'water pony heat buck, no see him Squaw anymore, no see him Injun anymore'. So they obviously didn't spend much time going down the river. Of course they had to cross it to get back and forth, but there are many places up and down here where there are traditional crossings, where there's a gravel bar, or something at the mouth of a canyon. But Ashley was certainly the first.

Green

When Powell came in 1869, parts of the river had been mapped, and parts had been run. Was there still a sense of danger and mystery along the Green River for Powell?

Webb

It very much was, when Powell came, people knew the lower end of the river, and the upper end of the river, but the whole in-between, the whole interior stretch of the Green especially, and the Colorado, just ran through country that nobody had any idea about. And you know, there was crossings like down, Gunnison's crossing, down by Green River, Utah, but again the whole series of canyons were hundreds of miles -- there was no idea of what was actually there. 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.

Green

There's a great quote about the fear of going into the great unknown...

Webb

Oh, John Charles Fremont in, who was exploring the Great Basin, and actually what he was doing was proving that there was no river, as the Spaniards had led everyone to believe, proving there was no river that went west into San Francisco Bay, and so he was circling the Great Basin to prove that, and he wrote, this is camped up in Brown's Park. He wrote "the course of the Green and the Colorado is but little known, and that little derived from vague report. The lower part as it approaches the Gulf of California, is reported to be smooth and tranquil, while the upper part is manifestly broken into many falls and rapids. It is probable that in its foaming among its lofty precipices, it presents many scenes of wild grandeur, but though offering many temptations and often discussed, no trapper has been found bold enough to undertake a voyage with so certain a prospect of a fatal termination"...Uh there were actually, there's a story of a trapping party that rode down the canyon on the ice, in the late 1830's, to get from Brown's Park down into the Uintah Basin, and the river was frozen over in the winter so they rode down on horseback, and they made their way down on the ice, but nobody else, there was always talk about trying to take - trappers trying to take boats down, but nobody would do it.

Green

You've run this river many times, can you put yourself in Powell's eyes describe what you think he might have been feeling, or seeing?

Webb

Sure, that's a common talk among river runners, what did Powell see? And, you know, he would have seen, and especially in the stretch like we're in now, Desolation Canyon, it wouldn't have really looked all the much different. There wouldn't have been the tamarisk, but the river itself would have been the same color, it would have been the same temperature, the ambience would have been the same, the big difference would have been that feeling of 'what's around the next bend.' You know, now we know we have river guidebooks, we have GPS, and we're all those kinds of things, and the rivers been run a lot. There's a whole body of knowledge built up about it, but in Powell's day everything was a great unknown, every day was something new, every day could have been-that you know, led to that fatal termination, that Fremont wrote about.

Green

Tell me about Powell's journey along the Green, how did it start?

Webb

Powell and his man started, or all gathered in Green River Wyoming in May of 1869. Powell had had the boats brought on the railroad. The men had kind of come from different places from Colorado and Utah and one guy, Jack Sumner

wrote that all they had to do was try to drink all the whiskey there was in town, he said, because Jake Fields, who is a storekeeper, persisted in making it faster than we can drink it, we failed in this enterprise.

Green

They were a rowdy bunch. But they weren't experienced river runners, and soon they found themselves in jeopardy. Tell me the story about Disaster Falls in Lodore Canyon.

Webb

Powell and his men had come into Lodore, and they were being very careful because it's a very dark gloomy place with big rapids in it. So Powell had devised a system where he had a flag in his left hand, of course he didn't have a right hand, so as they came down if he saw a rapid or an obstacle he would wave the flag left or right to signal the men which way to go. So he comes around a corner after just a little while after the last rapid, and all of a sudden there's a big rapid that he sees, and it's obviously one they can't go through, they have to stop. So he signals the men to shore, to the left shore frantically, his boat makes it, the next two boats make it, the third boat, the *No-Name* which had Oramel and Seneca Howell, two brothers, and Frank Goodman in it, is too far out in the current, and so they're swept into the rapid. The boat goes through big waves and then fills with water, and so it sinks down, and then in 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, and the men are cast into the rapid. Powell and his men on shore are just horrified watching this, but the three men are able to make their way to a rocky island, and cling there. So George Bradley and Jack Sumner take the small boat, the scout boat, the *Emma Dean*, and pull it back upstream as far as they can, launch out into the rapid and are able to make their way over to shore, and to the little island rather, and get the men, and rescue them. Powell says, "we were as glad to shake hands with them as if they had been wrecked on a distant coast'.

But there goes a third of their supplies, there goes all the outfit for those guys, and inadvertently all the barometers, which are vital to the scientific needs of the expedition. You'd use the barometers to measure the height of the cliffs; they had been left in that boat. So Powell, what to do, he paces the beach all night thinking what should I do? Should I go out to Salt Lake and get other barometers, should I go on, should I abandon it? In the morning when they wake up, they look at the rapid, and there's one half of the boat, lodged in the rocks. So again, Bradley and Sumner get in the *Emma Dean*, they pull it as far upstream as they can, launch out into the waves, and they get to shore, to the rocky island, and they open the hatch. And the first thing they pull out is the barometers in their case undamaged and all the men shout "Huzzah". And the next thing they do, they reach into the hatch, and they pull out a three-gallon keg of whiskey called the 'blue keg', and all the men then really say 'Huzzah', because Powell had told them they couldn't bring any spirits on the trip, but right now they needed a drink.

Green

The rapids that they didn't run, they had to portage around. Describe that to me, how hard was it?

Webb

So portaging and lining the boats was incredibly arduous. Powell's boats weighed well over a ton each, they had loaded with supplies, bags of rice and beans and sides of bacon, and things like that, plus all the instruments and their tools. So, when they came up to a big rapid, especially after Disaster Falls when they had lost so much, Powell felt he couldn't afford not to be careful. So they had to come to a rapid, they pulled ashore; they had to unload everything out of the boats. They had to pull out the sacks of beans, the coffee, the supplies, the instruments, and then they had to carry that on their backs all the way around the rapid, and it might be, you know, several hundred yards. So, once they get back to the boats, and they have all the stuff loaded at the bottom, they have to take the boats and tie lines on the bow and stern, push them out into the current, and then hold them as they go down. It - you've got a one-ton wooden boat, going down through this rapid, and you're trying to hold it with ropes. I mean, it was just an incredibly awful, arduous procedure. They had - they had to do it, Powell felt, the men wanted to just run the rapids, they felt it was worth the risk. Powell couldn't afford to take that risk, so just an amazing amount of work, just to get through seventeen miles in Lodore, and there's one rapid after another. When they got down to Cataract Canyon, same thing, 45 miles of just one big rapid after another. So it just wore them down, the physical labor wore them down, that finally, I think, was one of the factors that led to the break-up of the expedition at the end of the trip.

Green

What are some of your favorite diary quotes from the Powell expeditions?

Webb

Bradley was one of the members of the 1869 expedition. He's my favorite diarist. He gripes all the time, and he's always got a really mordant wit, he's really sarcastic, so it's funny to read. And one of his things, he talked about camping, finding a place to sleep, and he said "the major, as usual, has chosen the worst place possible. If I had a dog that would lie where my bed is made tonight, I would kill him and burn his collar and swear I never owned him". Another one he would say, he would ride along for a while, and one point he said "I must not criticize the major, but still as usual, I have my opinions". I use that quote in my computer screen (laughs). So another one of the good diarists was Jack Sumner. Sumner was sort of the co-leader of the expedition, I mean he was like the head of the crew for the 1869 expedition, and one of the things he said about running rapids in Red Canyon, is they ran small rapids one after another, he said they were "like sparking a black-eyed girl, just dangerous enough to be exciting".

(laughs) I always really liked that quote.

Green

Those are great. Besides being an explorer, Powell also had opinions about how water and development should occur in the west. Tell me about Powell's views on water and the west.

Webb

Powell, besides his feats as an explorer, was also very much a visionary, as he thought deeply about the future of the West, and he saw that it couldn't be developed the way that the popular conception was. Powell had come into a milieu of the rain follows the plow. That was the popular conception at the time, that there was always going to be enough water for agriculture, and it just isn't the case west of the hundredth meridian. And so, Powell thought that water should be developed for the greater good. Now at the time, the feeling in the country, this was the - started the age of the robber barons, and the great capitalists, that everything should be done by private enterprise, that government shouldn't be involved, and that the - there was no mountain too big to move, no river too big to divert, that private capital and men of enterprise couldn't do. Powell recognized that this just wasn't the case, that if you really developed the west, that-the way that he envisioned it for the benefit of all, then it-the government had to be involved. So he proposed that the state boundaries be redrawn, basically that there be a state of the Colorado, to follow river basins, river drainages, so there'd be a state of the Colorado, a state of the Green, a state of the San Juan, and so on. And this was met with just howls of outrage by the developers and the boomers, the people who really wanted to exploit the West, and they eventually because of that, of his positions, they forced him from office, as head of the USGS, and kind of shuffled him off into another government bureaucracy. But he's turned out to have been absolutely right, that we, the way we've developed water has not been a good way to do it.

Green

What do you think Powell would have thought about the way we're using water in the West today? What would he have thought about the big pipeline projects being proposed?

Webb

I think he would have disagreed with that. He felt that water should be developed by the government, for the people, not for big enterprise, not to enrich certain groups of people. So I think he would have disagreed very much with that, and just shaken his head over it.

Green

What about the development in the West, do you think he ever envisioned that?

Webb

I don't know that he did, I mean, I don't know that anybody in those days envisioned the way the West is developed. You know, a lot of people wanted to see it that way of course, you know, that again that rain follows the plough, that there's nothing you can't do, but it-people like Powell, and there were others too, who followed him that saw that, this is a desert culture, you can't grow like you can in a humid climate, you know, in the east part of the United States, for instance, it just can't be done. You know, if you look back at history, all the desert cultures have eventually collapsed and, who knows, I mean I'm not saying that's going to happen here, but it's something you certainly have to be cognizant of.

Green

Besides Powell, the Green is also famous for its rafting history. Did modern rafting get its start on the Green?

Webb

It was in large measure, I mean it started on the upper Green up in Dinosaur National Monument, where Bus Hatch started. There it was before, and there was Galloway, took people down as his guide, in 1909 on the Galloway stone expedition. And there had been a few other people, like in Glen Canyon, with David Dexter Russ, but it's really got its start in the 1930's, in two places really, on the Green with Buss Hatch taking people 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 he built the boats and took em down the river. The other was Norm Nevills down in the San Juan, and in the Colorado and Glen Canyon, and uh Neville's was the one who really saw it as a business, that he could actually make a living at that. Plus, Hatch was a contractor he made his living building houses and stores and things, but Norm saw that uh you could actually make a living as a river runner, as a river guide, and he publicized it heavily. He was very-worked all winters writing letters, and putting together little brochures and seeking clients and that. So it really did uh-river running as we know it today, umm 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.

Green

Speaking of firsts, in a way wasn't the Green the birth of the modern environmental movement?

Webb

It was, because of the Echo Park dam controversy. Before that the Bureau of Reclamation had just had free reign. I mean developers, in general had free reign in the west. If you wanted to build a dam and divert a river then that was your god-given right to do that. But in the late 1940's, right after World War II, there was a movement afoot to change the Colorado River, and the phrase they used was to 'turn a natural menace into a national resource', and by that this is

the Bureau of Reclamation, which is part of the Department of the Interior. They meant that you should um develop the whole Colorado River Basin so it could grow, so there could be industry and electricity, and so the Colorado River Storage Project was born, and that would have put dams up and down the Green River, um dams on the Colorado, even in the Grand Canyon, dams on all the tributaries. And the whole basin would have just been plumbed basically, so that you could divert the water and use it for agriculture and electricity. So one of the facets of that, one of the major units, in what the Bureau of Reclamation called the Wheel Horse, or the main-most important unit, was the Echo Park Dam. That was up in Dinosaur National Monument, right below the confluence of the Green and Yampa rivers. So they lined up everybody behind 'em. The state legislatures of all the basin states, the LDS church, all the industries, the women's groups, everyone, was behind this project until people started realizing, 'wait a minute, this is a National Park, you're not supposed to do things like this in a National Park.' And so uh a grass roots campaign started and 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 um he kind of brow beat the board into accepting that, and making a fight out of it. And so the Sierra Club started writing letters and started sending out 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. And um so they would fan out and then other people and the Sierra Club would run (river) trips of 150 people at a time that would come down and each one of those was basically a publicity agent against the dam. Another guy named Charles Eggert got involved, he made some famous films that were shown all over. And really, the first real grass roots movement of an environmental cause 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.

Green

Did the controversy over the Echo Park Dam, was it an instigating incident for making river running popular?

Webb

Well it was very much so, because um before that the-you know people had heard about Bus Hatch, or Norm Nevills or somebody, they were usually outdoorsy types that wanted to go have some kind of adventure. But during the Echo Park Dam controversy, actually both groups of people wanted to go down the river. The anti-dam (people) wanted to go and show how beautiful it was, and that you shouldn't flood it. The pro-dam people wanted to go down the river and say that it's too dangerous, we should fill this up with water and make a reservoir where everybody can enjoy. And so for both of them, there was only one person they could contact that could take people down the river, and that

was Bus Hatch. And so he started buying boats, and that's one reason he got into the rubber boats. And later, as the big groups came along they started buying bridge pontoons, which are great big huge inflatable boats, and you could take a dozen people-fifteen people on those and put a frame and a couple of sets of oars and pile all the gear on it, and you could take-uh just gigantic parties. And so um those people would go, they'd come back and ride "look I took my kids on the river, it was easy and fun". The people that went with Bus, uh that were pro dam would say "look how dangerous it is only a skilled river man like Buss Hatch can take people down the river". So he benefited both ways. He was actually secretly opposed to the dam, but he lived in Vernal, that was where he made his living, and you couldn't be opposed to the dam. His son made his opposition known, Don Hatch, made his opposition known. He was basically told 'don't ever come back', and uh it took a long time to get over that. And its still a quite the controversy to this day.

Green

In Vernal, Utah is it still controversial today?

Webb

Oh yeah, you know the whole phrase, we were just talking about this the other day where does this phrase come from um, 'waters for drinking and whiskeys or- or whiskeys for drinking and waters for fightin', and that's still very much the case. About the Echo Park Dam in particular I always say, if you go into the Sage Cafe or somewhere in Vernal and start talking about it you'll get an argument, because it was very much a-a really divided the town and not only Vernal but towns like Rock Springs and other places- Craig, Colorado that would have benefited from the building of the Echo Park Dam. There are people who still feel like that was stolen from them, that they could have developed, they could have been a much more vibrant community and had a lot more industry and that if the dam had been built.

Green

You mentioned pontoon boats, it's interesting that just after World War II, it seemed like rafting really took off. Why was that?

Webb

Well because before the war people wanted to run the river, but you had to be a carpenter, you had to know how to build a boat. Norm Nevills, Buss Hatch, people like that that would build boats, Powell. But they were wooden boats, and the problem with em was, first you couldn't carry very many people in em, they were heavy and they were relatively fragile, if you banged em under a rock they broke. And so you had to be a carpenter. Buss would carry a bucket of tar, and nails, and saws and all kinds of tools to rebuild his boat. So then entering the war they developed inflatable rafts, there had actually been a couple of inflatable rafts before that, they were just one off. But during the war uh the military developed inflatable rafts, had built thousands of them, so at the end of the war

there were huge surplus sales. You could buy everything from a bomber to a-an ammo can to everything, and so uh these rafts came up for sale for very cheap. You could buy em for 25 dollars, they came with paddles, pumps, repair kits, everything you needed, 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. And the supply of those rafts lasted up into the 1970's, and then after that there was kind of a change, but that was really the um basis of the modern river running was those inflatable rafts that were built for the military.

Green

Seems like Buss Hack really loved the river, and he really did a lot to get other people interested in it.

Webb

Buss Hatch loved the outdoors. he came from a big family in Vernal, and they all spent all their spare time outdoors. They hunted, they fished, they moon shined, they did everything they could to be outdoors. And growing up in Vernal people heard about the river, it was right there of course, and their mothers always warned em don't go near the river', which of course made it instantly attractive to young men. So um he got to where he could-he could go, he taught himself, he built a boat, he-him and his brothers and his cousins, they taught themselves how to run boats. But they couldn't really um afford to go, I mean this by now it's during the depression, so they found a guy named Russ Fraser, who is a company doctor out at Bingham, at the Copper Mine, and Fraser was also an adventurous outdoorsy kind of guy. He liked to fish and hunt and go outdoors, and um, Buss met him and Fraser was able to finance the trips, and that was really the start. And then after that Buss uh just kept growing, he-he loved people he always said that uh to his-his guides who worked for him, he said that "people are your bread and butter, so you better treat em nice". But he loved being around people, and he loved showing people the river, and uh it-conveying the the enjoyment that he got from it to the people who came on his trips.

Green

We're on this trip with Dee Holliday, according to many, he's a "river sage".

Webb

Dee's been around for a long time. He started out in the early 1960's, started with a guy named Jack Curry working Western River Expeditions and he's had from the day one I think, just a love of the river and did anything he could do to get on the river. He was told the stories about how he would uh start, he was a Ford mechanic in Salt Lake, and he would run a Yampa trip with a motor. He would leave on Friday night after work, drive all the way past almost to Craig, Colorado, to the-put in for the Yampa, and then his (wife) Sue would be waiting

at the end, and then he would run the trip in a weekend, with a motor. And they would run all the way down the Yampa all the way down the Green, all the way down into a Jensen, and Sue would pick him up Sunday night and they'd drive all night to get back to work. So, just right away, you know, you could tell that takes a lot of dedication to do something like that, do that every weekend. And then uh like so many river runners he just found people that were interested in going and they were willing to pay for it, and uh help him finance the trips and buy new boats and things like that. And then later I think um, by about the middle of the 1960's he had started working for Jack Curry, and doing kind of freelance trips for western, and then the company started he-he kind of went out on his own in 1966. So he's certainly one of the longest lived river runners, and it-he's-there's few that spend as much time on the river as he does. There's a lot a-a lot people that have been around a long time, but a lot of them are mostly in offices and, you know, they mean they don't work as much on the river as Dee. Dee, I always admired cause he's able to uh have other people like his family kinda runs the business, and Dee gets to go down the river. I mean it-it's something you gotta admire that.

Green

Describe the first time you ran the Green, do you remember the first time you floated it?

Webb

Yes, I certainly do. Um I was working for the National Park service up in Dinosaur National Monument and I was just a maintenance worker. We were building fences and cleaning toilets, and stuff like that, and the um river rangers, which I didn't even know there was such thing as a river ranger, it turned out they needed some extra help, because in those days they had pit toilets, and they had to dig a new hole and move the-the cover over it and so on. So I went with them down through the canyon of the door, and these old GRB's, park service boats, and it was a lot of work. We dug holes, hot sweaty tough work, and um had a crew of about 5 or 6 in two boats. But it was an incredible experience, I'd never been through rapids before, I'd never been in a canyon like that before, a very big profound gloomy canyon -- with the roar of the water in the background. And uh one night there was a huge thunderstorm, just crashing, flashing, lighting, and we sat up under a ledge and watched this all go on a good part of the night. And uh, when I got back, I'd always had an interest in history, I got back to the headquarters there in Dinosaur and there wasn't much else to do. So I went to the-they had a little library of kind of the standard sources-Ashley, Manley, Powell, and uh started reading up on those accounts. And it struck me as I was reading those that I had had the exact same experiences. You know those guys Kolb in 1911, Stone in 1909, Powell in 1869-they had written about the rapids, and the sound, and the weather, and the sand in your food, and all that. And suddenly-there was just this instant connection with those people. And I felt I had had the same experiences, time--the whole 100 years intervening just dropped away, and we'd had the exact same experiences. And I felt such a connection

that it started me on a career of writing and studying river history, uh never done anything else since (chuckles).

Green

It's a good way to spend your life. (laughs)

Webb

It's been so far.

Green

So why do you love the river? Why do you love the Green in particular?

Webb

I've always loved rivers um because I grew up around a river, on the San Juan River, in New Mexico. And 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 going to see in the future? The Green uh-it's just a home river to me. I always describe it as my home river, that's why I started, it's the first time I felt that connection with the river in the past, and the canyons, and um I could never get away from it. You know I always think, I-I run the Colorado, and I've run the San Juan, and the Yampa, and various other, you know, I've done taking boat tours on the Thames and on the Rhine and things like that. But the Green is one that'll always be a big part of me, it's one I always think back to. Driving down the freeway in Salt Lake, going to work, sometimes the uh picture like this of the Green River will come back and um it's just a place I could never be very far away from.

Green

It seems like there are a lot of different pressures on the river right now, is the river at a crossroads now, or have there always been many different people interested in developing the Green River?

Webb

Well after the defeat of the Echo Park Dam, and the other dams that were proposed. It seemed like people had gotten the idea that you shouldn't modify,-- you shouldn't change drastically wild rivers. But now it's come back up again, and the proposals are all around growth. Utah's a place where people want to grow, they want the state -- the economy to grow, the population to grow. And not just Utah, but the whole Colorado River Basin...And so there are big threats right now to the Green River, one of 'em is a big siphon that would take water out of the Yampa River, and pump it over into Denver for the metropolitan area. If you took all the water out of the Yampa, as much as they're talking about, it would drastically change what we're seeing now, and it would really affect the wildlife, the vegetation, the quality of the river experience. And that's very much a threat because all this water comes out of Yampa. The Green has already

been controlled by Flaming Gorge Dam. And now there's a proposal to build a nuclear power plant, down by Green River, Utah. And if that's the case, those things use enormous, thousands and thousands of acre-feet of water to cool the towers. And if that's the case then, that's again, it's just going to de-water the river. I mean you'll just basically have a little trickle of water going down. So that's another major threat. There's a big kind of a move afoot to redo the Colorado River Compact, and so reallocate the water. If that's the case, a lot more water will be sent to Utah, that'll start a clamor to divert it, to pump it out of the river and to irrigation and other uses. So the rivers are very much under threat right now, and there's never been the-the political will or the consensus to protect the rivers in Utah, that there has in other places, Colorado, Idaho, even in Arizona. Here, um they don't like the wild and scenic rivers idea, and uh so it's hard to say what's going to happen to the Green.

Green

What do you see for the future of the Green?

Webb

Well, I hope it stays like it is right now (chuckles) to tell you the truth. I mean that's the future I'd like to see, is that it stays unchanged, that more and more people enjoy it, uh that they-they use that enjoyment um politically, you might say, to insure that it stays undeveloped. I'd like to see it protected, um with a wild and scenic status, cause it's certainly wild and certainly scenic, and it's very much deserving of that. I'd like to see um-it given the respect that it deserves. 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.

Green

Why should people care what happens to this river?

Webb

Because it's-it deserves respect itself. And you know, the-the culture in Utah talks about the stewardship for the land, and this is something that needs stewardship, the Green River and the Colorado River. If the river goes, I mean, it's almost like a canary in a coal mine-if the river starts having problems then that's a symptom of that-we're overdeveloping the west. If too much water gets sucked out, if too much stuff gets dumped into it, it's going to affect everybody not just people who run rivers. It's going to affect the whole uh lifestyle in the west that we've developed around the rivers.

Green

Thank you.