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Contacts: Paul Ostapuk
928.614.9655
Friends of Lake Powell
friends@lakepowell.org

Tiffany Mapel
970.259.9179
Friends of Lake Powell
tiffmapel@yahoo.com

Lake Powell – 50th Anniversary

In 1963, Lake Powell opened exciting new realm of recreation opportunities

PAGE, Ariz. – There is no place in the world like Lake Powell.

Construction of the Glen Canyon Dam, which backs up Lake Powell, began in late 1956. On March 13, 1963, the river diversion plugging operation had progressed to the point where additional water impoundment in Lake Powell could be made. The adjustable control gates in the left tunnel were partially closed to allow passage of only 1,000 cubic feet of water per second through the dam to commence filling of Lake Powell as the waters began to rise against the face of the concrete dam.

On Jan. 21, 1963, Lake Powell was born when closure of the steel gates on the right diversion tunnel caused the Colorado River to rise 34 feet behind the dirt coffer dam and backed up lake water some 20 miles up the river canyon.

Today, Lake Powell has become a popular destination offering visitors spectacular scenery, accessible water recreation, and unmatched personal adventure.

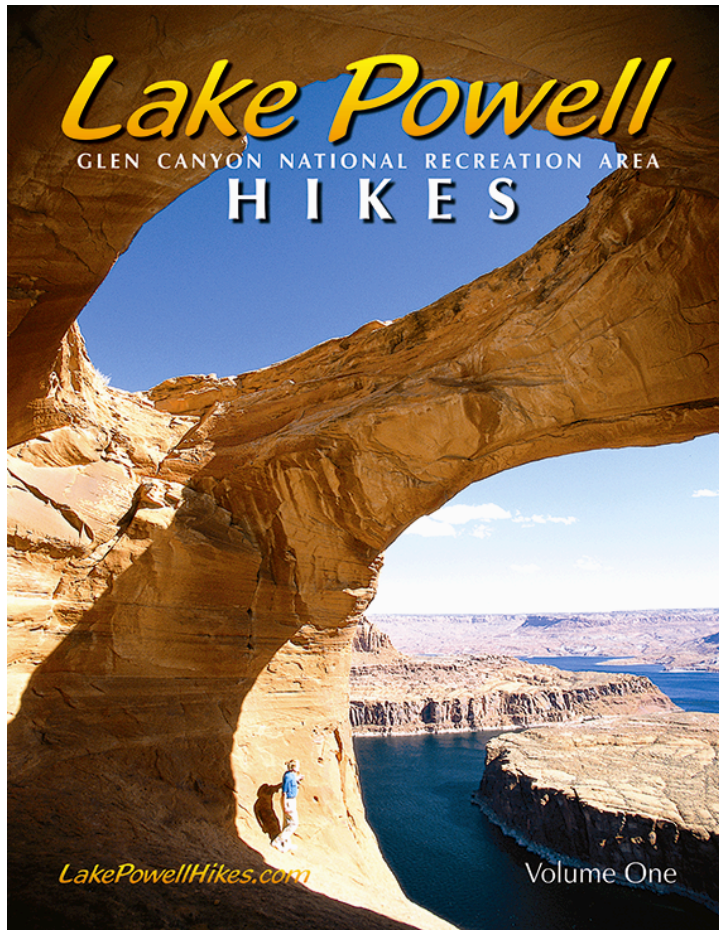
When the lake began forming in 1963, some conservationists might have given up on Glen Canyon. The reality was that Lake Powell opened an exciting new realm of recreation opportunities. Josef Muench, a world-renowned photographer who visited historic Glen Canyon several times each year for 18 years, came to Lake Powell for 22 days in 1963 to experience the lake's filling and provided subscribers to Arizona Highways with the first look at the new lake.

Muench was impressed with Lake Powell and the new adventure it provided. He called Lake Powell "not just the nation's most spectacular water playground but photographer's paradise as well," explaining "at the Grand Canyon the timing must be right as to time of day and weather conditions, if the picture is worth looking at. Glen Canyon [Lake Powell] is so varied that any time of day offers something to occupy the busy lens."

It comes as a surprise to many that the huge 1.25-million-acre expanse of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area encompasses a larger area than Grand Canyon National Park. Lake Powell covers just 10% of the park (on average). The water creates a blue highway of adventure that beckons boaters along more than 150 miles of main channel to over 96 major side canyons. Recreational opportunities abound. Outdoor play is at a freeform best at Lake Powell.

To celebrate the 50th Anniversary, the Friends of Lake Powell partnered with Lake Powell Magazine to create the publication "Lake Powell Hikes" as a way to highlight a sampling of the Lake Powell experience.

Entrepreneur Dave Tate, publisher of Lake Powell Hikes, has been coming to the area since 1992 and calls Lake Powell "the playground of a lifetime." Over the past 16 years his Lake Powell Magazine provided photo essays for over 100 boating excursions.



Len Cook, President of Old West Marine Services, who moved to Page in 1996, was amazed by the beauty of the place. On monthly flights from LA to the east coast he would fly over the lake and wonder at its magnitude. Then he visited the area in person and was hooked.

"Lake Powell provides an important economic lifeline to the community of Page both directly and indirectly," Cook said.

"This includes people who work for the concessioners, small businesses servicing houseboats, supermarkets, stores, hotels and basic infrastructure. The area has attracted new opportunities such as the Amangiri Resort and other projects are in the planning stages. As the attraction of Lake Powell continues to mature, Page will continue to grow," he said.

Recreation is not the primary purpose of Lake Powell. The Bureau of Reclamation, which operates Glen Canyon Dam, uses the stored lake water as a vast bank account that can be drawn upon during dry years.

Lake Powell provides long-term water storage of Rocky Mountain runoff that allows the Upper Basin states of Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah to use their share of the Colorado River upstream while still providing the required water delivery to the Lower Basin states of Arizona, California, and Nevada according to the Colorado River Compact of 1922.

The Bureau of Reclamation has indicated that as drought conditions persist in the Southwest, the water stored in Lake Powell is especially critical.

For travelers northbound from Flagstaff, it is important to note that travel to Lees Ferry and Jacob Lake is open as usual. But because of a section of road failure along the steep route through the Echo Cliffs, highway travel directly to Page is now detoured along U.S. 160 to State Route 98.

The travel time to Page and Lake Powell is 45 minutes longer but the reward is a new scenic route across the Navajo Nation with outstanding views of Navajo Mountain.

Friends of Lake Powell is a 501.c.3 organization whose mission is the preservation, protection and promotion of Lake Powell.

For more information visit the Friends of Lake Powell website: www.lakepowell.org