

Powell and the Arid West: 150 years later, time for a revisioning of place?

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One hundred and fifty years ago, the Arid West was forever changed from a land inhabited primarily by Native Americans and wayward mountain men to one of reclamation, development and cities. With the connection of the trans-continental railroad and the launch and completion of John Wesley Powell's 1869 Colorado River Exploring Expedition, the contiguous United States was now interconnected and the frontier was at bay. The year 2019 marks the 150th anniversary of Powell's historic expedition and the development of the modern West. In that time we have seen the desert reclaimed for agriculture, the proliferation of large-scale water projects, supporting economy associated natural resource extraction and urban-centered population growth. In that time, we have also seen the desert reclaim that same land for desert as fields go fallow in water trades that amount to food for water. The West is the fastest growing region of the United States, a major agricultural region, mineral and energy resource, cultural hearth, and land of national treasures represented by our National Parks and public lands.

The Sesquicentennial Colorado River Exploring Expedition (SCREE) is a commemoration and continuation of dialog about the Colorado River Basin and broader Arid Region that began with Powell 150 years ago. SCREE will follow the same pathway as Powell's 1869 Expedition in 2019 to engage in dialog, visualization and listening for insights about what future we might work for in this region. The Colorado River is a resource that unites and divides the region. Geopolitical boundaries determine the rules that partition our shared resources, but nature does not obey those rules of law and politics. Aridity, regardless of causation, affects more than residents of the West, it affects the nation.

To promote this critical dialog, SCREE is engaging in multiple activities including:

- A retrospective and prospective examination of water, public lands and Native Americans in the Colorado River Basin tentatively entitled, **VISION AND PLACE: JOHN WESLEY POWELL AND REIMAGINATION OF THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN**. This is an edited volume with 17 authors from the basin states (Proposed publication summer 2019).
- A distributed art exhibition from Green River, Wyoming to Flagstaff, Arizona, visualizing the modern West from the sublime to the post-industrial. The exhibition will be distributed in communities along Powell's pathway Spring 2019-2020.
- Community outreach events in Green River, WY; Vernal, UT; Moab, UT; Page, AZ; and Flagstaff, AZ. The past, present of and future of the Colorado River Basin as viewed by Citizens, Managers, Tribes, Activists, and Government Officials. What do we value in common? What are our concerns? Summer 2019.

- The Expedition: 1000 miles of landscape, river, reservoir, dialog, visualization and science. Unlike Powell's expedition, the SCREE trip will remain a part of the connected world. Not everyone can join us physically, but through daily blogging and social media, the world can join us on river. We are developing curriculum for K-12, science activities related to water and weather, and ART. Communication of natural sciences has always depended on visual arts.
- The Future: The horizon line for SCREE is currently summer 2019, when we launch and ultimately land back in Flagstaff, AZ. However, we expect to curate the work we do, what we learn and what Great Unknowns we discover to be part of this national dialog.

Our project is meant to bring forward a dialog about the next 150 years in the Colorado River Basin and across the Arid Region. We hope to facilitate that dialog with scholars, artists, policy makers and the people of the West who will be directly impacted by decisions made today and tomorrow, so we do not go blindly into the Great Unknown.