

Eradicating An Ornamental Grass In The Grand Canyon River Corridor

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Ravenna Grass (*Saccharum ravenae*) is a non-native species introduced into the riparian environment on the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP). The presentation is a review of the plant and treatment methods, project history, and the challenges of controlling and eventually eradicating an invasive species in the unique and isolated environment of the river corridor in GCNP.

A native to southern Europe, ravenna grass is sold as an ornamental in the United States. It was introduced at Lees Ferry in Grand Canyon National Park in the 1970s. By 1990 it had spread throughout the Colorado River corridor with plants documented over 225 river miles downstream. In the early 1990s control efforts were begun as a project on resource management river trips in cooperation with the National Park Service (NPS). During the early control efforts, teams were successful in documenting over 10,000 plants killed on a 2-3 week annual trip. The number of plants killed started to dive during the years 2000-2009. By 2010 less than 300 plants were being identified and killed annually. By 2014 the annual number of plants had stabilized to approximately 100.

Final eradication of ravenna from the corridor is possible. However, it has proven to be a challenge on many fronts which include; geographical isolation, identification in this particular environment, possible re-infestation occurrences, administrative access, and inconsistent project application by the NPS.

Dan Hall has been a white water river guide on the Colorado River in Grand Canyon since 1988. He first participated on a resource management river trip in 1994 as a volunteer boatman. Since then he has been working on invasive species control in the Grand Canyon corridor as a small craft operator for the National Park Service and as a volunteer. In 2006 he co-authored a contributing essay on invasive plants in the book *River and Desert Plants of the Grand Canyon*.