

Grand Canyon flooding considered successful

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WASHINGTON (AP) - The deliberate flooding of the Grand Canyon was successful, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt said today.

"The beaches and species habitat through the Grand Canyon appear to have been significantly restored," he said at a briefing. The project "exceeded the most optimistic expectations."

Four giant steel tubes at the base of the Glen Canyon dam were opened, sending a thundering waterfall down the river and into the canyon. The week-long flooding ended last week.

The aim was to restore the canyon's beaches and environment, depleted by years without the annual spring flooding cycle on the river.

Babbitt said that the beaches along the canyon appear to

have been increased as much as 30 percent and that the flooding had created numerous large backwater channels which can serve as a habitat for endangered native fish species like the humpback chub.

The discharge peaked at 45,000 cubic feet per second and was continued for seven days, lowering the level of Lake Powell by 3-1/2 feet, Babbitt said.

"It was exactly what we needed to do," concluded Dave Wegner of the Bureau of Reclamation, which supervised the project.

Babbitt said the results of the project "confirm our conviction that a new era has begun in the management of the Colorado River and the Grand Canyon."

He said this can serve as a model for work on the restoration of other damaged ecosystems.