

## River-access lawsuit over Canyon is settled

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A long-running battle between groups that use the Colorado River as it travels through Grand Canyon National Park was settled out of court Thursday morning.

The settlement will allow park authorities and special-interest groups to work on the issues of who gets to run the river and when they get to run it.

The lawsuits were filed in 2000 after then-park Superintendent Robert Arnberger decided to stop work on a wilderness plan and a river management plan that had begun in 1997. Arnberger ordered the stop, he said at the time, because of a lack of resources to complete the project, but also because there was too much controversy surrounding it.

In the court settlement, more than \$1 million that was supposed to go the park's general fund will be diverted for the study. "We're hoping the process that's vetted out over the next couple years will allow everybody who wants access to the Colorado River to have it in a timely and fair fashion," said Randall Rasmussen, program director for the National Parks Conservation Association, one of the groups involved in the suit.

With the National Park Service committing to restart its planning process, several issues that faded into the background have again come to the forefront. Foremost among them is access to the river. Commercial guide services have held most of the river permits for more than a decade, to the chagrin of private boaters who often have to wait more than 10 years to get a permit for a river trip.