

Video narration Canyon Sketches 17, February 2010. Grand Canyon National Park
[Grand Canyon Private Boater's Association Teams Up with NPS Staff to Rehabilitate Lees Ferry's Private Boater's Campsite](#)

by Allyson Mathis

Lees Ferry is where boaters put in for their Grand Canyon Colorado River journey. Excitement and anticipation fills the air as groups gear up for their long-awaited river trips. The launch ramp is a flurry of activity each day with rigging for both commercial and noncommercial river trips. Groups with noncommercial river permits may camp the night before their trip starts just downstream of the launch ramp in the Lees Ferry Private Boater's camp. In the morning, boaters meet with the Lees Ferry ranger for their pre-trip check in the morning to get an early start to their first day on the river.

The Lees Ferry private boater's camp is in an area of native vegetation, including cottonwood trees, seep willow, coyote willow, and arrowweed. Like many river camps in Grand Canyon, groups use this camp almost every night. As part of the Colorado River Management Plan, the park has the responsibility to mitigate impacts of human use in camps in order to protect the natural and cultural resources found in the river corridor. When working on camps, park crews construct or rehabilitate trails, delineate tent pads, and eliminate social trails. These actions make it easier for river runners who follow the Leave No Trace principle to Camp and Travel on Durable Surfaces to minimize their impacts on park resources.

Problems at the private boaters camp consisted of extensive social trails, overgrown designated trails, and a lack of space for two private groups to camp there at the same time. The rehabilitation project was a true collaborative effort, with volunteers recruited through the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association joining with staff from Grand Canyon National Park.

The team was divided into four work crews, each with a specific task. NPS boatman Jake Blackwell and volunteer Rich Bryant constructed a section of wood fence adjacent to the road to delineate parking boundaries. The newly constructed fence will also direct campers onto the

main trail into the camp and reduce social trailing so that native vegetation will be able to recover.

NPS Boatman Dave Loeffler worked with volunteers Ron Smith and Gary Hickman to line a section of trail from the road into the main camp with logs in order to clearly designate the trail. These standard trail construction techniques are proven methods that encourage the use of designated trails while helping to minimize the development and use of social trails.

A crew consisting of Outdoor Recreation Planner Vanya Pryputniewicz and volunteers David Schuster and Helen Hickman constructed new tent pads and rehabilitated the main trail from the launch ramp into the private boater's camp.

Canyon District Ranger Brian Broom worked with Restoration Biologist Kassy Theobald and volunteer Leah Bloom to construct a second kitchen area near the river. The park encourages groups to set up their kitchens and their tents on durable surfaces close to the river, to keep camps from growing larger with continued use. While the Lees Ferry private boaters camp still needs additional work, the NPS crews and dedicated volunteers made good progress towards achieving two delineated and well maintained camps river runners launching their Grand Canyon adventure.