



Insider's Look at Grand Canyon

Webisode #11 – Climate Friendly Parks Interview with Park Ranger Peg Bohan Transcript

Ranger Patrick: Welcome everyone to another webisode of Insider's Look at Grand Canyon! I'm Ranger Patrick and I'm here with Ranger Peg to talk about a special visit we had from a very important person and family!

Ranger Peg: Good to see you again, Pat! That's right! President Obama and his family visited Grand Canyon National Park back in August....and I got to meet them!

Ranger Patrick: Wow! What a great honor! What did you and the First Family talk about?

Ranger Peg: We talked about Grand Canyon, of course! But we also talked about change...Change, as you know is a powerful force of nature and helped create Grand Canyon. But we talked about another type of change: "Climate Change".

Ranger Patrick: Ah, yes. I've been hearing a lot about climate change lately...

Ranger Peg: Grand Canyon's (as well as Earth's) climate has been changing for hundreds of millions of years and that change has been recorded in the rock layers we see before us. Now, we're hearing more and more about the effects of *modern-day* climate changes. Scientists are concerned because the climate is changing faster than ever before, and believe that people are the main cause of this.

Ranger Patrick: So will we see the impacts of climate change here at Grand Canyon?

Ranger Peg: Unfortunately, the answer is probably yes...

Ranger Patrick: Well, how so?

Ranger Peg: With average temperatures expected to raise 6°F -8°F ...for example weather is expected to become hotter and more extreme! Hotter heat waves, longer droughts and more intense rain/snow storms. Even though we might get more rain and snow on the ground, it will be so dry it won't soak in well.

Ranger Patrick: So, where will all that extra water go?

Ranger Peg: Over the rim, resulting in more flash floods.

Ranger Patrick: Not good for our trails!

Ranger Peg: But that's not all...Trees will have a harder time trying to adapt to the higher temperatures. Hotter temp's means less available water and more bugs that like to attack trees. Bark Beetle outbreaks, fostered by warmer temps, mild winter and drought, have already killed 66% of pinyon pines near Flagstaff, AZ. We're likely to see an increase in wildfires as well.

Ranger Patrick: Aren't we already seeing that?

Ranger Peg: You're right. A recent study found that, since 1987, higher spring and summer temperatures and earlier snowmelt have already contributed to a four-fold increase in western wildfires.

Ranger Patrick: I remember we had several fires in the park this year...

Ranger Peg: Most of these fires (about 80%) were allowed to burn to help reduce available fuels and restore healthy forest ecology, our ecology is naturally fire-resistant (i.e. Ponderosa Pines). However, more wildfires and hotter temps mean higher levels of air pollution.

Ranger Patrick: Doesn't most of the air pollution now in the park come from upwind sources to our SW? (LAX. LAS)

Ranger Peg: You're right about that...

Ranger Patrick: Wow, I can't imagine that our plant and animal species are going to like all of these changes...

Ranger Peg: That's probably true if they are not able to move or adapt. We're already seeing desert animals' move to higher elevations in the park.

Ranger Patrick: Yeah! I just saw some javelina near my house the other day! And a visitor thought they saw a road runner by park headquarters not too long ago...

Ranger Peg: Those animals are commonly seen in lower deserts, but are now moving to higher elevations as desert temperatures become too hot even for them.

Ranger Patrick: What is Grand Canyon doing to help counteract the effects of climate change right now?

Ranger Peg: Grand Canyon National Park is currently taking several steps towards helping offset our carbon footprint! We're learning how to become more "green" by becoming a "Climate Friendly Park"!

Ranger Patrick: What's a Climate Friendly Park?

Ranger Peg: Well, the Climate Friendly Parks (CFP) Program, a collaboration of the National Park Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, provides national parks with management tools and resources to address climate change. Grand Canyon National Park will hold a Climate Friendly Parks Workshop on October 14th and 15th, we hope to bring together its staff, community members, local non-profits, schools including Northern Arizona University, and other stakeholders to discuss the future of the Park.

Ranger Patrick: Sounds pretty intensive...

Ranger Peg: Well, first we have to figure out how big our "carbon footprint" is by completing an emissions inventory of all the Green House Gases (GHG) in the entire park. Then we'll create an action plan based on all those findings and use the data to determine exactly how to lower our emissions. Finally, we help people understand what we're doing and they can do to help be more climate friendly during they're visit here, and at home.

Ranger Patrick: Is there anything we're doing right now to help be more climate-friendly?

Ranger Peg: Sure! We're already doing a lot!

We're offering mass transit to visitors. Grand Canyon National Park just bought 20 new clean-burning, fuel-efficient busses...5 of those busses were purchased with funds from the Stimulus Act! We're also already using alternative sources of green energy:84 solar panels were installed to convert energy from the sun into electricity we can use! They were donated by Arizona Public Service, largest utility company in AZ. The panels provide enough energy to offset 30 percent of the Visitor Center's electricity use, and reduce our CO2 output by 20 tons per year!

Ranger Patrick: What about recycling? I'm always seeing recycling bins around the park...

Ranger Peg: You're right! Of course we recycle! As a matter of fact, we have one of the best recycling programs out there. We want everyone to learn about how climate change may affect Grand Canyon, and all National Parks, and learn about what we can all do to help make better choices for our future!

Ranger Patrick: Looks like we have our work cut out for us...So it's up to you folks out there! Come to Grand Canyon National Park and learn about climate change, and how you can do your part to help us protect America's Best Idea! Ranger Peg I want to thank you so much for coming on the show, Insider's Look at Grand Canyon, and sharing this important information.

Ranger Peg: No problem Pat. I'm glad to be a part of it.

Ranger Patrick: We'll catch you folks next time.